

HOME

STYLE

This Atticus & Milo-designed interior in suburban Melbourne is a triumph of homely comfort and successfully executed residential decoration.

design Atticus & Milo

text Leanne Amodeo

photography Derek Swalwell









_____ From the street Huntingtower is an imposingly magnificent two-storey building, complete with central tower, gable and return verandah. Built in 1890, and said to be designed by the Victorian-era architect John Beswick (though without definitive proof as Beswick's son destroyed a lot of his papers), its architecture is an interpretation of the French Second Empire style. With likenesses of Diana, goddess of the hunt, in original cast iron panels and mouldings on the facade, Huntingtower is, nonetheless, impressive in both stature and heritage.

What truly surprises upon entering the house is the relatively intimate scale of the interior. The entry is short, with a mahogany-coloured staircase a few steps away; the dining room is to the left and the sitting room to the right. All around is the most wonderfully eclectic, tastefully arranged and beautifully styled collection of artwork, furniture, soft furnishings and personal effects, that have quite possibly ever graced the space. It is the home of Caecilia Potter, design director of Melbourne-based interior design practice Atticus & Milo.

One may have expected to step into a formal grand ballroom, complete with huge crystal chandelier, but this is even better – a well-designed interior that is truly a home. It is a rare treat and a pleasure to behold. The deliberate informality is very elegant, the styling never contrived and the dialogue between design and decoration both balanced and relaxed. “Homes that have a story always touch you, because everything in them has special meaning,” Potter says. Perhaps this is the key to Huntingtower's design success.

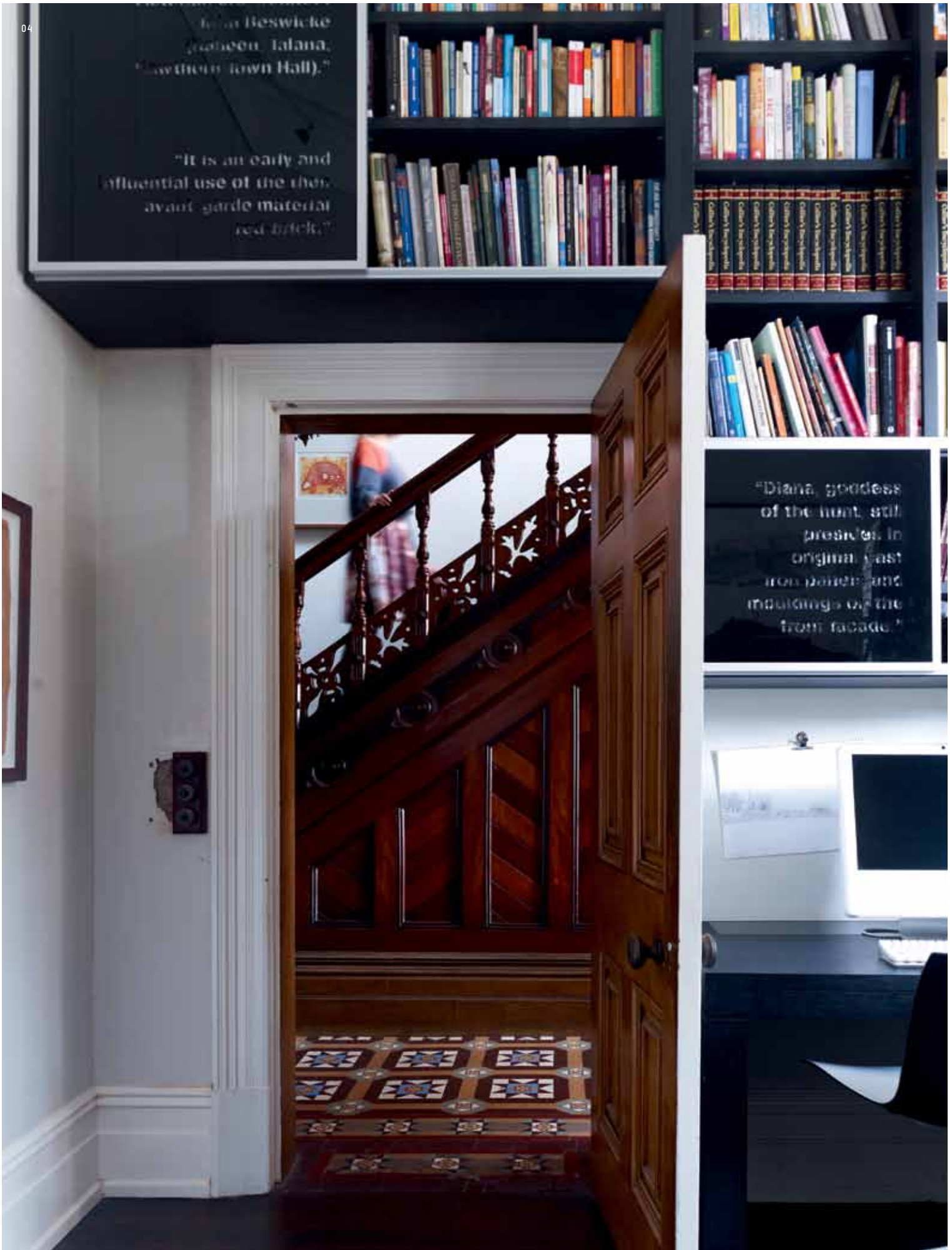
Walking through the dining room and into the billiard room it's the 1950s Swedish rose-wood cabinet that stands out. This beauty has been customised by Potter via the addition of coloured paper on its front. The multi-coloured diamond pattern is nothing short of stunning, and Potter held off having this room photographed until she'd found the exact right paper for the job. This paper came from London-based wallpaper specialist Cole&Son and of all the furniture in the house it is, quite frankly, the most memorable. |...



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03





In 1811, the first Beswick (between Talana, Sawthern Town Hall).
It is an early and influential use of the then avant-garde material red brick.

Diana, goddess of the hunt, still presides in original cast iron panels and moldings of the front facade.

...| Back in the dining room, and it's the multi-faced mirror above the fireplace, along with artwork that sings. Jan Senbergs' beautifully muted *Otway and Old World Memories* is broken up within its reflection in the mirror opposite, and one of a collection of small-scale Guan Wei sculptures, which are scattered throughout various rooms, sits on the mantelpiece. These whimsical white figures recline languidly and their cloud-like bodies put a smile on the face. There is also, not disappointingly, a chandelier in this room – a very elegant rose-coloured one.

Across the entry and into the sitting room a much-loved peppermint green sofa is complemented by a zebra-skin rug. This room has a calming effect, quite possibly due to its colour palette of pastels and creamy whites. It leads into the light-drenched conservatory, which was added in 1892 by a new owner, and which is now used as an art studio by Potter's eldest son. The kitchen is to the rear of the ground floor, but the real delight is upstairs in the powder room and tower, both a stark contrast colour-wise to the downstairs rooms.

It is also on the first floor level that Potter and her husband's love for travel becomes apparent. The artwork above the bed in the master bedroom is of Venice, the books in the den on various international destinations and the pink and orange colour scheme in the powder room and in the tower's wallpaper is a nod to the South African tradition of 'sundowners' in Capetown. For Potter and her husband, what fills their home are multiple references to journeys past, as well as a large collection of personal effects collected from their many travels. "I like to collect things in our travels that you wouldn't see here, and so bringing them home helps to cement new memories of a good trip," Potter says. "And everything tells a story."

Back to the powder room the collection of mounted ceramic wildlife heads is a nod to Potter's beloved brother-in-law, who lives in Capetown and is heavily involved in wildlife conservation. For all his good work, he had a rhino named after him. And so, in Potter's powder room, if you look carefully at the animals on the wall the rhino that stands out because of its size is the smallest one – 'Dave'.

The tower to the rooftop is narrow and winding and its windows, when opened in the summer, cool the whole house, eradicating the need for air conditioning. The view from the rooftop is breathtaking, and a rather fitting 'end' to a walk through a home that is both emotive and 'human', an engaging thread left by the interior designer's approach. Surveying the skyline, you can't help but feel that this house, with all its inviting charm and outstanding design attributes, is something special.

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OPENING SPREAD

Huntingtower's billiard room features a striking 1950s Swedish rosewood cabinet customised with multi-coloured wallpaper on the front

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The ground floor sitting room is drenched in natural light, which plays off the softly-coloured furniture

- 01** Ingo Maurer's Bang Boom Zettel's light has pride of place in the first floor den
- 02** In the master bedroom the print above the bed is of a Venice canal-scene
- 03** The dining room's symmetry provides the perfect setting for a collection of artwork that includes Guan Wei and Jan Sebergs
- 04** The ground floor study sits to the rear of the sitting room. Light boxes feature text referring to the history of Huntingtower
- 05** In the first floor powder room, the pink and orange colour scheme refers to the Capetown tradition of 'sundowners': watching the sun go down on the plains