Simone Haag lives here

For the interior decorator, her home Light Well House pays tribute to its mid-century heritage while also being matched to her family's lifestyle.

Photography
Armelle Habib

For me, Light Well House celebrates the balance between architecture and decoration, restraint and richness, past and present. Working on the design of this project – which is nestled in a leafy Melbourne suburb – was deeply personal: to create a home for our family that would feel both elevated and effortless.

When we bought the home two years ago, my husband Rhys and I personally connected with the architect, Ian J. Smith, who designed it in 1972. This allowed an even more genuine connection that spanned space and time – the house was a place that could embody my design philosophy with meaningful connections to the architecture.

One of the aspects that initially drew us to the home was the internal courtyard, or light well, which serves as the project's namesake and poetic anchor. This void draws light into the centre of the house and allows for a visual and emotional connection between spaces. It is a design gesture that lends an open, gallery-like atmosphere while still maintaining intimacy and functionality. The light well – while undeniably poetic – also serves to improve passive cooling and natural light throughout the day, adding sustainability and comfort to its visual appeal. The result is a home that, to me, feels intentional and cohesive.

True to its mid-century bones, the interior decoration is an interplay of soft modernism and curated warmth, where I've regularly experimented with the furniture, art, objects and styling. My own brief for reworking the interiors for our family was for it to be sophisticated but not showy, comfortable but never casual. I've employed a material palette that's rich in texture but subtle in tone: buttery leathers, honed stone, timber with visible grain, hand-blown glass and woven textiles.

We've updated fixtures and fittings and added pieces sourced locally and internationally, with a particular emphasis on collectable design – those future heirlooms that can be lived with now but appreciated forever. In updating the home, I wanted to remain true to the architecture but also to stamp my signature, perhaps most visible in the layering, and for each space to feel relaxed but refined, minimal yet soulful.

Artwork plays a pivotal role in anchoring the mood of each space, with pieces chosen for their emotional resonance as well as their visual impact. I've aimed to curate a dialogue between art and object, pairing, for instance, a contemporary ceramic with a brutalist bronze, or a Danish occasional chair with a modern textile. In the open-plan living area, oversized sculptural furniture contrasts with delicate lighting and curated objects.

The bedrooms are personal sanctuaries, each offering its own subtle personality through tone and texture. The primary suite is restrained and serene, where the bushy outlook evokes the essence of a country home. For our daughters' rooms, a more playful spirit comes through, with bold bedding, sculptural lighting and charming details that, in some ways, reflect each of them and can evolve with their needs over time.

To our family, the success of Light Well House lies not only in its beauty but in its useability. This is a home designed to be lived in, not just looked at. Practical considerations – ample storage, modern family functionality, flow between indoor and outdoor zones – have been incorporated into the design narrative. Perhaps, most importantly, the house feels like a true reflection of our family. It is not a showroom or a style exercise, but a deeply considered home that will evolve with us across seasons and stages and that is an expression of the work I do – where the architecture, interior decoration and emotional storytelling come together in spaces that feel both aspirational and grounded, layered and liveable.

Artwork Thomas Thorby-Lister