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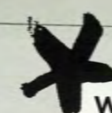
DREAM IT. DESIGN IT. DO IT.

in character




A heritage Melbourne apartment in a former chocolate factory takes its renovation style cues from the industrial history of the area

WORDS ROSANNE PEACH PHOTOGRAPHY SHANNON McGRATH



Who lives here: Dean Lefkos, a property developer and the director of Chapter Group.

Style of home: The two-bedroom apartment in Prahran's old Red Tulip chocolate factory has been given a chic refit to honour its industrial past.

 Purchased in 2012, the refit took nine months, with three in design and approval, and six in construction.

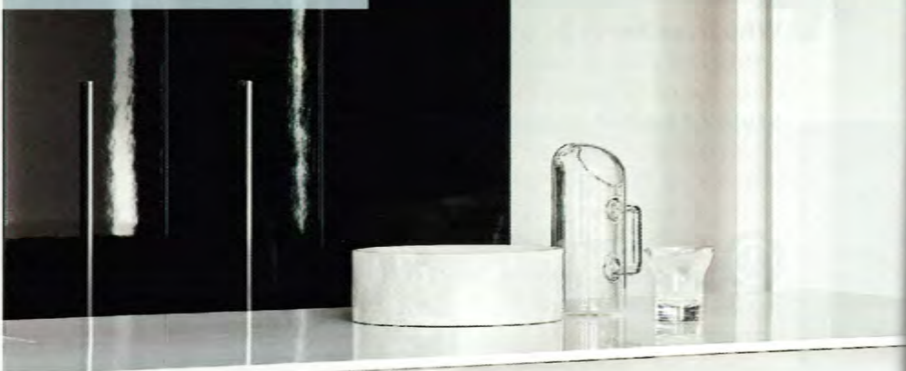
living area

The unique curved chimney acts as a centrepiece, without overpowering the space. Red bricks are a textural feature, a striking contrast with the warm timber. A Moroso 'Shanghai Tip' coffee table and Gan 'Canevas' rug from Hub Furniture provide a contemporary edge.



kitchen

Highly reflective surfaces and a smoky mirrored glass splashback position the kitchen as a jewel in the open living space. "It's almost about showing off the idea of cooking," says Tisha. "The gloss really celebrates the space whereas a matt finish would have dulled it down."



There's something romantic and inspirational about living in a converted chocolate factory," says Dean Lefkos, owner of this Melbourne apartment.

The iconic Red Tulip chocolate factory, converted into apartments in the 1990s, had long been on this property collector's radar and already housed a couple of his friends. When Dean's 'golden ticket' moment finally arrived and an apartment came up for sale, the developer moved fast to make it his own.

While there's no glass elevator, a beautiful brick chimney runs through the space to add plenty of magic and hint that maybe, just maybe, a waterfall of chocolate once flowed nearby.

Along with character, the apartment also had space on its side, with room for a 10-seater dining table and a couple of spare bedrooms to play with. "It's very generous and didn't feel like modern buildings, which can be very tight," says Dean.

It was, however, dark and dated, and in need of a serious lift. Dean had worked with the team at K2LD, an architectural firm belonging to his business partner, on many projects and relished commissioning them for his own pad. "I wanted something contrasting but at the same time complementary to the heritage," says Dean.



DREAM IT.

The original factory chimney, dating back to 1910, is a stand-out feature in this apartment and became the natural focus in dreaming up a design. "The chimney runs right through the building but there are only two apartments that have it as a feature right inside the living space," says Dean. "It has a function in creating different spaces but it's also just a beautiful thing to have inside the apartment. I really loved it and wanted to be sure it got the appropriate treatment."

His architect, Tisha Lee from K2LD, saw an opportunity to also draw on the industrial roots of the gentrified surrounds, with the view of the old factory's rooftop below another cue. "We decided not to fight the structure," says Tisha. "We could have gone the opposite way and closed it all up to make it really slick, but we decided to embrace the industrial nature of the area and bring that inside the apartment."

Dean's wishlist

- + "A separate media room with everything built-in and wireless, I'm a movie buff and like to relax that way. It's hard to get the time off, but it was on the wishlist!"
- + "Dean really enjoys cooking when he gets a chance, so there was a lot of emphasis on the kitchen being a place where he could celebrate what he was doing," says architect Tisha.
- + "Lighting is very important to me functionally, but it's also a way to create different moods throughout the day and across different seasons," says Dean. "We installed about 70 lights throughout, which can all be dimmed."



DESIGN: WISHLIST DINING AREA/ BEATRIX ROWE INTERIOR DESIGN; OFFICE: BEATRIX ROWE.COM.AU
UNILINE SUSPENDED PROFILE LIGHT; DELTA LIGHT; DELTALIGHT.COM



dining area

The chocolate factory's original brick wall makes a bold backdrop for dining. The chimney's rounded form is complemented by MDF Italia 'Flow' chairs and Toss B 'Sphere Pendant' lights, both from Hub Furniture. "The curves soften the feel of the space so it's not too masculine," says Tisha.

open-plan living

Clean lines and a crisp palette in the living area keep the focus on the chimney and urban outlook. Slimline 'Last Minute' stools by Viccarbe and the Moroso 'Gentry' sofa from Hub Furniture offer neutral tones. Both are designed by Patricia Urquiola, resulting in a coordinated look.

DESIGN IT.

The already workable floorplan was improved by streamlining the walk-in robe to free up ensuite space, refitting the kitchen and anchoring it with an island bench, and opening up the third bedroom to act as a media room.

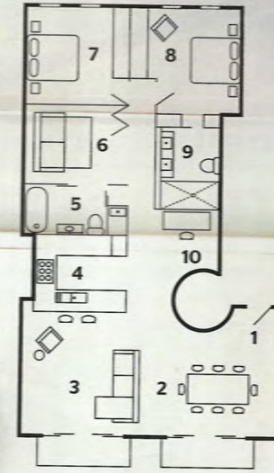
The tweaks also helped spread light through the home, something Tisha focused on further with her choice of paint, surfaces and all furnishings and fittings, down to the linen.

"The palette was largely influenced by ideas that wouldn't fight against that context," she says. "Hence you see a lot more white in the space. Then we thought about what else could enhance these features, and brought in things to contrast with white. For example, black light fittings, tapware and darkening the floors."

The freedom to furnish as well as fit out meant Tisha could play with texture at every level to contrast with the red-brick chimney. "It was all about finding materials that had a 'feel' to them, like the linen sofa, stitched tapestry-type rug and the timber dining table," she says.

It's a result that's proved it was well worth handing over the reins, says Dean. "There has to be an element of trust," he says. "For me, I wanted to say, 'here are some ideas I've got, here's the brief that I'd like to see, but you guys figure out how to do it.'"

DISHES (ON TABLE), WHEN OBJECTS WORK, WHENOBJECTSWORK.COM



1. Entry
2. Dining area
3. Living area
4. Kitchen
5. Bathroom
6. Media room
7. Bedroom
8. Master bedroom
9. Ensuite
10. Study nook



master bedroom

This space has been made over with soft layers of linen, a Molteni&C 'Glove' bed from Hub Furniture and plush carpet. A Topos 'DSL' light and Molteni 'When' side table add plenty of personality.

ensuite

By simplifying the adjoining areas, there's more room for the ensuite. Clever material choices further enhance the luxe feeling. "The more mirror you put in, the bigger the space feels. We've hung the vanity on the mirror, which is a builder's nightmare but it looks great," says Tisha.



GAN TRENZAS SPACES RUG, HUB, HUBFURNITURE.COM.AU

lessons learnt

"If you're not afraid to celebrate the structure and the surfaces then you can still create a great sense of height and space. People can be afraid when they see a lower ceiling height and think they have to cover everything up. But if you're willing to work with these conditions and not fight it, you can still get a really good outcome" TISHA LEE, ARCHITECT

media room

While the open-plan living area is perfect for entertaining, Dean wanted a place to chill out with all the media mod-cons. The third bedroom has been reworked with an emphasis on snug furnishings to deliver a clever hideaway. A large Trevor Mein artwork sets the tone, while a Gan 'Sail Spaces' beanbag and ottoman from Hub Furniture are welcoming touches.



DO IT.

When you start any renovation, let alone a heritage project, there's always a mystery as to what lurks beneath. "Renovations are hard. They are even harder when you have an apartment building where you have limited access, neighbours that restrict work hours, and a lift to get things up," says Dean. "This wasn't without its challenges but it has come with a great reward."

Tisha's approach to just go with the flow and embrace the unforeseen is largely to her credit. Instead of cladding the ceiling, she left it exposed so you can see the underside of the steel-form work of the slab above. "I think there's something really nice about that when you think of the industrial nature of the building," she says. "Why fight it?" Likewise, pipework and the steel beams have been left on show as a testament to the past. "There were some awkward junctions where the fire pipe would come into the space. We decided to let it be another one of those elements that hangs in the space," says Tisha. "The light fittings we chose really announce themselves, so we figured we'd allow the fire pipes to do the same."

A lick of paint and refined furnishings soften the hard elements for a juxtaposition that defines everything about this chocolate factory refit. "I love that it pays homage to its heritage and is calm inside, but you're amongst the hustle and bustle outside," says Dean. 10

Visit k2ld.com.au to see more of Tisha's work.

the best bits

- + "The red-brick chimney is quite beautiful in terms of it being a sculptural object itself, sitting inside this space," says Tisha. Dean adds, "You can't re-create something like that."
- + "The collision of textures creates a feel-good space. You're really drawn to run your hands over the red brick, it's very tactile," says Dean. "In the kitchen, the high-gloss joinery contrasts with the bricks and industrial ceiling - it works really well."
- + "I love the way the apartment feels at different times of day, plus the views over Prahara and the way they are always changing," says Dean.