

HIGH POINT

After an elegant makeover, an inner-city penthouse looks towards a bright future.



Words **CHRIS PEARSON** Photography **TOM BLACHFORD**

These pages Laying the foundation for the living area is a vintage Turkish Oushak from Cadrys. Antique Japanese lacquered screen from 1stDibs. Cassina 'Soriana' chairs from 1stDibs in Dedar 'Karakorum' from South Pacific Fabrics. Sofa by David Hicks in 'Lux Velvet' from Zepel Fabrics. Easy Chairs by Pierre Jeanneret. Custom coffee table, 'Eros' table and Murano table lamps from e Moderno. Drum table, custom. Curtains in 'Kyoto' Snow fabric from James Dunlop Textiles. Walls and ceiling painted Dulux Natural White.

A sleek and sweeping spiral staircase, forged in steel and covered in glass, dramatically grounds this luminous penthouse in Melbourne. Poised within a 10-metre void, this spine of the home straddles the decades and symbolises its ethereal transformation. So, when interior designer David Hicks first crossed the threshold of the 22nd-floor sanctuary in the sky, complete with jaw-dropping views, it still retained 1980s hallmarks. The less desirable features of the decade remained – awkward, jarring angles in a nod to Memphis; unrelentingly shiny, harsh surfaces; and the helical staircase in its earlier iteration, etched in white powdercoated metal and trimmed with salmon-pink carpet.

The owners bought the spacious apartment in a landmark building in 2009. Thirteen years later, they wanted a more modern and glamorous take, a home that luxuriated in the view but without those original glaring – and glary – faults. “The layout, typical of the era, with separate kitchen, dining and living, made the penthouse dark and poky,” says David. In addition, the windows had angled framing at eye height, impeding panoramas of parkland and the bay beyond. On two levels, the living areas and main bedroom suite occupied the lower entry level, while a second sitting area soaked up the views on the top level, which it shared with a guest room and bedroom/study.

After stripping the apartment back to bare concrete, David moved the main bedroom suite to the upper level. Meanwhile, the former main bedroom became a guest bedroom, complete with walk-in wardrobe and ensuite, a powder room and a generous bar and second sitting area, which occupies one end of the open plan. A massive main bedroom with expansive views now sits upstairs, with his and hers walk-in wardrobes and a generous ensuite, together with a third bedroom/study in its original location. “By moving these downstairs rooms, we created a large space extending from one side of the building to the other, with glazing on three sides that allows spectacular views of the park and water,” he says.

David also reoriented the kitchen towards the view to create a seamless flow. Sliding panels between the dining area and kitchen now facilitate interaction between the spaces while allowing them to be closed off when desired. »

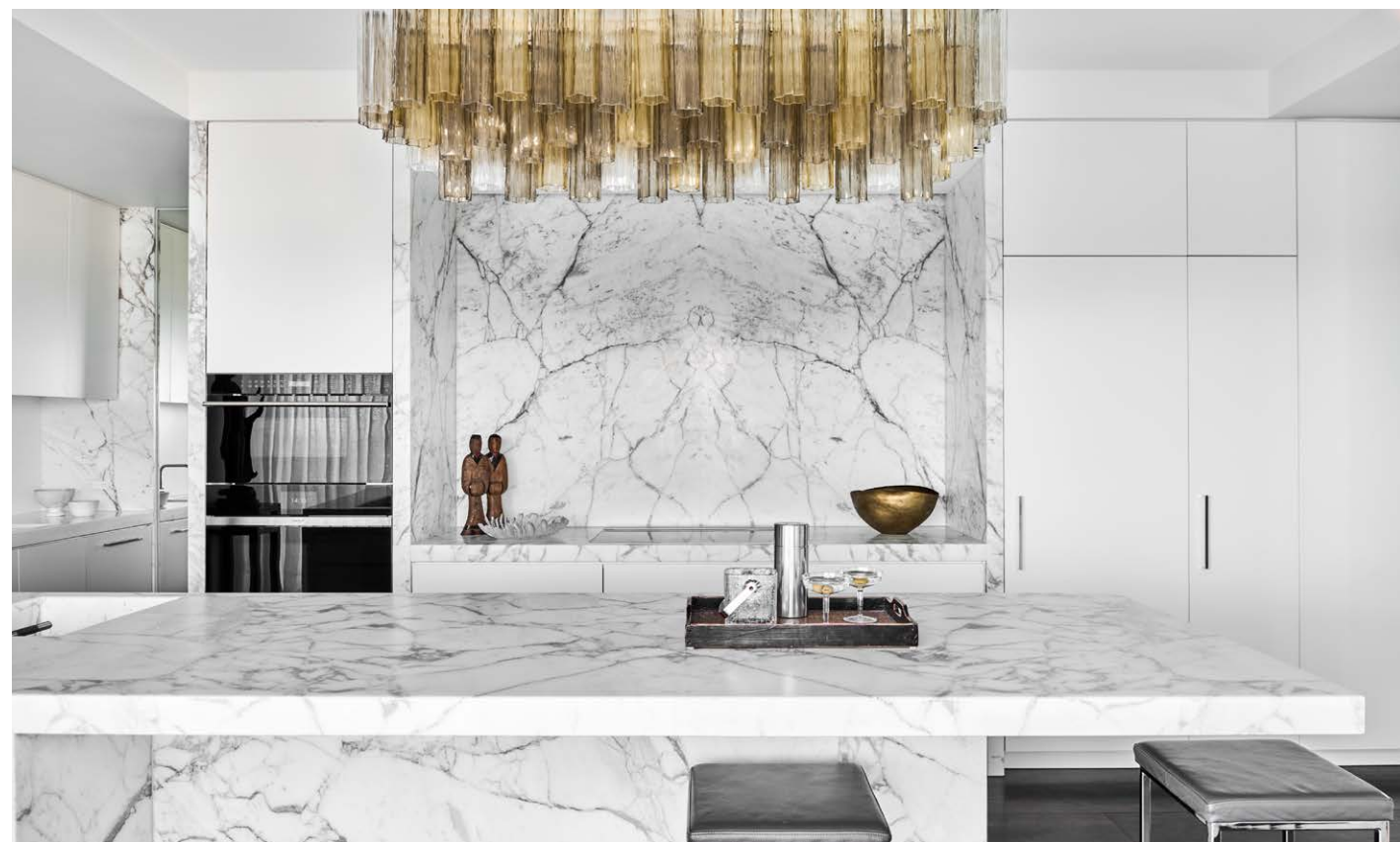


This page (clockwise from top left) Steel and glass form the polished staircase. // The hallway wall is polished Venetian plaster in Dulux Natural White. European oak floorboards stained in Feast Watson Black Japan. Antique Chinese lacquered cabinet and antique Thai Buddha from River City Bangkok. Murano glass vases from e Moderno. // An aspect of the living area. ‘Uovo’ brass and shagreen side table from Scala Luxury in the US. // The bar area is distinguished by its Armani Casa ‘Brera’ wallpaper from South Pacific Fabrics. **Opposite page** Near the window are Knoll ‘Platner’ chairs and a ‘Saarinen’ stool from Dedee. ‘Eros’ table from e Moderno. Custom David Hicks day bed in Pavoni ‘Vespa’ nubuck leather from South Pacific Fabrics.





This page Solid European oak floorboards with a custom Black Japan stain continue into the kitchen. Benchtops and splashbacks in Statuario honed marble from FUM. Joinery in Dulux Natural White. Sliding door panels in Armani Casa 'Brera' wallpaper from South Pacific Fabrics. Murano glass 'Tronchi' chandelier from e Moderno. Antique Thai Buddha from River City Bangkok. **Opposite page** The oak-stained dining table is a custom piece while the vintage chairs by Ico Parisi for MIM Roma and Murano clear glass bowl were sourced from e Moderno. Curtains from James Dunlop Textiles in the brand's signature 'Kyoto' Snow fabric.



« Strikingly, he also opened up the stair void to create a soaring atrium, where he placed the stairs and internal lift. “The owner wanted to open the spaces to create a grand penthouse with flowing but sectional rooms,” he says.

Other issues to tackle were erasing the tricky angles, squaring off rooms to improve their functionality, softening ugly bulkheads and removing awkwardly placed window frames to better address the view. As the existing balconies were one step higher than the internal floors, David raised the entire lower floor level, which, fortuitously, also enabled him to install the lift (it provided the shallow trough required for operation).

Luxe new finishes have elevated the high-rise apartment to the truly special. The sheen, which still peppers the interiors, is more subdued and without the harshness of the past, and dark floorboards have replaced the thick carpet and marble in the living areas. “The owners wanted an overall ambience that was chic yet comfortable, uncomplicated and unfussy,” says David. Cream polished plaster, textured wallpaper, French oak parquetry, marble, lacquer and silk carpet now make up the layered palette, with highlights of bronze, Macassar ebony veneer and decorative fabric.

Strikingly, in the relocated main bedroom suite with enviable views of Port Phillip Bay, David embellished the wall behind the bed with chinoiserie wallpaper. The elegant oriental theme recurs, most pointedly with a silk screen in the living room to temper the strong light. That’s echoed by a cabinet and Buddha in the stair void. “The upholstered wall in the bedroom is beautiful as it contrasts with the modern interior and embellishes the decor,” says David. “So, too, does the large Murano chandelier that hovers over the kitchen island.”

The designer chose many chic vintage Italian pieces for the project, including two signature Jeanneret rattan armchairs for Cassina and other standouts, including a marble and gilt coffee table, the beautiful antique Japanese screen and a silk oriental rug. “Combined, they make for a sumptuous edit of what the world has to offer,” he explains.

Not surprisingly, the sculptural staircase is David’s favourite feature. “You experience it from most spaces and it connects you to the whole apartment,” he says. “Cantilevered from the upper floor to the lower and attached to a glass walkway, the staircase floats within the void.” It’s ideally suited to this heavenly hideaway in the clouds. **15**

davidbicks.com.au; [@davidbicksdesign](https://www.instagram.com/davidbicksdesign)



This page (and opposite, top) Pattern and texture are skilfully layered in the main bedroom. Custom 'Shimmer' silk carpet from RC + D. Upholstered wall panels in Dedar 'Silkbird' jacquard from South Pacific Fabrics. Custom drum table in Macassar ebony veneer with honed Calacatta marble top. Vintage Italian Murano 'Rostrato' table lamp, armchair by Ico Parisi and porcelain and brass side table by Tommaso Barbi, all from e Moderno. Linen bed cover from Cultiver. Curtains in Zepel 'Intuition' Papyrus from James Dunlop Textiles. Fritz Hansen 'Swan Chairs' by Arne Jacobsen from Cult in Kvadrat 'Hallingdal 65' wool. Knoll 'Tulip' side table with marble top from Dedecce. **Opposite page** In the dressing room, the joinery is Macassar ebony veneer, with bronzed glass and trim details as well as Statuario marble from FUM. Vintage 'Chiavari' brass chair from 1stDibs in white leather. Tray from Kelly Wearstler. Walls and ceiling in Dulux Natural White.



1 Knoll 'Platner' lounge chair, POA, Dedecce. 2 Cotton-velveteen cushion in Bone, \$119, Bonnie & Neil. 3 Murano Rostrato table lamp by Aureliano Toso, \$2200, The Vault Sydney. 4 'Humphrey' side table by Kate Nixon, \$1790, Boyd Blue. 5 Suzanne Kasler 'Adele' chandelier, \$12,690, The Montauk Lighting Co.



SPEED READ

» The owners bought this two-level, two-bedroom penthouse atop a Melbourne landmark building in 2009. » It retained the trademarks of its 1980s origins, such as poky spaces, clumsy angles, glary surfaces and a white and salmon-pink palette. » In 2022, interior designer David Hicks was asked to update the apartment and resolve a layout that shortchanged the incredible views. Its awkward angles and other jarring architectural features were removed and updated with luxe contemporary finishes. » David swapped the bedrooms, creating a massive main bedroom suite on the top floor while the former main bedroom on the lower floor became a guest bedroom, bar and second living area. » Elegant finishes include French oak parquet, polished plaster, marble, Macassar ebony veneer, bronze, textured wallpaper, silks and decorative fabric panels.

