

PERIOD PIECE

WITH ITS GRAND VICTORIAN FAÇADE AND INTERIOR LITTERED WITH PERSONAL MEMENTOS, HUNTINGTOWER IS MORE THAN JUST ONE FAMILY'S HOME; IT'S THEIR HISTORY, **WRITES ANNA HOUSTON.**



For Caecilia Potter, director of Melbourne based design firm Atticus & Milo, story is everything. Who we are and how we came to be: these are the swirling, enigmatic puzzles that lend people and their living spaces depth and meaning. When it came to designing interiors for the inner Melbourne, heritage-listed Huntingtower, Potter's brief was disarmingly simple: she was the client, the occupants her clan, and the two-storey canvas wonderfully blank.

Devotion to the ancient art of storytelling was foremost in Atticus & Milo's rethink of this gabled, grand old dame of a dwelling, but faded holiday snaps and dog-eared photo albums are nowhere to be found. Rather, the Potter family history is a living, breathing picture book writ large across the walls of their home, visceral and immediate, imbued with a rough and tumble fondness. Their travels and passions, loves and losses are delicately and inventively wrapped up in an exquisitely crafted family portrait that is revealed, almost periodically, in each furnishing, artwork, fabric and fitting hand-picked by Potter.

From the street view, the stately Huntingtower announces itself with a smack of Victorian bombast. Dating back to 1890, the house was in a state of total disrepair when Potter lucked upon it, and its loving rehabilitation owes much to Potter's canny eye for original design jewels hidden beneath a century of city grit and grime. Outside, the original façade has held up remarkably well.



Diana, goddess of the hunt, presides over a coterie of big surly cats etched into a wonderfully imposing keystone above the arched entrance. Potter mined Huntingtower's history for texture and narrative, immortalising its origins in phrases laser cut into custom-made cabinets in the study. "Interiors and houses should always tell a story about the site and about the people. If they do, then they're really engaging and fun for people to visit. They're not just some kind of style statement – I think it's deeper than that," says Potter.

The influences at play in Huntingtower are thrillingly far flung, drawn from Potter's leaps across the globe and pivoting around a fantastically diverse art collection. Resene Quarter Ash coated walls are a smoky backdrop to treasured pieces by McLean Edwards, Gareth Samson and Jan Seberg, amongst many, many others. Potter considers the coherence



of her personal collection within Huntingtower's century old Victorian walls. "I really believe that you should collect pieces that are meaningful to you. All houses are adaptable to that sort of eclectic style and in actual fact I virtually bought nothing new for the house. You're better off waiting and finding pieces that you love and that are meaningful to you, and that therefore have longevity."

Whimsical design quirks abound throughout Huntingtower: the towers of books that cleverly demarcate between dining and lounge spaces; the 1950s Rosewood sideboard rejuvenated by artful lashings of Cole & Son's 'Circus' wallpaper; old suitcases adorned with vintage travel stickers that serve as bathroom storage space. Ingo Maurer's 'Bang Boom' light pendant pitches a chaos of





colours at the boys' den, while the formal sitting room balances tribal mask hangings and zebra stripes with Guan Wei's dreamy 'Cloud' sculptures.

References to favourite and future holiday destinations are scattered throughout Huntingtower with an easy, artful elegance. The first floor master bedroom unfolds like a love song to Venice, where a custom-made four-poster bed featuring Fornasetti's Venetian panels takes pride of place. The boys' bathroom cheekily references Old Blighty with Jake Phipps' Jeeves Table Lamp featuring a bowler hat shade.

The Potter tribe's devotion to all things Africa is evoked in the first-floor powder room. Kitted out in vivid magenta and pumpkin orange stripes, it features a stunningly crafted menagerie of wall-mounted white porcelain animal heads. Cutest of the bunch is a baby rhinoceros called Dave, beloved namesake of Potter's brother-in-law. As she explains, "the powder room tells the story of our whole family. My brother-in-law lives in Africa and has a safari company – that was all about remembering these wonderful safaris. He's done a lot of conservation work and he has a baby rhino named after him."

Awarded the 2012 Australian Interior Design Award for Residential Decoration, Huntingtower is a paean to pleasure, its form defined by a thirst for reading and knowledge, travel, art and literature. Potter is emphatic about the importance of pleasure in design saying, "people should think more about fun and joy when doing interiors."

Potter does indeed wield a kind of wizardry in her devotion to the business of fun. It's a thrilling tightrope that she treads with verve and élan and a balancing act between form and function that characterises her stewardship of Atticus & Milo ■

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Liquorice Allsorts

SPLASHES OF COLOUR AND A MISHMASH OF FURNITURE HELPS TO CREATE A MODERN YET ECLECTIC INTERIOR AKIN TO HUNTINGTOWER.



1. J.J. ARMCHAIR

DESIGNER ■ Antonio Citterio for B&B Italia
STOCKIST ■ Space Furniture
PRICE ■ \$7120

Nothing says relaxation quite like a rocking chair and B&B Italia's J.J. is the most stylish on the market. The high backrest comes equipped with a headrest and loinstrest for the ultimate in comfort, and the oak frame back with Mongolian lamb fur cover gets a perfect 10 in the style department.

2. STACK SHELVING UNIT

DESIGNER ■ Raw-Edges for Established & Sons
STOCKIST ■ Living Edge
PRICE ■ \$9472

Making use of a centrally-located frame, Established & Sons' floating storage unit allows you to access the drawers by either pulling them out or pushing them sideways. In addition, the asymmetrical stacking of its contrasting drawers creates a practical work of art.



3. SUPERARCHIMON FLOOR LAMP

DESIGNER ■ Philippe Starck for Flos
STOCKIST ■ Euroluce
PRICE ■ \$11,405

The warm, diffused light provided by Philippe Starck's Superarchimoon Floor Lamp creates a beautiful ambience in any living area, and the adjustable stand means you can decide exactly which space you'd like to illuminate.

4. BRAZILIAN COWHIDE RUG

STOCKIST ■ Sokal
PRICE ■ \$418

With its organic shape and supple hair, Sokal's Brazilian Cowhide Rug brings an authentic cabin feel to the living area. Perfect for anchoring all the furnishings in your room of choice, the rug also contains natural oils that help it to resist staining.