

life by design

After years of travelling the world, interiors specialist Simone Haag found her calling back in her home town of Melbourne. Heather Nette King steps inside her impressive modernist gem.

Photography by Armelle Habib

Simone Haag's daughters (from left) Clover, Juniper and Goldie relax in the sunken lounge. The tapestry from Fundamente is flanked by Le Mura and Tacchini chairs from Stylecraft.

From glamorous international nomad to darling of Australia's design world, interiors specialist Simone Haag's rise has been meteoric. "I've had a host of amazing jobs – working as a flight attendant on private jets, in a heli-boarding operation in Canada, as a snowboard instructor in France, and in events at the chic Sanderson Hotel in London," says Haag.

Returning to her home town of Melbourne, Haag followed her passion and chased down a dream entry-level position at a top-tier interiors firm. After eight years spent honing her skills in the curation of furniture, art and accessories, Haag started her own design studio specialising in textured and timeless interiors. Now, having compiled an impressive portfolio of high-end interior projects and won a slew of industry awards, she's taking commissions for hotel projects, presenting TV shows and leading design tours to Los Angeles.

Among all this, Haag, 44, and her husband Rhys have had three daughters (Goldie, 9, Clover, 7, and Juniper, 4) and renovated their first home (featured in *Sunday Life* in 2014). They are now lovingly restoring "Light Well House", another modernist gem in Melbourne's east. The four-bedroom, double-brick home was designed by architect Ian J. Smith and built in 1972. It has two lounges, a study and a separate studio and guest bedroom.



"The living spaces all face north, and I love how the light dances on the floor throughout the day," says Haag. In the family lounge, a 1970s lamp by François Chatain was bought through 1st Dibs and the sofa, from Space, is by Arflex.



Top left "All of the 1970s appliances still work, but there is a dearth of power points," says Haag. **Top right** Vintage rugs add a layer of texture; among Haag's vast collection of artisan ceramics and mid-century furniture is a wall artwork, *Piece of My Heart*, by Emerson Ceramics. **Bottom left** Haag sourced the desk from eModerno and chairs from the Paris flea markets; the wall hanging is from Fundamente. **Bottom right** The two separate zones in the sunken lounge can comfortably fit 12 adults. The rug is from Halcyon Lake, the artwork by Thomas Thorby-Lister.

"It's such a treat to have my own study, with space to ponder projects and lay out fabrics and finishes," says Haag. "I love the sunken lounge, too. A TV was never on the cards in there. The focus is on the forest and the fireplace.

"We've been here for under a year and are still enjoying the home in its 'extremely original' condition, just adding our furniture and art," she says. "My passion is collecting Italian vintage pieces from flea markets and dealers. With all the timber in the home, I've been drawn to robust, brutalist-inspired pieces of metal, stone and glass."

Haag can't speak too highly of the location, either. "It's all about the incredible open spaces – we're on an acre and can't see any other homes, plus the walk to school is through a magical bushy track," she says.

While the family are enjoying their home in its original condition, there are plans for the future. "We're here for the long haul, so it's just small adjustments for now, like some new lighting and updating the window treatments. Stage two will be landscaping, then in a few years we'll create a 'teen hub' for the girls."

For anyone else looking at taking on their own renovation, Haag has this advice: "Hunt down the home you want. We wanted to buy this house for over 18 months and we persevered and kept working towards it being ours." •



Timber panelling features on the walls and Haag has layered the home with her signature mix of design influences. The wall art is by Eline Baas and the pendant light is from Japanese maker Time & Style.