

PHOTOGRAPHY
Eve Wilson

STYLING
Annie Portelli +
Sarah Hendriks

WRITER
Bea Taylor

A Tip of the Cap

LOCATION
Kew, VIC
Wurundjeri Country

ARCHITECTURE
Kennedy Nolan

A couple's sensitive renovation of their modernist Kew home further strengthens the mid-century charm established by its original architect — with a few twists.





←

The renovated patio. Walls in TopCer Tessellated tiles in turquoise and green from De Fazio. Paving in Castlemaine stone from Yarrabee Stone, laid by Hone Landscapes. Parisi Table and Chee chairs by Tom Fereday for SP01 Design.

↑

Rachel Hurst and Richard Wharldall, at their Kew home.

→

The square window, painted Dulux Angry Ocean, is a small homage to the architecture in Jacques Tati's 1958 film *Mon Oncle*.





‘We wanted to amp up the modernist cred of the place.’

Rachel Hurst



Extrasoft sofa in 36 Caresse, 801 by Piero Lissoni for Living Divani. Nelson Platform Bench by Herman Miller. Escape Velour carpet in Joni by Supertuft. Walls painted Dulux Natural White.



Art (from left): *Mountain Lizard Dreaming* by Kathleen Petyarre. *Vassaio da Muro #2* by Michele De Lucchi from Produzione Privata. *State Highway 23* by Richard Lewer. *Aphotos 3* by Mary-Jean Richardson. *Vassaio da Muro #1* by Michele De Lucchi from Produzione Privata. VV Cinquanta Twin wall light by Vittoriano Viganò for Astep.



When someone who’s worked in architecture renovates a mid-century house, you know it’s going to be in good hands — especially when they bring Kennedy Nolan on board.

Rachel Hurst, architectural educator and writer, and her husband Richard Wharldall, moved from Adelaide to Melbourne in 2021, originally intending to settle in Carlton or Fitzroy. That was until the bush views, open aspect and mid-century modernism of the homes in Kew caught their eye.

Their home was built by architect Charles Victor Dumbrell in 1959, and was typical of that era, incorporating a material palette of brick, concrete and timber; a low-pitched galvanised roof; and horizontal timber ribbon windows.

Luckily, the previous owners — an interior designer and engineer — had already sensitively remodelled the home from its original ‘spartan’ state. But Rachel and Richard had further plans to ‘amp up the modernist cred’ with geometry, colour, pattern and texture.

‘Perhaps [we were] a little braver than Dumbrell had been back in the late ‘50s, but sympathetic to his design and the context,’ explains Rachel. ‘We also needed masses of bookshelves!’

The renovation designed by Kennedy Nolan focused on two critical areas; the patio and the bedroom wing. Although little was changed structurally, each space was totally transformed, so seamlessly you’d think they’d been there all along.

‘Kennedy Nolan took our brief and worked the same kind of magic we had admired in their other projects over the years,’ says Rachel.



←

Titos Apostos table by Philippe Starck for Driade. CH33T chair designed by Hans J Wegner for Carl Hansen & Søn.

→

Art (from left): Untitled by Paul Hoban. *My Lamb* and *Our Home: Boat Harbour* by Rebecca Lavis. Cabinet by Khai Liew Design. Eames DCM chair.

↓

The couple's light-filled living room looks out onto the patio and balcony.



The patio is the most eye-catching and dramatic transformation. With checkerboard teal and pale blue tiles lining the walls and a sculptural steel planter in the centre housing 'the biggest ornamental tree' Rachel and Richard could reasonably fit in the space, it's become a much greener area — quite literally.

The second major focus was opening up one of the small bedrooms and passage to become what the couple have dubbed the 'Murphy study' thanks to the clever inclusion of a double Murphy (fold down) bed. It's now lined in concertina profile timber and has French doors that open to the back garden.

It took a 'brisk' 14 weeks for the renovation to complete — a testament to the relationship Rachel and Richard had with their builders, Wilderness Building Co.

'As a practising architect for some 15 years, I've never had such a genial, non-adversarial experience on a building site,' says Rachel. 'We missed them when they went!'

The proof is in the pudding. Rachel and Richard's finished home is a wonderful mix of eclecticism and modernism. It has a sense

of honesty and respect for natural materials and an enviable connection to the outside and surrounding leafy views.

Every piece in the home is an edit of years of interest in design and art — even more so after the self-described 'mature collectors' had to downsize for the move from Adelaide.

Among their most cherished pieces are two Norwegian Sisesta Westnofa leather chairs (located in the Murphy study) bought 45 years ago and reupholstered by the original manufacturers in chestnut leather to suit the new home. 'They've supported us, literally, from newlyweds to retirees!' says Rachel.

There are also countless pieces made by Rachel and Richard themselves, and other family members such as the cherrywood desk Richard made for the Murphy study; or the numerous pieces of art painted by their daughter Beatrice that line the walls. Rachel's own artworks join the ranks too.

With touches of humour, well-resolved detailing and little 'fussiness', Rachel and Richard have created a home that tips the cap to Dumbrell's original design, yet is still unequivocally, 'them.' ●



↑

The passage. Vire Thermo-Aspen wall panel by Thermory. *High Tea* series sculpture by Karlien Van Rooyen. Art on right: *Table Studies* by Rachel Hurst.

→

Rachel and Richard's gallery wall of works acquired over more than 40 years. 'This is a very personal and joyful collection for us, full of memories,' says Rachel. 'We are probably fondest of the suite of our daughter Beatrice's work amongst these.'

←

The Murphy Study. Bespoke cherrywood desk by Richard Wharldall. Art: *Studley Park 01* by Rachel Hurst. 'This is a hybrid art-architecture painting of the living room,' she explains.





↑
The entrance to the home.

→
The house has a U-shaped design with the patio sitting in the middle separating the bedroom wing from the kitchen and living.

