

# home

## ACE OF SPADES

Garden tools come out of the shed

## SAFETY FIRST

Protecting children from household accidents



## A step forward

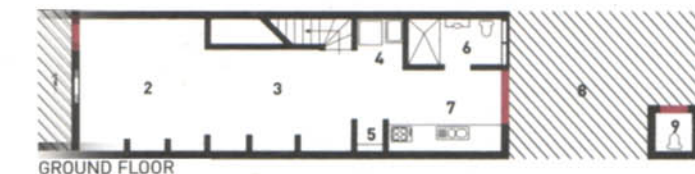
Bright transformation for a once-neglected terrace





**“I always wanted to buy an old terrace where I could actually do a substantial renovation”**

**A** Architect Christopher Polly at home **B** Corrugated iron sheets in the former rear area **C** Bi-fold doors open the new kitchen to outdoors **D** The white laminated streamline kitchen **E** The entrance and the first section of the orange feature wall **F** The living area



**GROUND FLOOR**  
1 Porch 2 Living room  
3 Dining room 4 Laundry  
5 Pantry 6 Bathroom  
7 Kitchen 8 Courtyard  
9 Toilet

**FIRST FLOOR**  
10 Balcony  
11 Bedroom 12 Study

# Orange appeal

Colour and creativity transform a dilapidated Newtown terrace into a liveable home, writes **Catherine Nikas-Boulos**. Photos **Katrina Tepper**.



Architect Christopher Polly had, in the truest sense, bought a house that befitted a 1920s shanty town. The rear of the property consisted of a couple of corrugated iron sheets slumped together to shield the house from external forces, and an adjoining concrete floor – complete with outhouse – was a poor excuse for a backyard.

It wasn't entirely liveable, and the previous owner had taken obvious liberties with council regulations when it came to the back extension, but Christopher was unfazed.

He had been searching to buy a property for some time, and having crossed out some of the more expensive inner-city areas at the top of his wish list, Christopher found the small terrace in Newtown charming, if not challenging.

"I wanted to buy my own place and I was looking in Surry Hills and Darlinghurst, but I was priced out of the market," he says.

"Newtown was the best alternative, and I was only looking in this area for about a week before I found this. This stood out because it needed a lot of work and I knew as an architect I could give it something. I always wanted to buy an old terrace I could do a substantial renovation to."

Working with the original footprint, the renovation started by tackling the existing, derelict rear extension. That area, now complete with sturdy roof and bi-fold doors, houses a kitchen along one wall and the bathroom on the other.

These new, modern and space-saving areas are a far cry from the state of the original kitchen and bathroom Christopher found in relatively the same position. To save on costs, he elected not to tamper with the location of the existing services, admitting the original floorplan was correct anyway, utilising the tight 3.7m-wide space well.

Running a white laminate, streamlined kitchen along one wall and a compact 1.2m-wide bathroom on the opposite wall gives the impression of more space than there actually is – a governing factor in his design.

"There was a doorway where the kitchen is, which led to a really small kitchen and it went down a few steps to the laundry and bathroom, and then there was a small rabbit-warren passage to a yard at a lower level," he says. "Then there was a series of corrugated-iron lean-tos. It was shocking, and definitely not legal."

Impressed with the process so far, Christopher sensibly decided to rip down the wall between the living and dining room to create a free-flowing space from the entrance to the courtyard. "Having done this much, I thought 'Let's attack the old house as well'. The old wall was originally going to remain between the two rooms but I thought it was a shame to have the rest of the house not matching. So those rooms got a makeover as well."

A steel beam is now where the wall once stood, ("it's a marked memory of the old wall"), and has been painted into the ceiling to appear seamless.

Once the wall was removed Christopher realised the two chimney breaths in the former separate living and dining areas were different depths. It would have been an expensive exercise to rectify, but as the fireplaces were non-functioning anyway, he used those areas for storage.

Other than sprucing up the upstairs bedroom (facing the street) and study, these two rooms were largely left alone.

## Cut to colour

With the terrace house opened up into one main space on the ground level, Christopher decided to use colour as a means of creating "borders" to define the areas.

The wall in the south-facing entrance and living area is dark blood orange, followed by a mid-orange in the dining room, then an all-white kitchen in the north-facing aspect.

"I tried to use colour as an ordering device. I guess trying to demarcate space in one large space rather than just use furniture," says Christopher. The orange has been extended to the upper level – the idea being the staircase looks unobtrusive, and essentially "stuck on the wall".

The Oregon staircase is one of the original features of the house that wasn't touched, because it was structurally sound. Had it not been fit to stay, Christopher would have had to replace it with one that had wider and deeper steps to comply with current Building Code of Australia standards.

Halogen downlights have been used in the kitchen area, while pendants mark the living and dining rooms – though two spotlights near the entrance will be used to highlight future artwork. George Nelson lava lamps are also a nice touch.

"I didn't have the height for pendants in the kitchen, but the other rooms have 3m-high ceilings, so that works," says Christopher.

The use of a glass panel where the shower juts out from the tucked-away laundry is meant →26





# GET THE LOOK

## JUST LIKE REAL

Oregon floorboards look fantastic but can cost thousands of dollars. If you like Christopher's floorboards but you're after a cheaper alternative, Novilon Traffic wood in Lagos 3384 is worth checking out. Priced at about \$49sq m plus installation, Novilon captures the beauty of wood and is available in 4m or 2m widths in warm cherry, beech, dark and grey wenges, reddish brown and rustic oak.

■ **More information**  
1800 22 44 71

## SPACE SAVER

The 'Opera' Basin from Paco Jaanson, \$1630, is perfect for space-conscious dimensions because it features a built-in shelf on the left or right side of the basin that provides plenty of storage. Miniature basins are another new development – small enough to fit in a tight space but roomy enough to wash your hands comfortably.

■ **More information**  
1800 006 260;  
pacojaanson.com.au

## LET'S GET LOUD

Christopher is right on the money with his orange wall – Bristol Paints' summer-colour forecast predicts yellow-hued greens and citrus shades will steal the show this season. While neutrals are still the most important colour palette in the home, it's the fresh vibrant hues of lettuce green, tangerine, and lime that will create a dramatic impact. The complete spring/summer 2006/07 colour range is available from all Bristol Decorator Centres.

■ **More information** bristol.com.au



G



H

## MORE INFORMATION

■ **Christopher Polly**  
9516 5994;  
christopherpolly.com



G Staircase leading to the upstairs study H The original balustrades were found out back and reinstalled during renovations I The old facade

to maximise light from that north-facing room into the dining and living area.

It works for Christopher, but he's not sure he'd adapt the concept into his client's homes.

"The way it kicks out like that was a real concern for me. The only way to deal with that corner was to put in a fixed glass in the shower recess," he says.

"These were the opportunities I had as an architect to test myself, that I ordinarily wouldn't do for a client. Especially if it's a family home and there are guests over, there's a voyeuristic aspect to it because you can see silhouettes behind it. The main reason for doing it was to borrow light from the bathroom, towards the living area."

Louvers have also been used in the bathroom by the toilet to maximise light, with the bottom section obscured glass.

Again, Christopher says if he had his time again he would work with another material.

"If you're having a party out here (in the courtyard) I have to put a sheet up because when it's dark out here and the light's on in there it's transparent."

## Back to front

The facade of the terrace took a historic turn in the renovation. Christopher opened up the glassed-in upper veranda, transforming it back to its former glory and removed the wood panelling. As luck would have it, Christopher unearthed the home's original cast-iron balustrades, which had been buried in the backyard. New regulations state the balustrades have to be at least 1m high, so he added a beam to the bottom and top to make it council compliant.

The courtyard was also the subject of an intense clean-up, with the outhouse the only thing that remained of the old concrete area.

"There's still a working toilet there but I use it for storage. A lot of these terraces don't have external side storage, so I have to wheel the bins through the house," he says. "A lot of the houses have their bins at the front, but I can't

stand that, so I just have to pick them up and carry them out."

Though the courtyard has a Japanese-inspired look with bamboo, a wooden bench seat and pebbles the main features, Christopher says it wasn't a conscious decision to use Japan as a point of interest, "it just worked out that way".

Christopher believes he has managed to create an overall feeling of warmth in the house, mainly because he didn't gut the whole terrace, leaving some of the original features intact. "It's not a typical overhaul where everything was replaced and the house was left with a completed sense of newness. Old bits and pieces were left here and there, and though the house is modern, it's not minimal," he says.

One major regret of Christopher's is that the house took 16 months to come together, with him working as architect and owner/builder on site while also holding down a full-time job. He estimated the job could have been completed in four months if he had a full-time foreman on site.

"I would only recommend the owner/builder path to someone if they had the time. You have to be really good at organising and managing."

He says he could have moved into his place earlier, but he wanted to cross off every chore beforehand – including painting.

After his experience, his advice to anyone going through a renovation is: "Be patient and be prepared to take a lot of knocks and bounce back. Most of all, you have to be wary of costs and time blow-outs."

Most importantly, Christopher says, from the onset, renovators have to reconcile what they have in the bank with what the house requires, and work backwards with the design from there. ■

Have you renovated a home? Tell us about it at [home@dailytelegraph.com.au](mailto:home@dailytelegraph.com.au)