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Just a few decorating rules are followed in the inner-west home of Kelly Doust (below right) – she likes to display beautiful things (left) and to hide practical items in cupboards. Colour-coding books, as Doust has done in the living room (right) and bedroom (bottom), makes for a striking effect and “it means you can fill up your home with tonnes of books and still have it look neat”.



Opposite page
In the kitchen – where the family spends most of their time – the retro dining table and chairs bought from the previous owners set off the gelato-inspired colour scheme.

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Photography **Prue Ruscoe**

pastelpalace

Vintage meets modern in a Victorian cottage that reflects the imagination of its creative and crafty owner.

“It’s a very modern thing to want to put everything away in cupboards but I prefer to put things on display,” says Kelly Doust, whose home brims with eye-catching collections in defiance of the contemporary convention of “minimalist” living. At every turn, precious floor space in her Victorian cottage is taken up with vintage pieces, while books, favourite objects and DIY artworks crowd walls and surfaces to charming effect.

An avid vintage shopper accustomed to scouring markets and second-hand stores for clothes, Doust turned her attention to homewares two years ago, when she and her husband, James, bought their freestanding three-bedroom cottage in the inner west.

After having lived in much smaller homes in London, Doust suddenly had room to spare and decided to fill her house with vintage furniture that she could alter to fit the space.

Her finds include a 1930s club sofa, which she bought at Mitchell Road Auction Centre for \$100 and re-covered, and an old timber cupboard that she repainted white. Doust, 33, a former book publicist, taught herself to use a sewing machine and turned vintage jumpers into throws and cushions, and a damask tablecloth and a mix of other fabrics into a patchwork quilt cover.

Along the way, Doust discovered she had a knack for modern craft. Her home, now overflowing with DIY projects, was the inspiration behind her first book, *The Crafty Minx*, on easy and affordable craft.

The house itself – which has many original features such as fireplaces and ornate ceilings – is the perfect backdrop for Doust’s handmade works and “modern vintage” furniture. “We love a mix of old and new,” she says. “I love old and James loves new so our look is always going to be a blend of the two.” In the bedroom, for example, a contemporary bed is softened by the DIY patchwork quilt cover, an old timber armoire and vintage paraphernalia, including retro telephones and costume jewellery.

The bedroom of their one-year-old daughter, Olive, is a strictly girly affair, with a white cot and pint-sized white-painted chair among dainty dresses hanging from picture rails. Other clever ideas for clothes storage include second-hand suitcases piled up and holding off-season clothes, and a century-old costume theatre rail on which hangs Doust’s beautiful colour-coded collection of dresses.

An original 1950s kitchen, complete with black-and-white chequerboard lino flooring, was one of the attractions for the couple. Doust took her cues for the gelato colour scheme from pictures of ‘50s kitchens. “Of course, back then they only used one colour but I thought I’d mix it up!”

Despite the age of the house, Doust says they have had to do very little to it. “The previous owners had it in pretty good shape. I’ve just painted kitchen cupboards in pink, blue and yellow.”

Doust regularly entertains friends in this space, serving tea in cups found in flea markets. “I’ve made an entire tea service out of it. The key is to only buy a particular look – pieces with a gilt rim or blue florals, for instance. Then they look like they match.”

Doust would like to renovate the cottage at some stage because “it’s time for new appliances in the kitchen”. Not surprisingly, when they do update, they will use reclaimed materials, as well as new ones, in the spirit of matching new with old.



Rozelle Markets
Darling Street,
Rozelle.
Phone: 9818 5373.
Every weekend, Doust shops here for dresses and furniture, such as a chair in Olive’s room.

Lawsons Auction House
1a The Crescent,
Annandale.
Phone: 9566 2377.
Doust loves auction houses and scours this inner-west one for affordable art.

ICI Et La
7 Nickson Street,
Surry Hills.
Phone: 8399 1173.
Deck chairs and French outdoor accessories from this store add rustic charm to the cottage garden.

Dinosaur Designs
339 Oxford Street,
Paddington.
Phone: 9361 3776.
Doust counts platters and vases from Dinosaur Designs among the beautiful things you should put on display.