

COVER STORY

Design of the times

HAMISH GUTHRIE, PAUL HECKER & JOSH WATT OF HECKER GUTHRIE

EUGENE HYLAND / THE TABLE IS THE BASE, HECKER GUTHRIE, THE RIGG DESIGN PRIZE 2018 AT THE IAN POTTER CENTRE, NGV AUSTRALIA

A new exhibit explores how home can be the ultimate escape.

Interior design is much more than pure decoration. As such, ten of Australia's top interior designers set out to challenge, provoke and even shock with a new National Gallery of Victoria show.

The range of styles and influences in the pop-up rooms for the Rigg Design Prize 2018 reflect the designers' interpretation of Australian society and where it is headed.

Some spaces for the Rigg Design Prize exhibition may have viewers scratching their heads, but there is an overall message – the future will prompt homeowners to create a refuge in more compact spaces, with a new respect for handmade objects.

Most rooms crafted by designers for the Rigg show refer to the idea of the home as a refuge from the outside world.

Designer David Hicks has noticed a return to the mentality that the home is a castle, and his room follows this idea. "It's almost like people are trying to create this private world for themselves," Hicks tells the NGV in an interview series.

"Design is never finished because it is an evolutionary thing, it is a journey – it's being confident enough to know when to stop, to know when to edit, to take things out."

Hicks' Rigg room, titled *Panic Room*, is his reaction to the pressures and exposure of everyday modern life.

"The whole thesis of it is this voyeurism – how design is reacting to this constant pressure of being watched," Hicks says.

"The Rigg exhibition is an amazing initiative ... it highlights (interior design) as a high art form,

RIGG DESIGN PRIZE 2018 \

Exhibition is at the Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia at Federation Square until February 24. ● ngv.vic.gov.au/exhibition/rigg-design-prize-2018

turning an idea into a product ... it is like art because it enriches people's lives."

Though based on the same domestic living theme, each Rigg pop-up is very different. The display rooms dreamt up by the designers are not just pretty spaces.

They are a mix of fantasy, Bohemian lifestyle, glamour, futuristic trends and art but the simplest space, titled *The table is the base* – which focuses on the table and is designed by Melbourne studio Hecker Guthrie – was the winner of the \$30,000 Rigg Design Prize.

Designers Paul Hecker and Hamish Guthrie (pictured with associate Josh Watt) use several different-sized tables (Hecker says the table is central in all cultures) flipped around in various positions to create an entire room.

The fundamental purpose of interior design is to improve the way we live, Guthrie says.

As much as interior design is grounded in that outcome, the Rigg Design Prize exhibition also celebrates the fantastic.

"There's a level of fantasy around what people have created that shows there are different ways of approaching interior design," Hecker says.

Juliette Arent, of Arent & Pyke, says she aims to design spaces that avoid trends. "The notion of the bespoke or the handcrafted is definitely an idea proposed not only in our space but by each of the designers."

Sibella Court of The Society Inc's room celebrates the skill of craftspeople. Court says many designers "use a mix of vintage or antique with the new" and show "a deep respect for master craftsmen".

The handcrafted theme is balanced by expressions of technology. The cool black tiles of Richards Stanisich's entry represent the digital world, which contrasts with handmade natural textures.

Media overload is the unsettling influence in Hicks' luxurious *Panic Room*, where the perfect life seems sterile.

Danielle Brustman's fun futuristic retro set, inspired by the Olivia Newton-John movie *Xanadu*, features art deco curvilinear shapes.

Shortlisted interior designers for the NGV Rigg Design Prize 2018 are: Amber Road, Arent & Pyke, Danielle Brustman, David Hicks, Flack Studio, Hecker Guthrie, Martyn Thompson Studio, Richards Stanisich, Scott Weston Architecture Design and The Society Inc by Sibella Court. ●

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