

## cheat sheet

**Who stays here** Louise Clarke and her husband Peter Walmsley, who are both civil servants, as well as their adult daughters, Emily and Isabella.

**Style of home** A two-bedroom 1930s apartment near Sydney's Manly.

**🕒** Work began in January 2018 and was completed later that year.

**💰** The budget for the project was approximately \$320,000.

### before&after

An art-collecting couple have restored the charm of their Sydney apartment from floor to ceiling

# FINE ARCH

### sunroom

A beautiful new archway makes this part of the apartment feel like a separate room. "We thought an elliptical arch would provide a wide curve, spanning the opening which we had closed in slightly," says interior designer Suzanne Gorman. Chair (on left), Cult. Side table and glasses, Hub Furniture. Black table, rattan chair, and leather and metal chair, all Anibou. Artwork on right by Lucy Culliton.

WORDS KATHERINE CHATFIELD PHOTOGRAPHY PRUE RUSCOE STYLING CLAIRE DELMAR

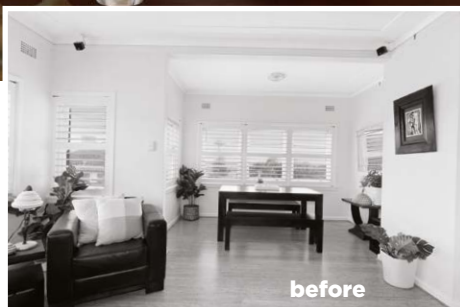
ARTWORK (ON LEFT WALL) BY UNKNOWN ARTIST





*dining area*

"We brought the Austrian dining table and chairs from our previous Sydney apartment 100m up the road," says Peter. "They were made in the 1930s and fit perfectly. We love interesting light fittings and this is an &Tradition 'Utzon JU' pendant." Glass vase and white vase by Alana Wilson.



**L**ouise Clarke and Peter Walmsley fell in love with their Sydney home the moment they saw it in 2017. The top-floor Art Deco apartment overlooks the walk to the historic rock pools and surf break of Fairy Bower, near Shelly Beach and the tourist mecca of Manly. Despite being badly renovated, its "great views and good bones" won through.

The couple, who are civil servants, travel to Sydney from their family home in Canberra every few weeks for work and wanted a bolthole where they could relax, display more works from their art collection, and have space for their two grown-up daughters to stay (Isabella is based in Melbourne; Emily lives in another part of Sydney and sometimes visits on weekends).

"We loved the light from the northern aspect," says Louise. In addition, says Peter, "Our previous apartment was an interwar gem with period mouldings and red gum floors, which served as some inspiration for what we wanted to do here. At the same time, Manly was undergoing a lot of building work and we wanted to stay in keeping with the feel of the suburb."

The apartment had been gutted during a 1990s renovation, and they wanted to restore some of its original character. Interior designer Suzanne Gorman from Studio Gorman was happy to help. "We didn't want it to become a pastiche to Art Deco," says Suzanne. "I was inspired by Louise and Peter's art, which is full of

rich, autumnal tones, and wanted to create a home worthy of it. The colours speak to the Art Deco period, but are also reminiscent of the Australian bush. We wanted to use them throughout, and have lots of gallery-white walls to showcase the art and vintage rugs."

**before**

"The layout was clunky," says Peter. "There was an enormous and pointless fireplace, and our predecessors had demolished the wall of the sunroom, which had left a very awkward shape – like someone had carved through it with a butter knife."

The concrete-and-steel construction was advanced for the 1938 build date, but eight decades on, this had also caused some problems. "The concrete on the floor wasn't reinforced so it had rippled over time," says Peter. "This meant the bamboo floorboards laid on top had rippled as well. They were so wonky that they made you feel drunk when you walked on them."

Built-in wardrobes in the main bedroom meant the bed faced an ugly brick building instead of the sea. The bathroom needed updating and the kitchen was "aesthetically hideous", according to Peter. "The doors and windows were the only original features left," adds Suzanne. "We wanted to hold on to those."

ARTWORK ON SUNROOM WALL BY ERICH HECKEL

*kitchen*

"The subway tiles are handmade white-speckle ceramic tiles commissioned by Anchor Ceramics," says designer Suzanne Gorman. "The tones and tiles harmonise with the Grigio Orsola marble benchtop from Artedomus." Peter loves the layout and the American walnut cabinetry. "This is the best-designed kitchen I've had," he says. "It's small but has storage everywhere, including wine drawers in the kickboards and pull-out shelving. And there's a lot of bench space." Ceramic bottle by Damon Moon.





“  
It’s our second home, which  
gave Louise an excuse to  
buy two of everything!”

PETER WALMSLEY, HOMEOWNER

”



## during

Louise and Peter had a few issues to deal with as the renovation progressed. “All of our terrazzo was destroyed in a warehouse fire, and a neighbour complained about every bit of noise,” says Peter. But the big issue was the floor. “The installer couldn’t quote on re-leveling the concrete until they’d taken up the floorboards,” says Peter. “When they did, we realised how bad the floor was underneath, which meant it was very expensive to sort out.”

Once it was level, the new American walnut floor became the focal point of the project. “Getting the bones of the apartment right was essential,” says Suzanne. “The rich colour of the parquetry gives the floor a beautiful layered feel. We used small-scale parquetry, which means you can see lots of lines and detail. The oiled finish makes it elegant, soft and very high-end.”

In order to move away from the minimal 1990s look the apartment had previously, Studio Gorman suggested adding an archway between the living area and sunroom. “We spent many hours working out how curved or flat it should be,” says Suzanne. “Plaster is very delicate, so it was a triumph when the builders managed to get it up the three flights of stairs and in place without any cracks. It restores some of the softness to the apartment. We also added picture rails and some ceiling detail.”

Although Louise and Peter had wanted air-conditioning at first, the building structure made it too tricky. “We would have had to open up the roof and hire a crane to install it, costing about \$100,000,” says Louise. “We figured we’d stick with a sea breeze running through the apartment!”

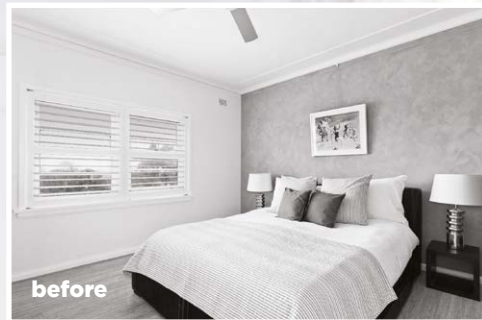
## living area

In the hall is a 1950s Danish chest of drawers that the couple have had for decades. The artwork above was a wedding present. Like all the other rugs in the apartment, this one is antique. Listone Giordano American walnut herringbone parquetry floor through Winspear Group.

ARTWORKS (THIS PAGE OTHER THAN ABOVE CHEST) BY UNKNOWN ARTISTS







*bedroom*

"We considered painting the wardrobe doors olive green, but then went with white to keep the mood light and breezy," says Suzanne. Peter and Louise changed the location of the bed (opposite) so they could look out over Fairy Bower. Blanket and white cushion, Ondene. Artwork by Graham Kuo. Rattan chair, and leather and metal chair, both Anibou.



*bathroom*

"Terrazzo was already there in the communal stairway," says Suzanne, "so we specified a grey/olive speckle tile to suit the era of the building. We built the subdued, rich palette from there, adding texture on texture to create comforting spaces." Bowl, jar and vase, Ondene. Glass bowl by Alana Wilson. Hand towel, Hale Mercantile Co.

*after*

"The sunroom arch was a clever solution to the awkward space," says Peter. "It's still one room but now acts as two. If you're sitting in the area behind the arch, you can see through the apartment and get the illusion of expansiveness. We love it."

A deliberate use of white on the walls – Dulux Natural White in particular – has amplified the natural light throughout, which is controlled with several measures. "Ivory-white timber venetians let us reduce the sunlight when it's really dazzling, but we can still see the ocean and palm trees through them," says Peter. "In the main bedroom, sheer Italian linen curtains soften the look and stop us from waking up at 5am when the sun rises."

The dining area is the only space that doesn't have white walls. "It's in the centre of the apartment and is also used as a library, so it felt like we should differentiate it," says Suzanne. "We chose a Grasscloth wallpaper in Twine from Porter's Paints. It's naturally textured and the weave goes with the pattern in the floor, creating balance in the design."

Louise and Peter may not live here full-time, but they've had no problem at all settling in. "It doesn't feel like a place we just visit," says Peter. "It feels like home." **TD**

To see more of Suzanne Gorman's work, visit [studiogorman.com](http://studiogorman.com)