

RENOVATING

The Pitfalls & Pleasures

To renovate or not to renovate? It's a decision that shouldn't be made lightly— as our writer, Jennifer, knows too well as she embarks on her own home renovation project.

WORDS: Jennifer Johnston





Before you even begin to consider entering the renovation arena, it's important to have a clear idea of what you want to achieve. Here are a few of what I suggest you consider prior to hopping on the renovation merry go round.

Do your Research

Reality renovation shows like The Block give people the impression that anyone can renovate a house. But there are many council regulations that need to be considered before commencing any renovation/demolition process. If you're contemplating a large scale house renovation, investigate what residential zoning applies. Find out what building works can be carried out in your area. Look into future zoning plans. You may not want to spend a fortune on renovating your dream home, only to find out the land next door can be developed into town houses.

Know what you want to (and can!) spend

We all start with a figure in mind but, the reality is, this usually blows out beyond budget. You need a realistic figure PRIOR to considering the project as a feasible entity. Consider obtaining an independent

quote for your renovation by engaging a quantity surveyor who will price and itemise the costs for you. This provides a realistic benchmark to use against the builder's quotes. And remember with a quote, add 10% for price rises and other unexpected costs.

Work out who you will need for your project

Selecting someone to design a renovation to your existing home, is a major decision – one that will impact your lifestyle, as well as your bank balance. If you have not renovated before, a project manager or a building consultant can provide guidance to help you save money. "Be really clear about what you want done and how," says architect Dion Seminara. "Work out what is most important to you – getting it done on time, or getting it done right, looking good at the end? Make sure you communicate this to the people you employ."

Seek quotes! If you are going to engage an architect ensure they have the same vision as you. I was upfront about my lack of knowledge in this area, and advised my architect and town planner to reduce the technical terms and give me information in words I would understand.

Find your builder

To locate a builder, try word of mouth. Reach out on Facebook. As you drive the streets around where you live, take notice of who is renovating. Keep an eye on the progress and approach the owners if they live there or speak to the tradespeople working on site. When someone suggests a builder, get your list of interview questions out. As an ex HR Manager I treated the process like a recruitment and selection job. Check their resume by looking at their past work experience – houses or decks, kitchens or bathrooms, raise or dig under. Drive past the houses they have worked on. Door knock and speak with the owners. Reference checking is important. Find out if the house owner was happy, did their builder listen to them, stick to their timelines, clean the site each day?

Create a Scrapbook

It's very important to have a general idea of how you want your space to look. Search the glossy magazines for inspiration. Scan any images you would like to consider and catalogue these into your vision. Once you start gathering pictures you will see how various design elements work together (and those that don't.) To have these on hand and categorised into rooms will help you understand your style preference. Pinterest is a useful place to gather your own style boards.

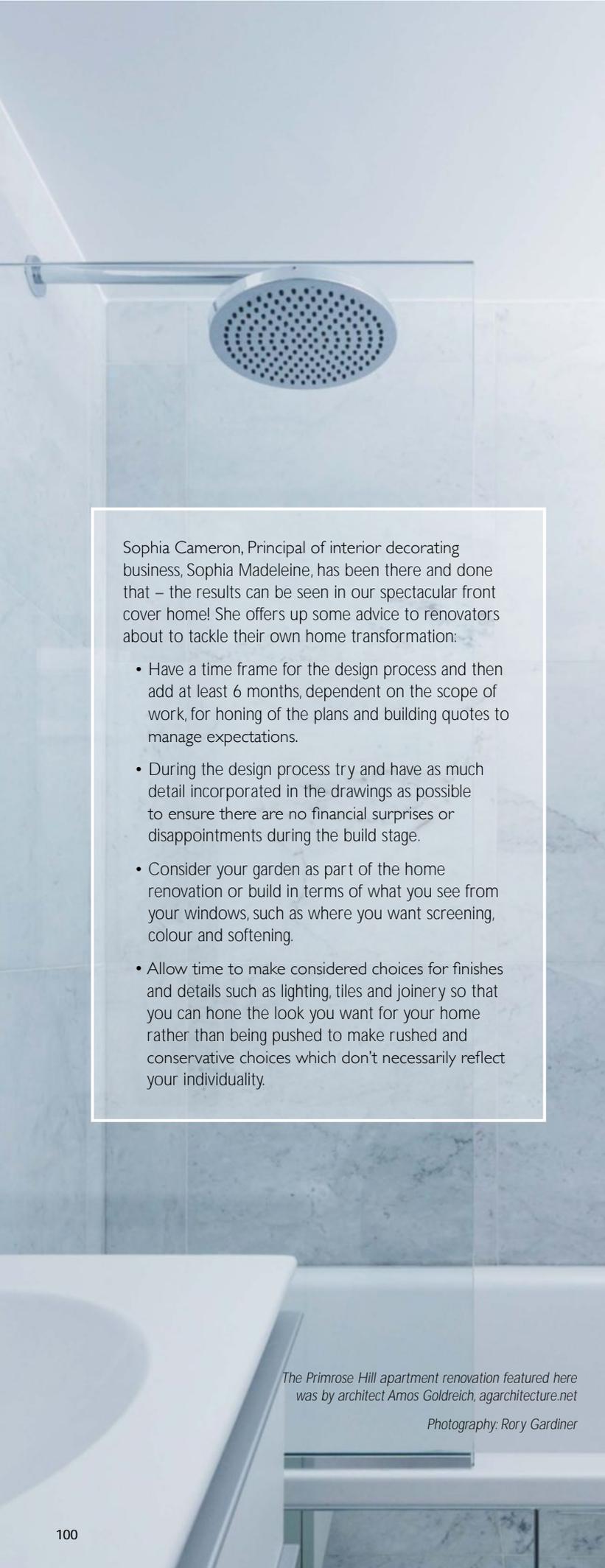
Choose your Style

Consider seeking professional design advice. Rachael Turner from Front Porch Properties, a privately-owned design and construction business in Brisbane, draws inspiration from American homes, in the style of Cape Cod, New England, Modern Farmhouses and Beach Houses. "I try to create houses that are 'timeless' and won't look dated in a few decades," she says. "Crucial to a house design project is street appeal. Things like gables with decorative gable windows, window sash bars, wide verandas with American style hand railing and timber detailing, dormer windows, are trademark features to my style."

Consider recycling or re-purposing

Before the builder destroys your existing kitchen or bathroom consider whether any of the materials can be reused, repurposed or even sold second hand. Rachael Turner enjoys recycling building materials where possible. "I know other builders may consider this a time waster, but I love the warmth and character this adds to a project," says Rachael.

There is an overwhelming amount of renovation advice available, but remember a great deal of pleasure is derived from renovating. And one learns from the process, in readiness for the next project.

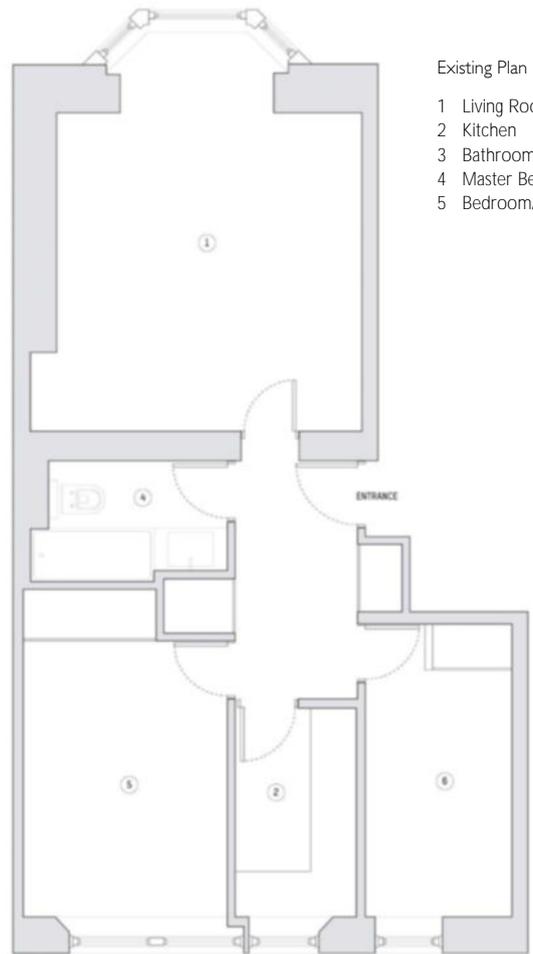


Sophia Cameron, Principal of interior decorating business, Sophia Madeleine, has been there and done that – the results can be seen in our spectacular front cover home! She offers up some advice to renovators about to tackle their own home transformation:

- Have a time frame for the design process and then add at least 6 months, dependent on the scope of work, for honing of the plans and building quotes to manage expectations.
- During the design process try and have as much detail incorporated in the drawings as possible to ensure there are no financial surprises or disappointments during the build stage.
- Consider your garden as part of the home renovation or build in terms of what you see from your windows, such as where you want screening, colour and softening.
- Allow time to make considered choices for finishes and details such as lighting, tiles and joinery so that you can hone the look you want for your home rather than being pushed to make rushed and conservative choices which don't necessarily reflect your individuality.

The Primrose Hill apartment renovation featured here was by architect Amos Goldreich, agarchitecture.net

Photography: Rory Gardiner



- Existing Plan
- 1 Living Room
 - 2 Kitchen
 - 3 Bathroom
 - 4 Master Bedroom
 - 5 Bedroom/Study



- Complete Plan
- 1 Living Room
 - 2 Kitchen
 - 3 Bathroom
 - 4 Master Bedroom
 - 5 Bedroom/Study