

Property



Good riddance: Suzanne Spinner used white gloss to cover tiles with a palm tree motif. Picture: PENNY STEPHENS

How to transform a kitchen with imagination and \$200

IT'S popular to buy a rundown house and do it up but it can be demoralising living in it until the building project begins.

St Kilda playwright Suzanne Spinner swore she wouldn't renovate another house when she, her husband, Ian, and their children, Lawrence, 14, and Stella, 11, moved back to Melbourne from Darwin recently.

"It was a fairly frustrating exercise. We had sworn not to renovate after having done so twice before in Melbourne, once in Darwin and also a holiday house in Blairgowrie. But, in the end, we decided the only way that we would get what we wanted was to do it ourselves."

The home they bought needed a complete overhaul but had all the right ingredients — large rooms, was north-facing and in the location they sought.

The hard part was living with the decor — the kitchen had

1960s orange, flowery wallpaper with matching curtains on one wall. This was teamed with a lurid pink and pale blue color scheme. The tiles were also in pink and blue with palm tree motifs.

Ms Spinner decided the tiles had to go and painted over them in white gloss. A quick paint job also put paid to the wallpaper and the pastel color scheme.

"The kids were so appalled by the floor tiles that they pulled them off in a frenzy. I had heard about this place in Richmond that had cheap vinyl offcuts. I got three lots for \$200 and cut it up and laid it loosely on the floor. It fit together like a jigsaw.

"The upper cupboard doors were lethal. My son said, 'this is ridiculous' and ripped them off with a screwdriver. I then painted the edge of the cupboards black using theatre scene paint."

Her eclectic collection of 1950s china on display in the open cup-

boards has enlivened the room, as do the Aboriginal artworks collected during the family's travels.

"I like to get it all done fairly quickly, the awful light fittings have gone, every electric point had to be changed, the meter was moved, we put in ducted heating and polished the floorboards."

The house had been in the same family since 1963 and had been "modernised". "They had ripped out the Victorian/Edwardian features so we put the picture rails back in," she says.

Ms Spinner loves to fossick and found the deco-style deep bath and matching basin and light fittings through 'The Trading Post' or opportunity shops.

Major renovations at the rear, including a light-filled family room, are planned but on a budget. "I would rather spend money on art or something more interesting than floor tiles," she says.

— Denise Ryan