

SMART

SPACES

Seeking change, these owners made a quantum leap, making more of less and using every trick in the book to conjure a bewitching slice of heaven to call home.

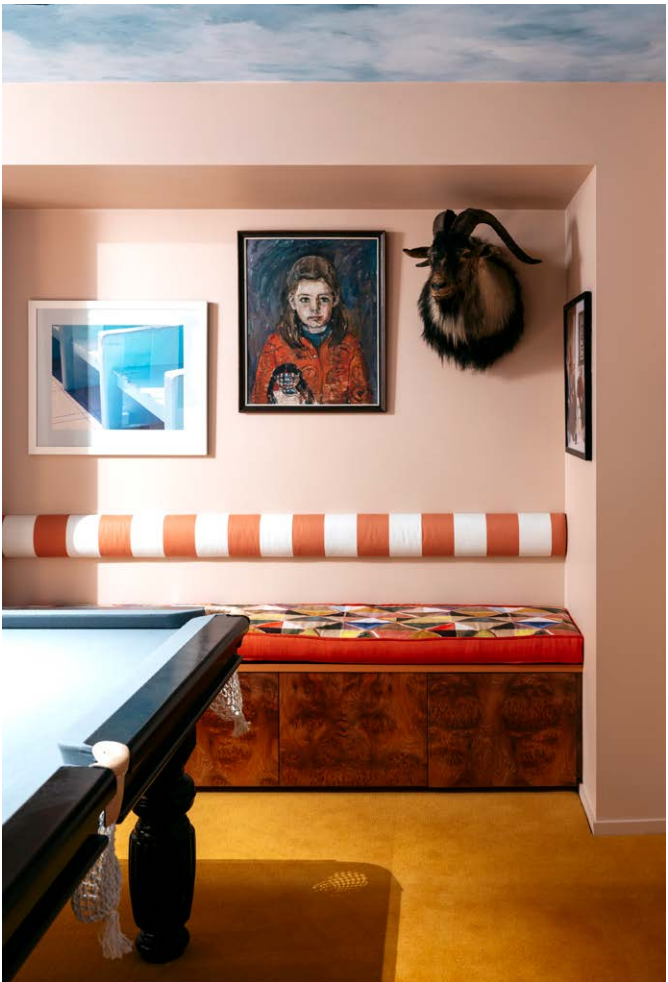
INTERIOR DESIGNER
Brett Mickan Interior Design
ACCIDENTALLY FABULOUS
[Sydney]

Photography FELIX FOREST

This page "The connection to the dining room through the concrete wall was enhanced with a large marble island in an organic form," says Brett Mickan, designer and owner of this whimsical inner-city Sydney home. Stone for the kitchen island bench and plinth from Granite & Marble Works. Kitchen joinery by Bespoke Creations. Astronaut sculpture on island from Seletti Australia. Vintage ceramic bust by unknown artist. Striped carpet runner from Cadrys. Tangerine curtain in Aldeco velvet from Domestic Textiles by Coco's Soft Furnishings. Pair of red collage works by Carlos Castell. Lambert & Fils 'Dorval 01' pendant light in Midnight Blue from Living Edge. Jasmine Poole artwork at rear.

ON THE LOOKOUT for a new project as his own home where he could make an impact and hoping to move closer to the city, interior designer Brett Mickan assumed he'd have to sacrifice space to do so. "When this 300sqm apartment with many challenges came up for sale, it was just too much to resist," he says. "A predominantly underground space with a secret gambling den sent my spidey senses into overdrive and I knew I could use all my tricks from my career in theatre, film and interior design." *How did you become involved with this project?* I live here with my husband Nick. We like to find spaces with potential for big change and to create the ultimate entertaining space to enjoy with our friends. After living in any space for around five years, Nick gets worried I'll start redecorating if we stay any longer, so that's when we get looking for the next project. *What were the challenges of the space and how did you resolve them?* Much of it is underground, so the two major challenges were light and ventilation. Not wanting to compromise ceiling heights, we used wall cavities and openings created through reinforced concrete walls to run the services for airflow.

An elaborate lighting design includes many recessed LEDs and even a light on an app set to replicate the circadian rhythm, making it ideal for growing indoor plants. The lighting journey continues with a light box picture window in the powder room and multiple sensor lights throughout. Light sources are concealed to create depth and control the eye. *What was the starting point for the interiors?* With only two tiny external windows and several small disconnected rooms, [we decided] to gut the space to see how open we could make it. Our major obstacles were structural brickwork from its early 1900s life as a factory and reinforced concrete walls from a 1990s conversion to apartments. A successful design should integrate the story of the interior, so it became a balance of highlighting the structural brick and concrete then contrasting with a layer of luxury and opulence. *How would you describe the completed interior?* I like a space to say something about the people who live in it and, here, it's yelling. Combining site and architectural relevance with a client's personality and collections forms truly unique spaces. I describe this interior as Industrial

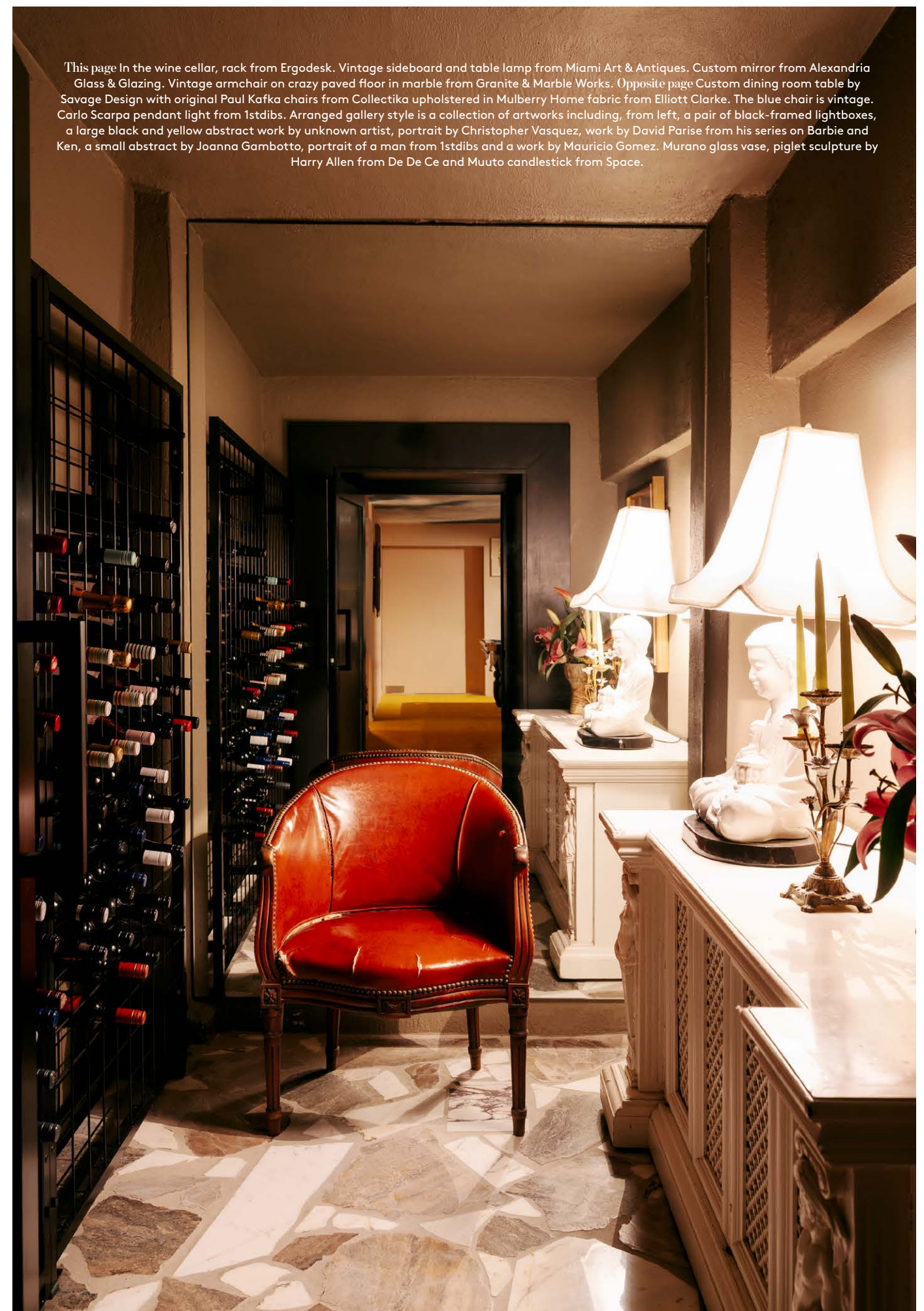


These pages, clockwise from left In the media area, Molmic sofa was upholstered in a Maharam fabric. Red vintage Knoll chair covered in Kvadrat fabric. Ottoman from Arthur G. Vintage Saarinen 'Tulip' table. Vintage timber-framed chair. Around the vintage wall light from Morris Lapidus are a cat painting by Kasia Frankowicz, a photographic work by David Parise from his Barbie and Ken series and round wall ceramic by unknown native American artist. Taxidermy from Hunters & Collectors Antiques. Above the table lamp from The Bronte Tram are grouped artworks, from left: white-framed painting by Terri Turner, orange-based work by Joanna Gambotto, unframed work by Peta Morris and timber-framed vintage work from Retro on Regent. By the pool table, bench by Bespoke Creations with seat cushion by Coco's Soft Furnishings in Inge Holst fabric from Elliott Clarke and seat back in Jab striped fabric from Unique Fabrics. Photographic artwork by Keith Raessler. Vintage painting of girl by unknown artist. Taxidermy from Lydie du Bray Antiques. In the entry, reflected in the mirror from Miami Art & Antiques is an artwork by Christopher Vasquez. On left, work by Joan Ross while on the right are pieces by Joanna Gambotto (top) and Joerg Dressler. Knoll stool by Jens Risom. Pendant light in courtyard from The Bronte Tram. Artwork seen through window by Noelle Rigaudie.



Brutalism meets Chanel: a considered blend of vintage and contemporary art and luxurious furnishings. I wanted to continue the legacy of the secret gambling room by creating another hidden space to add that element of surprise – my theatrical history showing its face. *What are some of your favourite elements?* We love to entertain, so having an inner-city apartment with the luxury of space is a treat. I also love the large reception room dedicated to drinks and conversation with a cocktail bar as the pièce de résistance. The combination of the bar's exquisite Iksel wallpaper, stunning marble and

original brick column is a show-stopper. A large pivot door disguised in the panelled dining room wall reveals what we call the playroom. This is washed in bold colour and, using a little of my theatrical craft, a trompe-l'oeil cloud ceiling. Whether it's playing a little pool, watching a movie or having an after-dinner boogie, this room could tell a lot of stories. *Were there any devices employed to maximise the sense of space?* We created long sightlines to highlight distance with lighting and used mirrors and reflective surfaces. Each area is designed to draw you in to linger a while as it reveals glimpses into spaces beyond.



This page In the wine cellar, rack from Ergodesk. Vintage sideboard and table lamp from Miami Art & Antiques. Custom mirror from Alexandria Glass & Glazing. Vintage armchair on crazy paved floor in marble from Granite & Marble Works. Opposite page Custom dining room table by Savage Design with original Paul Kafka chairs from Collectika upholstered in Mulberry Home fabric from Elliott Clarke. The blue chair is vintage. Carlo Scarpa pendant light from 1stdibs. Arranged gallery style is a collection of artworks including, from left, a pair of black-framed lightboxes, a large black and yellow abstract work by unknown artist, portrait by Christopher Vasquez, work by David Parise from his series on Barbie and Ken, a small abstract by Joanna Gambotto, portrait of a man from 1stdibs and a work by Mauricio Gomez. Murano glass vase, piglet sculpture by Harry Allen from De De Ce and Muuto candlestick from Space.

This page In the bedroom, headboard by H&J Furniture upholstered in Alhambra fabric from Elliott Clarke. Bed linens from Ivy Lane, throw from Pigott's Store and custom cushions by Coco's Soft Furnishings. Bedside table from Lightly. Vintage etagere from Miami Art & Antiques. **Opposite page, clockwise from top** In the ensuite, the vanity sports a marble top from Granite & Marble Works with mirror cabinets and base by Bespoke Creations. Synergii bath, Ram rain shower and Brodware hand shower all from Sydney Tap & Bathroomware. Wall tiles from The Art of Tiles. Towel from Ivy Lane. Vintage Morris Lapidus wall light. Striped vase from Jones & Co on joinery by Bespoke Creations. Bar counter in marble from Granite & Marble Works. Articolo wall light from Est Lighting. Wall paper by Iksel Decorative Arts from Boyac.



The ceilings were relatively low, so we used a lot of reflective finishes. A gloss lacquered ceiling in the front reception room, an old decorator's trick to bounce the light around, enhances the sense of light and space. At one end of the dining room we created an internal courtyard lit by a LED that imitates the circadian rhythm, giving the illusion there is a natural light source deep inside the space and tricking the eye into thinking that this area is not underground. *What informed the selection of furniture, art, fittings and finishes?* I'm a passionate collector of art and furniture, favouring bold colour and vintage pieces and have, perhaps, an addiction to distinctive lamps. I like to form literal connections between art and furnishings through a balance of colour and materials to create layers of warmth and intrigue for interiors that feel organically formed and accidentally fabulous. The soft furnishings, favouring opulent textures, luxury and colours drawn from the catwalk make bold statements that contrast against the industrial structure. *Were you happy with the result? What do you enjoy about being in the space?* The transformation is dramatic and the space is a delight to spend time in, from the enlarged, light-filled openings onto the inner-city lane frontage to the generous and luxurious interior. Like walking through Alice's looking glass, you're transported into an unexpected world. A long unused storage space was reinvented as a fully equipped kitchen. The connection to the dining room through the concrete wall was enhanced with a large marble island in an organic form, giving the impression it is breaking through the space. This home is ideal for sitting in a cosy corner with a book, hosting a formal dinner for 14 or ready when 30 friends drop in for cocktails after work. bmid.com.au

