

worth the wait

Patience proves to be a virtue for an owner who saw this Blue Mountains cabin 10 years ago and cherishes it still

WORDS CERI DAVID

STYLING LARA HUTTON PHOTOGRAPHY HAROLD DAVID



ARTWORK: BEN BARRETT

ENTRY (this page) One of the first things owner Harold David tackled on buying this house was the palette – painting the walls a dramatic blue and the floors white. Combined with the warm tones of the existing timber features, Harold’s modernist furniture collection – including the ‘Grasshopper’ chair by Eero Saarinen – is able to shine. **DISPLAY (opposite)** Earthenware pieces bring texture to the painted wall above the old wood-burning stove – it comes in handy when the mountain air turns chilly.



cheat sheet

Who lives here: Photographer Harold David (right) and his partner Andy Medina, a musician; Harold's twin sons Henry (left) and Franklin, 3; their nanny, Amanda; groodle Edie and cat Fifi "though the boys can't pronounce that, so they call her Mimi".

Style of house: Part mid-century bunker, part cabin in the woods, nestled in NSW's Blue Mountains.

Whatever your stance on such things, most of us have heard of the Ten Commandments. Along with helpfully advising against the likes of murder and adultery, there's one that suggests "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house". So, in reality Harold David would have been considered one big sinner by Old Testament standards. The fashion photographer began lusting after this place in 2005, after coming across it near his own holiday property in Blackheath, NSW. "In the summer it's almost completely hidden by trees," he says. "No-one ever seemed to be there, and I would literally sneak up, look in the windows and say to myself, 'I want this house.'" Time passed and Harold sold his weekender, forgetting about the house in the woods. Then, one day in 2013 while surfing online property sites, he spotted it for sale, though he had no plans to move at that time. Just two years before he'd bought a 1950s bungalow in the Sydney suburb of Earlwood, and renovated extensively. "It was beautiful," he says. "No other house could have taken me away from that."

But he couldn't resist. And so, with his partner, Andy, twin boys Henry and Franklin, and their nanny Amanda, Harold upped sticks for the mountains.

Firstly, why were you looking at houses online if you weren't looking to move? I just love property porn! I bawl my eyes out when I watch *Grand Designs*.

And what was it that appealed about this place? I'd always loved it. It's like a white monolithic block that looks totally mid-century.

What condition was it in when you bought it? I could have left it exactly the way it was, because it was designed to be timeless, but that version of 'timeless' wasn't my taste. There was a lot of wood – it looked like a sauna. It was built in 1984 and was obviously inspired by the Finnish architect Alvar Aalto; if you Google his residential work, it looks just like this – panelled timber ceilings and odd-shaped, heavy timber windows.

So, how much work did you end up doing? There was about a three-month period where we still had the old place, so I'd go up by myself and do things. I painted the walls a blue-black and the

ARTWORK: (OPPOSITE, LEFT) DOCTOR COOPER (BIRDS) YOSI MESSIAH, (ABOVE WOOD-BURNING STOVE) JULIE PATERSON



OPEN-PLAN LIVING Timber panelling and striking '60s accessories combine with tactile brick, leather and animal hides in this space. Harold found the 'Wishbone' chairs at a second-hand shop. They sit around the blonde dining table that acts as a tonal middle ground between the chestnut ceiling and white floors. The inviting sofa was bought at auction and primes the area for relaxation.



bright idea

Drawing inspiration from the architecture of Alvar Aalto, the timber panels add to the modernist feel.

“We’re in a little nook. You hear birds all the time, and possums running across the roof. It’s very wild and private”

MISSION I CUSHIONS (LEFT CORNER AND RIGHT CORNER), SPENCE & LYDA, SPENCEANDLYDA.COM.AU

🕒 timeline

2005	2013	2014
The property first catches Harold's attention on weekends away at his own property in the Blue Mountains of NSW.	December The house comes up for sale, and purchase goes ahead.	January to March Harold paints the floorboards a crisp white and the interior walls deep blue. He also converts an extra building that is the current laundry into a bedroom for his live-in nanny Amanda. April The whole family moves into their new home. He creates a new laundry out of extra storage space under the house.

LIVING AREA Huge timber-framed windows let light into this stunning open-plan space. An original Herman Miller 'Eames' lounge chair takes the top spot next to the wood-burning stove and a huge hide on the floor also helps to combat cold winter nights.



floorboards white, and that really lifted it. We have a nanny who lives with us – I love her, she’s family now. There’s an extra building that was the laundry so I turned that into a bedroom for her, and converted some storage space under the house into the new laundry.

How has that impacted the storage situation? There’s still room down there. There are built-in wardrobes, and there’s shelving in the lounge. The kids have a toy cupboard that I throw everything in every night, and sweep. I need some sense of order. But while they’re awake, I let them do their thing – I let them be kids.

Do you worry about mess? It’s a tricky house in that respect. Being a photographer, I’m a tiny bit OCD. I see everything in terms of shapes and lines, and I divide things up in my eye. Now I have kids, I’ve had to learn to let it go a little bit or I’ll drive myself mad. Also, I really hate when architecture takes over comfort – being comfortable is important to me.

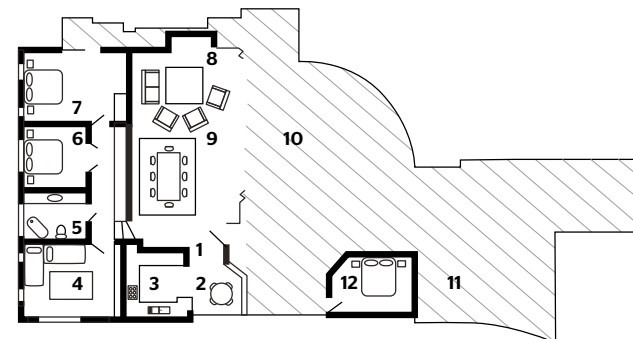
Your furniture and art are a lovely fit with the house. Was it bought specially? No, I’d say we had 90 per cent of this. It’s just my style.

And where do you spend most of your time when you’re at home? We’re always at the dining table. We eat there, the kids will paint and play. I’ll bring my computer and work. I shoot two or three days in Sydney, but all the editing and retouching is done at home.

It sounds perfect. Is it? Actually, it’s proving to be a little too small. Once the kids get bigger, we’ll need more room. Plus, people come to visit all the time – I act like everything’s fine, and it is, until about the third day when I’m like, “Aaaargh, there’s not enough space!”. We had weekend visitors for two months solid when we first moved in and they all had kids – I was just going stir crazy.

Any ideas on how you might upsize? The tricky thing is that it’s architecturally designed, so I need someone clever to do an addition – whether that connects physically to the house or not. I’ve got an idea of adding a big rustic metal cube to contrast with the building. A few months ago I considered selling, because of the size, but I’m so glad I came to my senses. What was I thinking? I love it here. **10**

To view Harold’s portfolio, visit networkagency.com.au.



- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Entry | 7. Master bedroom |
| 2. Breakfast area | 8. Living area |
| 3. Kitchen | 9. Dining area |
| 4. Franklin and Henry’s bedroom | 10. Courtyard |
| 5. Bathroom | 11. Car spot |
| 6. Guest bedroom | 12. Nanny’s quarters |

ARTWORK: (TOP) JENNY KEE, (OPPOSITE) DOCTOR COOPER, (BOTTOM) ANDREW POMMIER, VINTAGE SAW AND SQUIRREL UNDER DOME (BOTTOM), CABIN & CO, (02) 4787 7110



great value

‘PS 2012’ black chairs sit nicely with the more high-end pieces. They’re only \$69 each from Ikea.

KITCHEN (opposite, top) “It’s not huge, but it’s incredibly comfortable. Three of us can work in here at the same time,” says Harold of the kitchen that he didn’t change. **LIVING AREA (opposite, bottom)** Here, son Henry sits among pieces in a variety of styles. “I’m not a mid-century purist,” says Harold. “I like mixing it up.” **DINING NOOK** The space where the family enjoys their breakfast reflects Harold’s talent for mixing eras, with the tall chair by Kartell, the black pair from Ikea and a Philippe Starck stool.



HENRY AND FRANKLIN'S BEDROOM A softer colour scheme gives the boys' room a tranquil yet happy feel. The homemade pallet beds bring an industrial vibe to the space, while a knitted cushion and throws from Aura By Tracie Ellis up the warmth factor. **MASTER BEDROOM (opposite, left)** This moody room gets a bright lift from the Vladimir Tretchikoff artwork. **BATHROOM (opposite, right)** Stacked timber boxes and glass vessels toe the line between functional storage and decorative display.



lessons learnt

“I don't know if I'd do the floors white again. They always look so dirty”

HAROLD DAVID, HOMEOWNER

Greatest cost: “We didn't have to spend much. The most was putting in the plumbing for the new laundry under the house, at \$8000, and that was well worth it.”

Biggest mistake: “I don't know if I'd do white floors again. They always look so dirty. I could change my perception of what a white floor needs to be and think of it as characterful.”

Best surprise: “I feel more comfortable with myself since moving. I'm less self-conscious.”

What I'd change: “We definitely need more space. I'd like to add a playroom and one or two more bedrooms.”



THE
MAGIC
3

1

Oiled V-joint hardwood lining board **timber cladding** in Spotted Gum, \$85/sqm, Boral Timber, boral.com.au.

2

American oak timber **flooring** in Limed Finish, \$132/sqm, Porter's Paints, porterspains.com.

3

Carl Hansen & Son 'CH24 Wishbone' **chair**, \$1316, Cult, cultdesign.com.au.

paint palette

When Harold first bought this house, there was a lot of timber. To soften the overall look, he decided to paint the walls dark blue and the floors were given the white treatment. The tones add a dynamic touch to the home, and work well with the natural colour of the timber to create a cosy and inviting feel.

'Interior Expressions' low sheen acrylic **paints** in (clockwise from top) Boulder Grey, Moon White and Intrigue, \$38.95/1L, Haymes Paint, 1800 033 431.

THE MAGIC 3 AND PAINT PALETTE PRODUCT SOURCING: JOSEPH GARDNER. PAINT COLOUR MAY VARY ON APPLICATION



Scandinavian reindeer **skin**, \$595, Great Dane, greatdanefurniture.com.

“Using textural elements – such as hides and rugs – is an easy way to soften the harder edge of modern spaces”

JOSEPH GARDNER, MARKET EDITOR