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FORM, FUNCTION
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KITCHEN &
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*10 pages of ideas
and inspiration*

PERTH'S
NEW
BOUTIQUE
HOTEL



FRENCH

Designer David Hicks adds a certain *je ne sais quoi* to soulful Belgian simplicity in a 1950s Melbourne apartment.

DRESSING

By Annetarie Kiely

Photographed by Ivan Terestchenko



LEFT, CLOCKWISE: In the living room, a *Planer* by Knoll sits atop *Tom Dixon's* a *Rankin* by a self-styled French designer chair and a chair made by David Hicks (pictured in Andrew Martin's *White Paper* issue from Litigae Kabala). The bronze sculpture on the table left is by a self-styled designer and Knoll's Creative Director, while the bronze bust on the table left is by David Rowley from Knoll's *Knoll* collection. *Tom Dixon's* *Tom Dixon* chair and chair made by David Hicks (pictured in Andrew Martin's *White Paper* issue from Litigae Kabala). The bronze sculpture on the table left is by a self-styled designer and Knoll's Creative Director, while the bronze bust on the table left is by David Rowley from Knoll's *Knoll* collection.



When asked for a one-room designer for his redesign of a 1930s apartment in the Mollusque suburb of South Yarra, designer David Hicks declares it "Belgian". The owner refers either a palette grounded in waffles and beer or the spare Flemish way with the knee and grey. He noted that a brief could be both toward him, Hicks quotes the word as the French name for Belgium. It is the perfect subtle for rooms that speak in strains of Flemish ecclesiastic but with a more pronounced French accent. "The brief was for modern European," says Hicks, describing the client as a well-traveled, cultured couple who were mindful to have enough geographic latitude for the designer to express. "But there was something about the character of the slacker brick building that lent itself to an old-school new look."

Making sense of that suggestion, Hicks shows behind images of the first-floor apartment in its full unadorned — stainless white spaces wrap around a covered entry hall with doors everywhere offering the perception of a small apartment. The rooms are plain, starkly proportioned and subtly lined themselves to what Belgian architects makes the most of grey-washed woods. But 'belgium' is not Hicks's default decorative style; he likes a little strange French for his creative cocktail.

"Before any of the finishes could be added, we first had to address the plan and the proposed function of rooms," he says of the decision to create living and dining rooms, merge the kitchen, directly integrate the existing laundry into a new luxury bathroom and rip out all the doors. "We then decided to retain the 'look' of the original architecture, which is what the Europeans do so well — keep the past legible while leaving with new histories."

Reacting to the prior progress of natural light, Hicks occasionally advised the apartment's gray, rationalizing that the best decorative decisions are born of going with the grain. He replaced the "stone marble" carpets with a shaven-painted oak parquet floor and, true to the Belgian way with sun surfaces, washed a grey to suggest weathering.

With the same stated reservations, Hicks painted walls in a warm dove grey and picked out all environmental surroundings and ceilings in white. The slacker brick foundation of the living room fireplace was cement-rendered grey, leaving "a piece of environmental revolution," which he edged with a new marble bench. "We wanted to have a





The kitchen glass-fronted cabinets are a nod to the mid-century modern aesthetic, while the dark countertop and stainless steel oven are a nod to the modern aesthetic. The kitchen is a perfect blend of old and new, with the white cabinetry and dark countertop creating a classic look, while the stainless steel oven and glass-fronted cabinets add a modern touch. The kitchen is a perfect example of how to mix vintage and modern styles to create a unique and stylish space.

**"WE MIXED
VINTAGE WITH
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CONVERSATION
HAPPEN"**



• the windows while creating the illusion of their continuation, so we stacked the curtains between them," says Hicks, referring to the design of one Belgian linen that falls from single steel rods to juxtapose lines. "We mixed formal with informal, antiques with American modernism, vintage with very new and let the conversation happen."

The discordant character that arises from juxtaposing late-20th-century French modernism with mid-century modern English traditionalism is contained by a gray silk rug. But should the design dialogue erupt, Hicks has prepared a French marble coffee table "as a weapon" on the marketplace to maintain all from a self-defense. "But some things are allowed to be a little bit ugly," he says, citing the piece. Italian wares with contrasting periods and patterns. "There might be something we quite right, but the big picture is beautiful."

Hicks carried the concept of mixing old European tastes with surprising new ingredients through to the kitchen, where he transformed the conventional L-shaped cooking area into an ergonomically efficient galley, detailing one side as a stainless steel

working environment. He selected solid oakwood doors with ribbed glass panels and crackle-glass handles nodding to the 1950s, while inserting ceramic appliances that reflect custom pop-art interiors in cooking and storage the illusion of added depth.

Hicks decided to leave the master bedroom alone and let the existing bathroom absorb the spirit of his old laundries. "We shared the idea of an entire bathroom and a walk-in robe," he explains. "Only two people want to inhabit the apartment and what's wrong with walking across the hallway to a bathroom?"

This questing of reuniting conversation protects the qualities of his ideal apartment. Hicks takes issue with the proposition's formal inflexibility before arriving in on a minimalist scheme with iron-faces, stacks of color or texture, an 18th-century rock-crystal chandelier, an eclectic mix of furniture, a Dutch mirror and one of German artist Erwin Hagemann's most "impressionist" sculptures. "But I'd want a pony race on the side," he says, suggesting a vibrant lined party room. "What's difficult question to ask a designer?" ■

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The bathroom features an Apple 'Cubano' bath from Arredoluce and a custom style 'Up the Bay' of Artisan Stone Acrylic tub in Carrara from Stonehouse. The vanity is clad in Roman Porphyry from Stonehouse. OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: the dining room features 'Buck' chairs (reproduction of Robert Curjel) and a Henry James 'Decorated Chair' (the chairs in the kitchen are reproductions of James' pieces from The White House). The painting in the hallway is Michael McDonald's 'Cherish' (see page 100). The wood used in the 'Le Pergolone' table (see page 100) is 'Tropical Oak' (see page 100) from George Johnson of Co. Details, see page 100.

