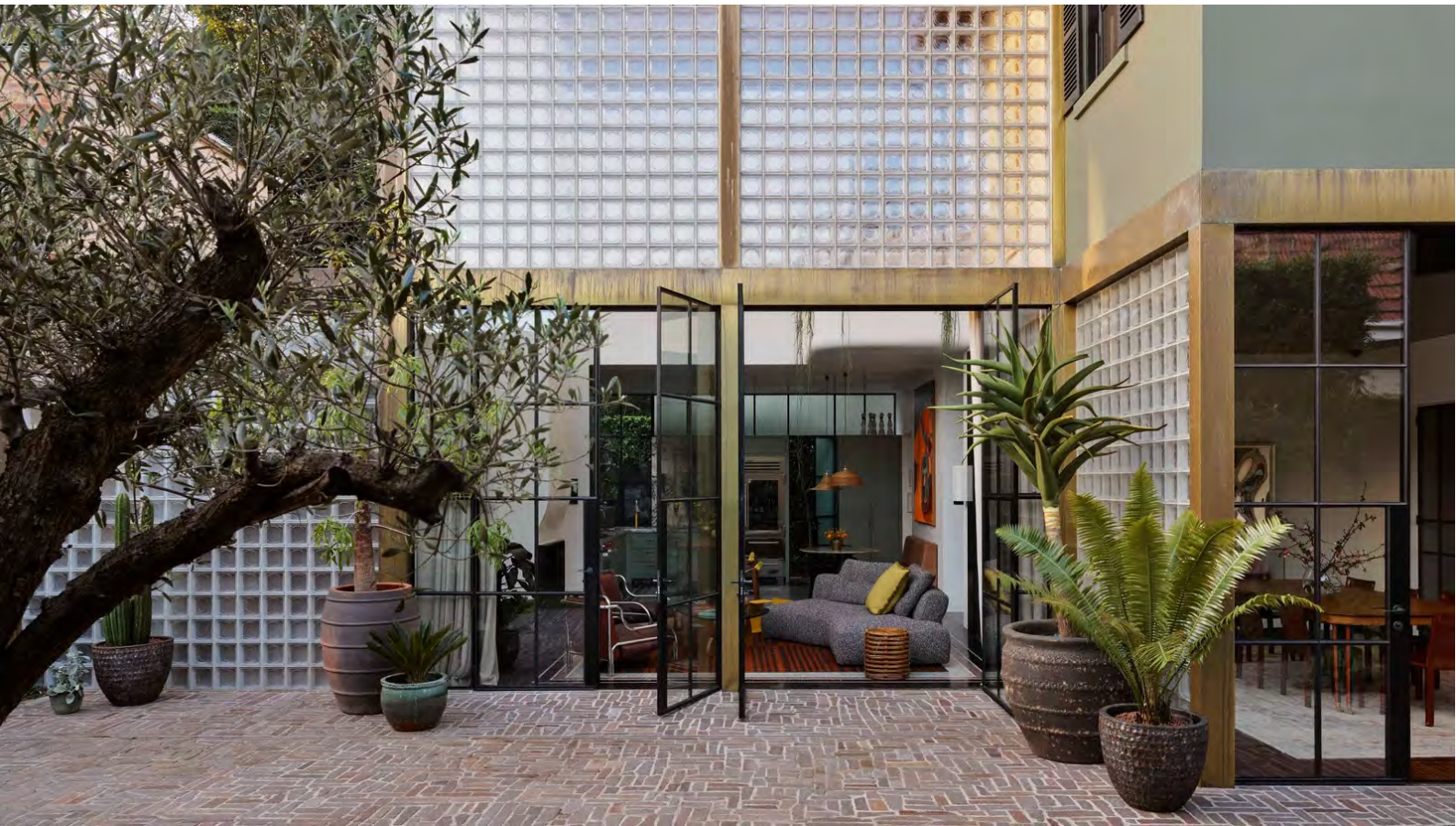




HOME TOUR

Glass Block Structures Allow This 1930s Melbourne House to Be Bathed in Light

AD100 firm Flack Studio transformed this South Yarra house into a bright, personality-filled family home

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Like many 1930s houses, the interior of Catherine Hains's in the Melbourne, Australia, suburb of South Yarra was drenched in character. But sunlight? Not so much. Hains and her children had lived in the historic four-bedroom home for 15 years, but after she hired local AD100 designer David Flack to transform her country house about two hours north, she turned attention to making her city place just as inviting.

The homeowner originally came to know the designer via an Internet search in 2016; learning he was a “Bendigo boy” raised in a town near her farm was as appealing as his interiors. “It was literally a random search, and it worked out brilliantly from there,” says Hains, whose family made its name in prize-winning racehorses. “I decided to do a similar lightening and brightening and a bigger build on the city home.”

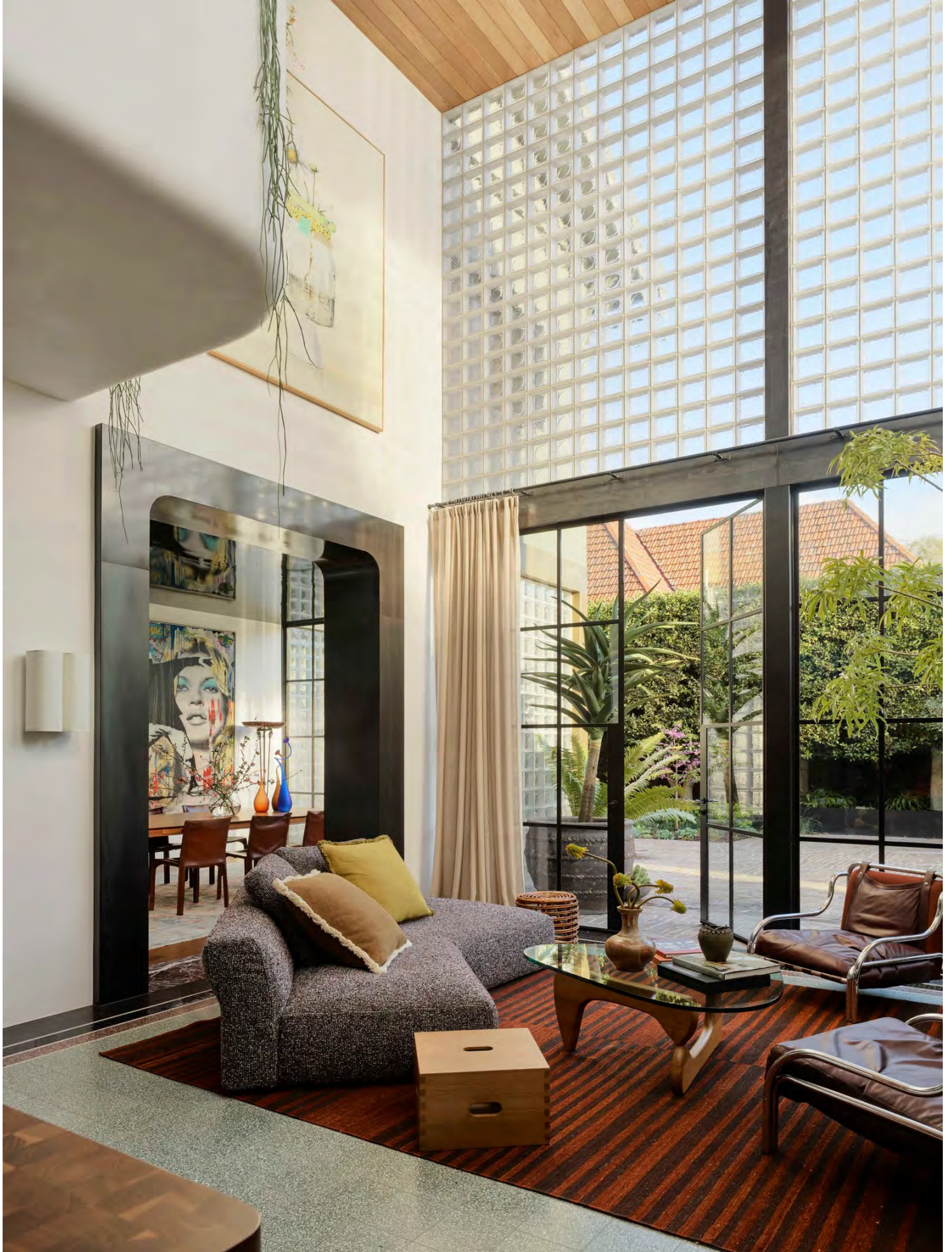
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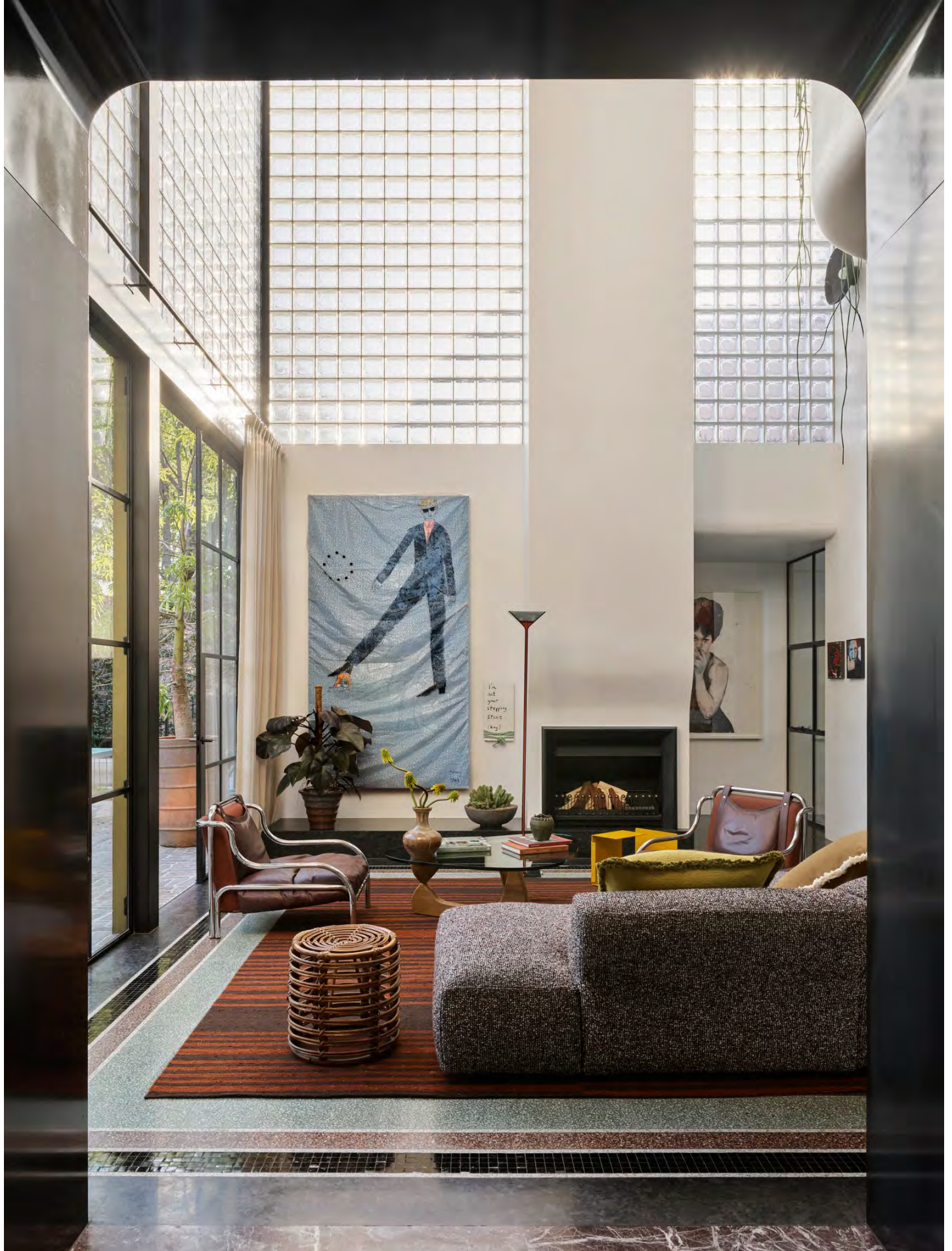
In the Southern Hemisphere, south-facing light is indirect, which left many of the South Yarra home's rooms bathed in shadow for most of the day. The abode also had a series of disproportionate prior renovations that made its rear a bit of an architectural jumble, explains Flack. To pull sunlight deep into its core and better highlight Hains's exuberant art collection, the designer demolished these additions and replaced them with a slightly smaller “glass block lantern.” The double-height volume captures daylight from three directions while actually reducing the overall footprint. While home's total square footage dropped by less than a 100 square feet, the extra space was given to the exteriors, which meant the lush landscaping by Melbourne talent Kate Seddon, enjoyed through new blackened steel-framed glass doors and windows.



Glass blocks pull sunlight into the back of the house through the new blackened steel-framed extension, Flack Studio's first architectural design. In the double-height living room, a sofa by [Patricia Urquiola for Cassina](#) with cushions by [Jardan](#), drinks table by [Le Corbusier for Cassina](#), and a pair of [1962 Gae Aulenti for Poltronova armchairs](#) surround an [Isamu Noguchi cocktail table](#). Artworks by [Dane Lovett](#) and [Mr. Brainwash](#) in collaboration with Banksy (in background).

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Bernard Bijvoet and Pierre Chareau's 1932 Maison de Verre in Paris inspired Flack's use of glass blocks as structure in this project, which marks his studio's first foray into architectural design. (The team now has seven other architecture projects in the works). Inside the day-lit extension—which hosts the living room, kitchen, and a powder room—and throughout the home, he made design moves that add a glowing feel. Glass blocks and steel-framed windows also wrap the dining room and family room. Frosted glass softly illuminates some marble-clad powder rooms and baths. Boldly hued lacquer lightens shadowed surfaces, like the walls, ceiling, and bar front in the front-most room of the historic portion of the house, a space newly re-envisioned as a deep red cocktail lounge, and the now dark green dining ceiling, whose near mirror surface both reflects and references the garden outside.



A 1970s floor lamp by [Afra and Tobia Scarpia](#) for [Flos](#) stands next to the custom fireplace in the new living room. Vintage rattan side table; artworks by [Jenny Watson](#) and [Fiona McMonagle](#).



Vintage Rattan Wicker Stool by Tito Agnoli

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The house's original layout was quite formal, which for the more casual Hains, meant many rooms went largely unused. With intentional vintage, contemporary, and custom furnishings, Flack transformed them into spaces with purpose. For example, a double-sided On the Rocks sofa by Francesco Binfaré for Edra centers the cozy library, painted a deep yellow ochre. With twin desks, the room can now be a home office, study, or party space, depending on the occasion. The new kitchen offers a breakfast table with a banquette, "a very daily and comfortable addition" that often ends up as the location of four-person dinners, says the homeowner. "I'm a casual entertainer," she adds. "I like to keep it fairly simple with my grown-up kids, but this house also has very practical spaces to enjoy with friends and family during bigger events."

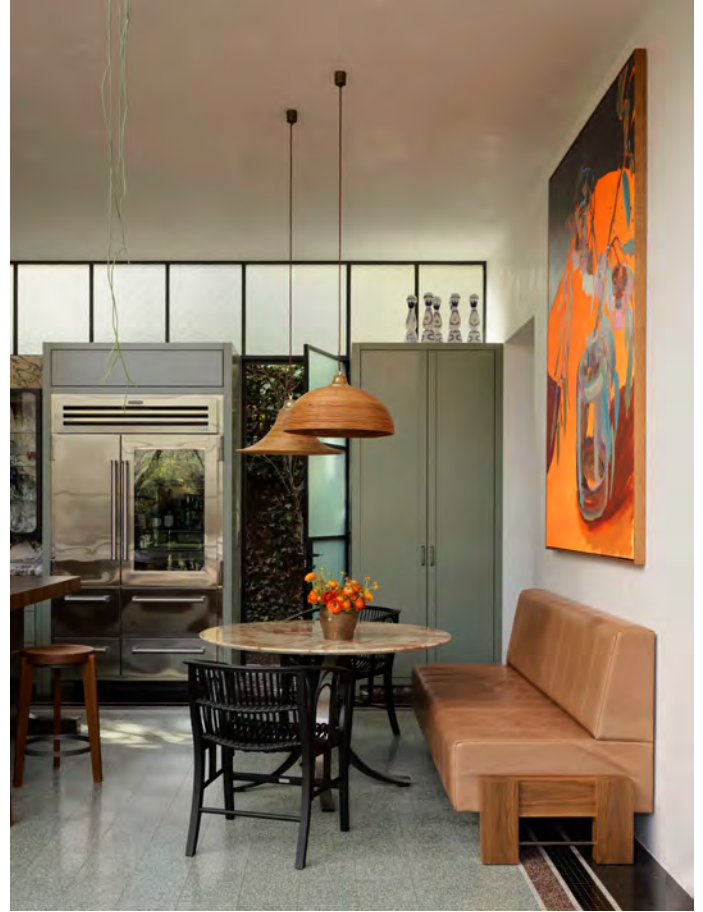
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In the double-height addition, the sunlit kitchen and living room now flow into each other. Artworks by [John Henry Whybin](#).



The material-rich kitchen features Breccia Capraia countertops and backsplash, a custom brass hood, green-painted cabinetry, and a bespoke green terrazzo tile floor with borders brown terrazzo, enamel glass tile, and chocolate brown granite. The custom island has an aged brass base and a walnut block grain worktop with stools by [Chandigarh Collective](#). Light fixtures by [Apparatus](#); artwork by [Arthur Boyd](#).



A painting by [Laura Jones](#) hangs over the well-loved [Osvaldo Borsani for Tecno breakfast table](#) with a custom banquette and [1992 Vico Magistretti wicker armchairs](#). Vintage [Vivai Del Sud](#) pendants.

Another practical requirement was lots of open walls for Hains’s collection of contemporary artworks, many by Australian talents. Their colorful skew is matched by Flack’s whimsical design details, like the triple-border on the bespoke terrazzo floor across the kitchen and living room, the black-and-white striped marble hearth in the library, or the cheeky overlook that extends a piece of the second floor’s circulation into the double-height glass addition. “I think contemporary architecture works really beautifully when there’s a contrast [with the historic], but it’s also important to integrate them,” says Flack.

The old and new portions of this house are certainly given equal design weight, but the transformation’s ultimate focus is optimizing the day-to-day experience for Hains. “This house represents David’s ability to translate style and sophistication with a bit of humor, whimsy, and personality,” she says. “There’s nothing precious about it.” And along with sun, that’s exactly what she wanted.



Pierre Chareau and Bernard Bijovet's 1932 Maison de Verre in Paris inspired Flack Studio's glass block-and-steel addition to this historic home near Melbourne, Australia.

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Atop a "rug" of onyx and marble tiles set into the French oak timber floor, a dog sculpture guards the home's entry with a [Christopher Boots chandelier](#) in the stairwell. Artwork by [Mary A. Waters](#); custom runner by [Halcyon Lake](#).



The dining table by [Adam Goodrum](#) is set with [Mario Bellini side chairs](#) under a dark green lacquered ceiling that references the garden outside. Artwork by [Jim Lambie](#).



Venetian plaster clads the walls and ceiling in the family room, retrofitted with large steel-framed windows and a small glass block-wall that alludes to the home's larger transformation. Armchairs by Baxter, a leather sofa by De Padova, and a 1965 Jorgen Kastholm and Preben Fabricius chaise longue gather around the client's own cocktail table. Artwork by Mary Tonkin.



Honey-hued onyx builds a custom sink, mirror, and wainscoting in the powder room, which also features Venetian plaster walls in a stone-colored hue by [Porter's Paints](#). Bespoke rack by [Flack Studio](#) with linen towel by [Hale Mercantile Co.](#); illuminated artwork by [Makiko Ryujin](#).



Frosted glass blocks draw natural light into this powder room with a bespoke sink, wall, mirror, and floor made of Tavoire marble (the latter has a Crema Perla marble border, and the mirror features a wood surround painted in [Porter's Paints'](#) blood red).



In south-facing rooms, like this second-floor sitting room, Flack “went intentionally dark” with its gray Venetian plaster, vintage wingback chairs, and sofa and ottoman from [Cassina](#). The millwork is fabricated of American walnut. Artworks by [Makiko Ryujin](#), [Stormie Mills](#), and [John Bodin](#).

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A pair of pendants by [Christopher Boots](#) crown the primary bedroom, where Venetian plaster, plush carpet by [Halcyon Lake](#), and the bed, armchair, and ottoman from [Cassina](#) create an enveloping, cozy feel. Artwork by [Alice Couttoupes](#).



Palladiana terrazzo grounds the primary bath, while Breccia Capraia creates the luxurious baseboards and vanity with its sleek stainless steel drawer fronts. Tub by the [Water Monopoly](#); fittings and fixtures throughout are by [Brodware](#). A sconce by [Ruemmler](#) illuminates a wall painted [Porter's Paints'](#) [Scorched Almond](#).



A sculptural sofa by [Edra](#) and drinks tables by [Scotty Bemeen](#) (left) and [Luca Recchia](#) center the toasted almond-hued library, courtesy of a [Porter's Paints](#) colorway. Artworks by [Sir Sidney Robert Nolan](#) and [Penny Byrne](#) (on mantel).



The custom wardrobes in a gray-hued guest bedroom are made with American walnut and aged brass. The bed wears linens by [Inbed](#) and a throw by [Bedouin Societe](#); 1962 Gae Aulenti for Poltronova armchair.

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Custom gray terrazzo, tile walls, and frosted glass blocks create a moody bathing room for the tub by [Agape](#).



In the new cocktail lounge, a custom aged brass cabinet holds Hains family trophies for its prize-winning horses. High gloss [Red Lantern paint by Porter's Paints](#) drenches the walls, ceiling, and onyx-topped American oak bar with 1950s [Tito Agnoli for Bonacina rattan stools](#).



An artwork by [Dale Frank](#) emphasizes the bold palette of the room, where guests can lounge in armchairs by [Vico Magistretti for De Padova](#). Vintage rattan side table and 1950s [Stilnovo floor lamp](#); custom kilim rugs throughout by [Halcyon Lake](#).



Landscape designer [Kate Seddon](#) created the home's lush garden, which can also be enjoyed through all the large new steel-framed windows. "Getting the best of the garden right in front of you was important," says AD100 designer David Flack.

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