



Drawing on Californian inspirations, this house glows with a



glamorous vibe that strikes a pose between ease and elegance.

These pages, from left Access to the home is via a glass vestibule flanked by original palm trees. Landscaping by Ben Baring of Barings Landscape. Stairs leading to the cavernous living area are clad in Arabescato marble. *The Feast of Trimalchio: Panorama #1* by AES+F from Anna Schwartz Gallery. Sumo wrestler sculpture by French artist Alexandra Gestin. This bold sculpture helps to delineate the zones within this large space. Custom un-dyed fleece rug by Velleris. Custom sofa and Italian wingback chairs by David Hicks. Vintage side tables from Conley & Co.

"THE ORIGINAL BONE STRUCTURE OF THE HOUSE APPEARS TO BE TRANSPLANTED STRAIGHT OUT OF ... BEVERLY HILLS."



This page "Although not sunken, the circular white linen sofa is reminiscent of a conversation pit," says David Hicks. Photographic artworks by Massimo Listri show perspectives of Italian interiors. Antique Javanese wedding drum used as side table. Custom bronze base Arabescato marble-topped coffee table. Custom sheepskin rug. Opposite page, from left The large custom coffee table is made from walnut timber and takes centrestage, creating a platform on which books, vintage finds and sculpture are displayed. An over-scaled black marble fireplace features a white Arabescato plinth to match the stairs. The dining area is in muted walnut and soft caramels. Vintage chandeliers, French table in European oak and custom dining chairs by David Hicks. Orlando Bloom 2 artwork by Dale Frank.



Tall and thin with fans of strappy leaves up top, palm trees have a ubiquitous presence in this Melbourne home by interior designer David Hicks. He sought to give the slick, minimalist architecture, built in the late 1970s but with a modernist vibe, what it deserved: a tropical-glam gloss outfitted with contemporary art and luxurious pieces well suited for a chic patio party. It's a *mise-en-scène* that calls to mind a sprawling mid-century compound, high up in the Los Angeles hills. "We have created a carefree home that's also very glamorous," says David. "But not in a flashy new way: more in a subtle, old-school way. I would like to think we have returned it to its former glory."

Fortuitously, David knew the home's original owners (he has memories of the house with a waterfall) and was conscious to strike a balance between ease and elegance. His clients, a design-savvy couple with young children, who had also worked alongside David on their Hamptons-style beach home, decided to go more 'West Coast' with this inner-city property, remodelling with ideas picked up on their travels throughout the US, particularly California.

"The original bone structure of the house appears to be transplanted straight out of the Trousdale estate in Beverly Hills," says David. "It incorporates a relaxed Los Angeles vibe that is very complimentary. Much like modernism, this house is

about light, space and being enveloped by a seamless architecture. The existing bone structure provided an amazing starting point."

Access to the front door is via a walled outdoor vestibule flanked by sculpted palm trees and blinding white walls. To create a lounge-like foyer David added furnishings including gold custom chairs and a smoked Venini chandelier. Tucked behind the entryway, an eye-popping powder-room features a cantilevered marble basin, black marble floor and handpainted de Gournay wallpaper.

A set of wide Arabescato marble stairs splits the ground floor into two levels, leading to a cavernous space incorporating a dining suite ahead, and living areas on each side. To the left, the lounge is outfitted with a sheepskin rug and a custom-made white curved sofa reminiscent of a conversation pit. An antique Javanese wedding drum is used as a side table and gallery-style walls are arranged with Italian-themed photos by Massimo Listri. Behind the dining area lies the kitchen with an adjoining casual dining and family zone. Vast expanses of operable sliding glass blur the inside with the outside, the rear opening up to a 'David Hockney-blue' pool with its original diving board. An alcove under the tennis court acts as a cabana with long banquettes upholstered in the original Beverly Hills Hotel's 'Martinique Banana Leaf' fabric by Don Loper from Designer Wallcoverings and plenty of pale pinks, white and greens.



Another short flight of stairs runs back to the home's entry level where there is a study, rumpus and games room. At the rear, a new extension incorporates a golf simulator and day spa complete with infra-red sauna, steam room, and ice bath. With its rich timber ceilings and black moiré wallpaper, this side of the house was designed to contrast with the lighter, brighter palette of its opposite wing.

Upstairs, there are five bedrooms including a master with dusty pink walls offset by a more masculine timber-clad ceiling. Her walk-in robe is light and feminine while his is an opulent black with glassed-in shelves trimmed in gold. David outfitted the contemporary private spaces with "simple yet beautiful objects with sumptuous overtones," such as a silver Vladimir Kagan sofa, and the vintage pendant and oversized rock-crystal bedside lamps.

"These interiors are not precious. Every part of the house is used by the family and the dog," says David, who designed white sofa slipcovers for easy removal and cleaning. "Everybody works and lives in different ways. Some people want total carefree surroundings while others are prepared to respect certain aspects of their home and maintain them. You have to weigh up the functional with the aesthetic," he adds. The clients, wanting both, were open to exploring their desired look while understanding how to treat and use certain parts of the house. "There is a saying: if you want nice things, you have to be prepared to work for them." ■

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SPEED READ

» A design-savvy couple with young children engaged interior designer David Hicks to remodel their 1970s inner-city Melbourne home with modernist bones. » The couple had picked up ideas on travels in the US and were keen to give the split-level house a "West Coast" feel. » The entry with a lounge-like foyer leads to a cavernous space with a dining suite and two living areas. » Expanses of glass link to the tennis court and landscaped gardens by Ben Baring with a shimmering pool as a jewel-like centrepiece. » David dressed the five upstairs bedrooms with simple, beautiful objects that have sumptuous overtones. » "Every part of the house is used by the family and the dog," says David.



This page Expanses of operable sliding glass blur the inside with outside. Custom dining table in polished gold and Calacatta Viola tiles. Custom tub chairs in green velvet mimic the lush hedging. Vintage brass chandelier with white parchment shades. Opposite page, clockwise from top left On the bed is an Hermès throw. *Rose #8*, *A Dozen Roses* by Marco Fusinato from Anna Schwartz Gallery. Murano chandelier from Smith Street Bazaar. Murano glass lamps from Conley & Co. Custom Italian slipper chair by David Hicks. Hand-painted wallpaper by de Gournay in the powder room inspired by Palm Springs decadence. A cantilevered marble basin extends out from a mirrored wall. Additional mirrors trimmed in thick polished gold were added to reflect the wallpaper panels. Vintage gold wall lights. "A new black marble floor creates some drama and lifts the room," says David Hicks. The nook lounge area features a vintage daybed in pink wool. Murano wall sconce and Knoll 'Platner' side table, both from De De Ce.