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Victoria Hynes takes a peek inside this 1970s-inspired home in Hawthorn, where a retro approach to design is matched by an art collection with a story to tell.

PHOTOGRAPHY DEREK SWALWELL



A work by Sally Ross makes a striking statement in the dining room.



OPPOSITE PAGE
A work by owner
Kim Rees' mother
Lavina Rees
marries perfectly
with the textured
wall covering in
the bedroom.

THIS PAGE
Mustard and black
finishings pair
with the exposed
brick floor in the
kitchen for some
serious retro
style.

BELOW
Cloud No2, a
bronze sculpture
with white paint
finish by Guan Wei
sits pretty on the
ebony shelving.



According to interior designer **Caecilia Potter**, the 1970s was far from a beige decade. After all, this was the era of Marimekko and other Scandinavian designers – interiors filled with vibrant blocks of colour, bold lines and monochromatic patterns. She remarks that this decade “opened with black and white TV then exploded into full colour”. This was the inspiration behind her recent design project, a 1973 concrete block work home by architect **Gordon Cope-Williams**, inspired by **Frank Lloyd Wright**’s pared down Usonian designs. The couple that own the Hawthorn house, medicos **Kim Rees** and **Chris Plummer**, share the home with their three young daughters. They were looking for a renovation that was a warm and visually engaging restoration of the swinging 1970s era. According to Potter, the owners’ brief was for “a flexible, robust, sustainable and playful environment for family living”. In order to revive the 1970s aesthetic, Potter preserved as much of the original materials as possible, such as the old brick floor, cedar wall and ceiling lining. The designer, a founding director of the Melbourne design firm Atticus & Milo, specialises in creating layered, eclectic spaces that reflect and enhance the individual tastes of their owners. Potter is an avid collector of contemporary art and also believes in the importance of art within the a refurbishment. She states unequivocally: “A home without art is no home at all!” Potter always takes inspiration from a client’s existing art collection or assists with art referrals and advice. In this case, she says, “we took design inspiration from their collection and helped with finding new locations for different pieces, such as **Sally Ross**’ *The Path* in the dining room. We also loved how *The Aviator*, by Kim’s mother **Lavina Rees**, worked so beautifully in the bedroom, a marriage made in heaven!” She also placed **Murray Hilton**’s exuberant photograph *New Dunes* portraying





LEFT
A timber feature wall makes for an eclectic, layered space.

BELOW
Bold graphics are added to the sleeping area via patterned tiling in the bathroom.

three young brothers leaping off sand dunes, in the family room above **Antonio Citterio's** dramatic yak-upholstered J.J armchairs, creating an energetic yet inviting space.

Rees and Plummer are also enthusiastic art collectors and were very conscious about the placement of their collection within the redesign of the home. Rees comments that: "The only piece of art bought new was *The Path* by **Sally Ross** in the dining room. It wasn't bought for the renovation specifically, but I was on an art walk run by [boutique art tour company] Art Atlas and this painting was propped up on a side table at Murray White Room and it sucked me in!" She continues: "My favourite piece is *Aviator Girl*. It had been sitting in a stack of paintings in my mum's old studio area for ages and every time I visited I'd say 'remember, that's mine' and after 2 years I just took it and had it framed. She's perfect in our bedroom. *The Dunes* is a piece I saw in an article about the photographer in a magazine – I ended up stalking Murray online and he sold it to me ... This is my husband's favourite piece – he loves the joyful exuberance and the fact it was taken on the Queensland coast near where we grew up."

Potter is passionate about the new look of the home: "I love the sense of light, space and fun! There is joy in its boldness of pattern and colour, which inspires an emotional response from the client and visitors."

So does the designer offer any final advice for art enthusiasts in their placement of art within the home? "We recommend installing art tracks so that it is easy to move pieces around. Look for the themes that link pieces, such as colour, style, school or origin, subject matter, form and so on when grouping pieces. Be adventurous; don't take the most obvious option. And if you like to add to your collection, change it around as you acquire new pieces to get a completely fresh look. You will be surprised how energising it is and how you see old pieces in a new light." ●

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"A home without art is no home at all!"

Caecilia Potter

