



Above: David Hicks has left his mark on Australian residential interior design.  
Right: Clement Meadmore sculpture, artwork by Dale Frank.

Over 25 years, Melbourne-based David Hicks, a seminal figure in Australia's contemporary residential design, has elevated domestic spaces into sanctuaries of considered sophistication, where his signature approach weaves together refined rationality with rich, expressive layers—by *Alice Blackwood*.



# THE SEEKER'S EYE

Though now synonymous with Melbourne's design scene, David Hicks' distinctive aesthetic has its roots far from home: his childhood in 1970s Malaysia, where colonial grandeur met modernist sensibility.

His mother—an architectural draftsman and art gallery owner—orchestrated their Californian bungalow home as a masterclass in sophisticated eclecticism.

"You had these [grand] colonial buildings, but then inside a more relaxed interior," Hicks recalls, describing the early spatial contrasts that would go on to shape his design philosophy. His mother's curation represented what he calls a "quiet"

fusion—European, Asian and Middle Eastern elements combining to create an atmosphere where diverse influences converged without competition.

The details remain vivid in Hicks' memory: Chinese cabinets inlaid with precious stones standing alongside classic French Louis-style chairs, cane seating, a marble-topped table supported by a delicate timber base, and Persian rugs anchoring the eclectic ensemble. "It was very decorative minimalism," he reflects. "That midcentury modern foundation, overlaid with a mixture of European, contemporary, Asian pieces, Middle Eastern rugs, and antiques was quite

formative to the way that I design," Hicks explains.

With his intuitive sensitivity for contrast, balance and materiality, Hicks is not averse to bold material contrasts or the integration of sculptural furnishings. Yet he anchors every design decision in fundamental principles: composition, proportion and narrative remain the cornerstones of interior balance and cohesion.

"Design is about discipline, but also intuition," he reflects. "You need to instinctively know when to push, when to edit, and when to let the architecture breathe." This philosophy has crystallised through decades of practice into a deeper understanding of luxury





Antique French marble bust.



Vintage Italian side table by Tommaso Barbi, Anton Gerner Macassar ebony box.



From Hicks' collection of Asian sculptural art: Thai bronze Buddha head, Afghani sandstone carving, Burmese bronze Buddha head.

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itself. “Over the years, I’ve learned that true luxury isn’t about excess—it’s about refinement, craftsmanship, and creating spaces that people truly want to live in.” This creative rigour, the deep nostalgia held for the stylistic fusions of his childhood home, and the early influence of living abroad—existing simultaneously as a visitor and a resident within a foreign culture—has nurtured Hicks’ own curiosity and distinctive penchant for collecting. More than a collector, Hicks is a seeker. He believes a collection can be founded on a single piece, following lines of interest, curiosity, memory, and affinity for particular cultures or eras. His home and office serve as intimate galleries, filled with thoughtfully acquired pieces that reveal the rich tapestry of his creative mind’s eye.

His love of objects of cultural significance and decorative beauty finds its most profound expression in his extensive collection of Buddha heads—discovered, collected and acquired throughout his many years of travel and keen pursuit. “I have an affinity towards Asian crafts, objects and furniture, so I started collecting Buddha heads,” he recalls. “Every country I’d go to, I’d purchase one. I’ve collected Indonesian, Thai, Chinese, Cambodian, Laotian, even Afghan Buddha heads.” For Hicks, the allure lies in the craftsmanship of these objects—their finishes of bronze and stone, placing a sentimental value upon them that may often exceed their actual worth or perceived collectability. “I think they are beautiful objects that have a history to them, and remind me of the countries I’ve been to.”

That distinctive fusion of historical and midcentury sensibilities continues to inform both Hicks’ creative approach and restless seeker spirit. “I think my design work has a very midcentury modernist undertone,” he explains. “It was an era of change in which everything shifted away from the antique to being quite streamlined; shapes became simplified—organic and aerodynamic, materials changed to chrome, stainless steel, beautiful exotic polished timbers.” Yet antiques retained their relevance during this time: “They were mixed in with this new life, this new world,” he observes. Drawing from these same principles, Hicks quietly pursues iconic midcentury Italian lighting and other Italian or French furnishings from the midcentury period. “Those items have a lot of history—the designers, the



Thoughtfully chosen pieces such as this original 1960s Pierre Jeanneret Chandigarh chair and Murano glass lamp define the Hicks aesthetic.

materials they’re made from, the very era of change that they represent,” he explains. Again, these carefully chosen pieces fill his home and workspace, lived in and among, enjoyed in a functional capacity as much as they are in an objectified sense. Hicks’ aesthetic sensibility extends beyond interior spaces, manifesting in an appreciation of contemporary Australian art—with the work of painter Dale Frank being of special interest—and fashion. An avid collector of shoes—Tom Ford, Saint Laurent, Louboutin, Louis Vuitton among them—he regards them not merely as footwear, but as sculptural objects worthy of contemplation. Here, his collecting philosophy channels broader cultural shifts, as he considers his passion for collecting boots as something belonging to a

more formal time, pre-pandemic, when we all made an effort to put our best foot forward, so to speak. While the widespread transition to sneakers mirrors our collective embrace of casual living, for Hicks, it represents something deeper: a philosophical evolution as he moves from reflecting on 25 years of practice toward envisioning the next quarter-century of design. As he celebrates this milestone in business and design, Hicks considers it not merely as an achievement, but “an end to that body of work”—a natural conclusion that creates space for renewal. “It’s nice to have a fresh point from where to start,” he reflects, while qualifying that he doesn’t see his future being a radical departure from his past. “I think the world is changing, people’s lifestyles are changing so, for



A distinctive tableau: vintage Italian bamboo console paired with contemporary Jonny Niesche artwork and Murano Seguso glass.

me, it’s about relaxing the style, being less rigid and more tactile,” he explains. Despite this, he believes a cyclical rebound to a more elevated aesthetic is inevitable. “As we continue on in this ‘comfort era’ I think there will be a return to materials that are more glamorous—highly polished, very slick—but it will be contrasted against textures like exposed brick walls and concrete floors, for example. It’s this warmth alongside industrial elements that really resonates with me.” For David Hicks, the nostalgia of eras past continues to be tempered by the industrious creativity of progress, and he positions himself at the centre of this dynamic—collecting by way of meditation and reflection, and designing by way of contribution.