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THE INTRIGUE OF TENSION

The art and objects in this space deliberately don't match. Rather they stage a dinner party of sorts in which the participants are in lively conversation.

Penny Craswell writes.





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/ The more dialogue and difference between the art, furnishings and other elements, the better the outcome. When there's a bit of tension, I find that more intriguing. / ALEXANDRA DONOHOE CHURCH

When a home is bought, renovated and sold on, interiors are created as a blank slate, resulting in a boring space. That was certainly the case for this terrace house in Paddington, Sydney, which had no need of a new kitchen or bathroom when its owners took possession, but was sorely lacking in personality.

As this was the second home that this young couple had entrusted to interior design studio Decus Interiors, the brief was pretty broad: to make the house a bit more them. While the couple work in finance, their interests are in fashion, art and design. Decus' **Alexandra Donohoe Church** says they are more adventurous than most: "These clients are quiet when you meet them but are rock n' roll underneath."

Entering the front door, you come to an entry corridor with a stunning ombré mirror by **Sabine Marcelis** that the clients bought from Gallery Sally Dan Cuthbert, Sydney — a follow-up purchase after first buying a dark red resin table called *Candy Column* for the client's birthday. Decus designed an entry hall table to go with the mirror — a piece that is actually made of strips of Marblo, a resin material, that was bracketed to the wall. Made by **Jonathan West**, it sports ice cream colours — pale pink, vanilla and chocolate.

The downstairs formal living room features the Russell sofa from Italian brand Minotti with two small portrait paintings by **Camille Olsen-Ormandy** — *Portrait of Jess* and *Portrait of Duc*. A custom rug by Tsar and a black fireplace give the room weight, while an expressive painting above the mantelpiece and two brightly-coloured glass vases by **Edward Wearing** bring in flashes of colour.

Probably most noteworthy in this room are two custom pieces by Decus, made by **JP Finsbury** — a dark green cabinet with India Mahdavi handles and gloss tiles on top, and a green coffee table with sinuous curves surrounded by a brass curved frame. A fuzzy Nepal armchair by Baxter from Criterion and a custom-designed dark green ottoman, and two sculptural works — **Ivana Taylor's** fabric and wood pieces, and a textile work in foam and lycra that looks like a bronze statue by **Tarryn Gill** (also from Gallery Sally Dan Cuthbert).

The main living spaces in this house are on the top floor, where the living room features more stand-out pieces. A large curved banquette sofa creates ample opportunities for socialising and a golden Scrigno cabinet by Brazilian designers **Fernando and Humberto Campana** for Edra creates a sparkle: "It's the party," says Donohoe Church.



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A custom blush quartz-topped coffee table with 3D-printed base fits perfectly in the inside curve of the sofa, while the pink **Pierre Paulin** Groovy Chair's were brought over from the Netherlands. The pink photograph above the sofa is *Peach Wall* by Los Angeles-based artist **George Byrne** and adds an architectural reference — the work is part of a series of photographs of Miami buildings.

This interior proves that the best way to add personality to a home is by adding considered pieces

of art and design. But that doesn't mean they should match. Donohoe Church compares placing art in a home with a dinner party: the best dinner parties have people from different walks of life with differing world views — that's when the good conversations really happen.

The same is true with art: "The more dialogue and difference between the art, furnishings and other elements, the better the outcome," she says. "When there's a bit of tension, I find that more intriguing."

1 / Scigno Console by Edra with *Totem of Slubs* and *Light Gesture* sculptures by Ivana Taylor and Sally Smart's *The Artists Ballet (Duet)*.

2 / Ivana Taylor's *Wrapped Circle Sconce* hangs with Camile Olsen-Ormandy's *Portrait of Jess* and *Portrait of Duc*.

3 / In the hallway hangs Sabine Marcelis's *Seeing Glass Off Round Hue* mirror with the India Mahdavi Zoom Vase from Studio Alm.

4 / Above the fireplace sits Edward Waring's sculptures *Maude* and *Lily*.

5 / In the living room hangs George Byrne's *Peach Wall* with a custom designed sofa and coffee table by Decus Interiors.

6 / The Nepal Baxter chair sits with Ivana Taylor's sculptures *Arch Bend* and *Garden Arch* and Sally Smart's *Pirate Physiognomy#13 (The Exquisite Pirate)*.

PHOTOS: DAVE WHEELER
COURTESY: DECUS INTERIORS

