

DESIGN BRIEF

Words by ELIZABETH CLARKE | Photos by SHARYN CAIRNS

The Inner-city home has an ambient, other-worldly quality and a feminist history.



Behind an old shop window, a romantic Fitzroy home began its life as a 19th-century store and, in the 1970s, was Melbourne's first feminist bookshop, The Shrew Women's Bookshop.

"I fell in love immediately with its strong, powerful history," its owner, designer Kate Challis says. "My husband and I bought it over 15 years ago when the street had a rough reputation and not a barista in sight, but we loved it."

Only four metres wide and without a hallway, with access to each room only possible by entering through another, the home's original layout proved impractical for contemporary family life.

Challis lived in the unrenovated building for some time, completing a rigorous process of detailed observation and planning for her home.

Working alongside Ridolfi Architecture to retain as much of the building's charm and character as possible, the ground floor was thoughtfully reformed.

A corridor was created down its centre and lined with timber doors that conceal a series of utility rooms, including a laundry, powder room and storage space. A kitchen and dining room were relocated near the entry, a formal lounge added to the rear, and an extra bedroom and roof garden installed above the garage.

The former shop window was blanketed with double-glazed frosted glass, providing the family with privacy from the street.

Inspired by Challis's love of art and history, in particular pre-eminent Australian artists Margaret Preston and Valerie Sparks, the home's interior is delightfully magical.

STYLE NOTES



Elegant and timeless, Ross Gardam's aluminium Ora lamp has an adjustable shade that orbits through 360 degrees and tilt-adjusts. rossgardam.com.au



Ochre's clever Eternal Dream modular sofa is upholstered in bespoke linen and braid, making it chic and comfortable. ochre.net



Cole & Son's Nuvole al Tramonto wallpaper is created from one of Italian designer Fornasetti's most iconic artworks. cole-and-son.com/en



Moving through it is akin to sweeping through a rich, transitioning landscape of colours and tones, both subtle and vibrant, that gives each room its unique character and ambience.

Opulent colours and elaborate wall papers feature throughout the spaces, including an immersive, mystical art installation by Sparks that envelops the walls of the kitchen and dining areas.

The living room draws inspiration from Margaret Preston's artwork *Western Australian Gum Blossom*, with its palette of deep sea-green, dusty pink and vibrant yellow brightening the home's dark parquetry floorboards.

A shock of luminescent jungle green wraps around the walls of her son's room, and a soft grey dominates the main bedroom, complementing a striking work by Australian photographer Petrina Hicks.

"It occurred to me later that my art

selection was an unconscious reference to Melbourne's early feminism and my home's history," Challis says.

She also finds inspiration in her travels, evident through an eclectic textural palette of velvet, stone, timber and ceramics, as well as Moroccan tadelakt, a mix of lime plaster and black soap derived from olives.

"Its undulating, chalky appearance makes it feel and look like velvet," she says. "We used it in our en suite as a backdrop for layering other materials, including a ceramic feather tile pattern that covers only part of the wall."

Challis says her home's beautifully layered spaces and history ensure a "sense of serenity and comfort" for the family. "I knew one day I wanted to design a home that would feel other-worldly and completely unexpected," she says. "This home became exactly that." 🏡



TWO OF A KIND

For young couples

By JACQUI HAMMERTON



TOORAK
2/6A Ruabon Road
\$1.45 million-\$1.55 million

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Young professional couples will like this 2017-built townhouse in an urbane environment, tucked off a one-way street within the triangle of Toorak village, Hawksburn village and boutique Beatty Avenue. "It's a very groovy part of the world,"

says the agent, who chooses to live here. "The home is for busy people as it's low-maintenance, lock-up-and-leave so you can head off for the weekend," he says. The property features timber floors, open-tread stairs and a north-facing deck.

Contact agent
Agent: Marshall White, Fraser Cahill 0400 592 572



COLLINGWOOD
102c/2 Brewery Lane
\$1.195 million

🏠 2 \ 🛏️ 2 \ 🚗 2

This contemporary townhouse is hipster on the outside, being immersed in the buzzing inner-city, yet chic within, designed for entertaining on the terrace and working from home. One of six in the character-filled Yorkshire Brewery's heritage

Stables section, it is supplemented by access to the residents'-use rooftop barbecue, business centre, library and gym. "It's brilliant for young professional couples, having two levels, good space and lots of character, yet nice and bright inside," the agent says.

Private sale
Agent: Nelson Alexander, Charlie Barham 0400 507 688