



call to dangar

Acting on impulse can often be followed by a wave of regret. But not when it

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came to spontaneously buying on a Hawkesbury River island just outside Sydney



For most of us, a spur-of-the-moment buy might be a pair of extravagant shoes or a new television. For interior designer Greg Mellor and his graphic-designer partner, Nick Krull, it was a 1927 beach cottage on Dangar Island, on New South Wales' Hawkesbury River. "We were ready to leave our terrace and Sydney," recalls Greg, "and started looking around the Hunter Valley and beyond. We'd been out one day, looking at some land further up the coast and on the way back, I said to our agent, 'What about Dangar Island?'"

"'Oh, no,' she said, 'You'll find it far too suburban', but she took us to see this house. I was looking for a project, and there was just something about the property, and the island, that we both really liked. We decided to go for it then and there – we had a really quick look round and decided to buy it. When we came out, neither of us was sure if there was even a bathroom!"

Both of them thought that, with a lick of paint, the house would be the ideal weekend retreat – after all, the island can only be reached by boat and is car-free. Of course, once they got down to work, they realised it was a far bigger renovation than they'd anticipated.

"There was a gargantuan bougainvillea out front that blocked out most of the light, and asbestos outbuildings, which had to go. And the space was quite badly laid out," says Greg. "We basically reconfigured the property completely. The living room used to be two rooms, so we knocked those through and added a back verandah, along with an extra guest bedroom and bathroom."

Greg and Nick, who are originally from South Africa, wanted to create a getaway that was bright and breezy in summer but warm and welcoming in winter. "Back in Cape Town, we lived in a very minimalist house, which looked great but was a nightmare to live in," remembers Greg. "With this property, we wanted to make a comfortable, laidback home, where we used every room and where friends would love to come and hang out." →

(Opposite page, right) Nick Krull (left) and Greg Mellor, walking their collies, Lisa and Luke, around Dangar Island, on the Hawkesbury River, outside Sydney. **(Opposite page, top left)** The Shaker-style kitchen was repainted a darker shade of green, as the first attempt was "too girly"; it is now more "schooly, or army-like", according to Greg. The vintage pendant light is from Sydney dealer Howell & Howell. Greg brought the antique taps on the double butler sink **(this page)** over from South Africa in his hand luggage. **(Opposite page, bottom left)** On display is a collection of kikoyis – traditional Kenyan clothing – which Greg and Nick and their many visitors use as beach towels.





(Above right) The artwork in the living room is actually an old school poster printed on linen – restored by art dealer Charles Hewitt. It illustrates the biology of the mussel. **(Right)** Greg has always liked stable doors as a design feature. “If you live with animals, they’re great for controlling their movements. And they’re good for ventilation, too.” This entrance leads through to the guest annex that the owners have added to their home. **(Opposite page)** The living area, which used to be two individual rooms, is where they spend most of their time in the winter months. Greg had the sofas custom-made, and he found the tortoise shell at auction. The floorboards are sanded cypress pine. **(Above left)** The only access to Dangar Island is by boat, across gloriously scenic Hawkesbury waters. **(Below)** Collies Lisa and Luke are part of a menagerie, which includes cats Yazoo, Binx and Phoebe. →





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Greg knew in an instant that he wanted the house – which soon became the couple's only residence – to be white. He also added tongue-and-groove walls to give the construction a sense of nostalgia and echo the weatherboard exterior cladding.

Inside, there are interesting objects everywhere you look: a collection of white jugs here, antique globes or junk-shop-find portraits there. All have been sourced by Greg, who clearly has the eye of his trade. Mix-and-match antique and custom-made furniture round out the personal feel.

Cross-ventilation keeps the home breezy in summer, and the fireplace ensures the residence is toasty in winter – so it's little wonder that the couple is inundated with visitors all year round. A stables-like outbuilding (which the couple constructed, complete with stable doors – one of Greg's favourite design touches) contains a comfy bedroom and bathroom that echo the cool, white aesthetic of the main house. "The great thing about having guests here is that you get quality time with them. Because we're on an island, people get to stay over. It's not just a rushed supper and then off home."

Outside, the picture-perfect scene continues, with Greg and Nick creating a playground for their pets – collies Lisa and Luke and cats Yazoo, Binx and Phoebe. "Lots of gardens here are on slopes," says Greg. "The fact that this was on the flat was really appealing." Nick has done most of the planting, which includes plenty of hydrangeas and agapanthus. There are even visits from "parrots, parakeets and kookaburras and the odd pelican," says Greg.

With a continual itch to be creative, the couple is planning a move – although Greg, who has just started his own interior-design company, says neither he nor Nick are sure where they fancy living next. Perhaps, though, it won't be very far. "There is a great little property on the east side of the island," notes Greg. ✦

For details on Greg's interior-design business, visit www.gregorymellor.com.

(Opposite page, top) On the bedroom's right is a piece by South African artist Zander Blom. On the left is Greg's woodcut depiction of his mother as an angel below a junk-shop find. The mirror came from *Imagine This*, in Sydney's Woollahra. **(Opposite page, bottom left)** The taps in the main bathroom were lugged over from South Africa, while the portraits were "scavenged" by Greg from various junk shops. **(This page)** "I love collections of things," says Greg of the trophies in the bathroom. "This one started with a cup my great-grandmother won in a gardening competition and another that my father got for swimming - we used to use it as a sugar bowl." The portrait behind is from eBay. Although the subject is unknown, Greg says, "He does vaguely resemble my late grandfather as a young man".

