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ALEX THE ASTRONAUT'S LATEST ALBUM COVER ART COLAB
RAMPING UP THE SENSORY PLEASURE OF YOUR HOME
IN THE STUDIO WITH RAMESH MARIO NITHIYENDRAN

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SLIDING DOORS

Past and present, east and west collide in this heritage Toorak home, skilfully updated by Lucy Clemenger Architects to unlock space and maximise functionality.

Charlotte Middleton writes.

After several prior renovations, the house known as Villa Glen was ready for a comprehensive facelift and contemporary extension when art consultant **Georgie Bruce** engaged Lucy Clemenger Architects. The redesign of the grand, c.1930 residence called for expanded living and entertaining spaces to accommodate Bruce's family of five, but the element the clients were most eager to see accounted for was their art collection: "It is very important to us and reflects our lives, living overseas in Seoul, Hong Kong, and Singapore," explains Bruce.

One of Lucy Clemenger Architect (LCA)'s first projects as a design studio, work on Villa Glen commenced in 2016 and was completed in 2020. Whilst originally built in the 1930s, the house was an interwar villa with restrained interiors, largely lacking in ornamentation. Undertaking both the architecture and interior design, LCA therefore aimed to introduce additional design features, detailing, and materials referencing the building's art deco-era vintage.

Lucy Clemenger drew particular inspiration from the architectural colour system set forth by pioneer of modern architecture **Le Corbusier** in 1931, and as such, the interiors combine harmonious colour palettes with contemporary detailing. "Marbled stone, brass accents, deep walnut timber flooring and joinery

with pops of pink provide interest, texture, and depth to this grand old dame," she says.

With the clients emphasising their love of entertaining and spending time with family and friends at home, the brief called for an open plan kitchen and interconnected living and dining space, seamlessly leading onto their terraced garden; a home office for Bruce's business GB Art Consulting; and the relocation of a key stairway to maximise flow.

Central to the design studio's vision for the spatial restructure was the introduction of new openings between rooms, allowing for curated views across and through different areas of the house to Bruce's enviable collection of contemporary Australian and Asian art. Large, sliding wooden doors with stately brass handles – in one instance even lined with gold Japanese rice paper – were added between the dining, family, sitting and dining rooms.

The luxurious new sitting room adjoining the dining room became Clemenger's favourite space within the house, featuring French doors looking out onto the garden, and a fireplace framed in stone. Above, the delicate glass artwork *Ho! Keum River* by **Lee Kwoung-Hwa** hangs quietly. "It's highly decorative, and the peaceful colour palette adds to the calm and tranquil feel of the room," says Clemenger.





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Planning the interiors in order to best showcase the client's sizeable and distinguished art collection took careful consideration. During the design process, Clemenger would insert images of key artworks into her designs, allowing Bruce to envision how they would present in the space. "It was particularly handy," says Bruce, "especially with two of my favourite works by Chinese artist **Tsang Kin-Wah** and Korean artist **Lee Kyoung-Hwa**."

Throughout the home, an array of paintings by Chinese, Japanese, and Korean artists are complemented and contrasted by notable Australian talents **Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori**, **Guido Maestri**, and **Del Kathryn Barton**. Likewise, sculptural figures by **Miki Taira** and **Kaws** embodying distinctly Eastern aesthetics play off against homegrown forms by **Lisa Roet** and **Alex Seton**, resulting in a symphony of Australian and Asian influences.

For Clemenger and team, working with a client who had a high visual sensibility, was passionate about art and interested in design, and who appreciated the importance of honouring the building's heritage made the process all the more rewarding. "Spending time with our clients and discussing their ambitions, we were able to work together to ensure the design met both their aspirational and pragmatic requirements," says Clemenger.

And from the client's perspective? "The end result was everything we could have hoped for."





1 / In the dining room sits (from left): Miki Taira's sculpture *The Foolish Husband and the Mustard Pickles*; a sculpture by Kaws; and Guy Maestri's painting *Untitled*.

2 / Lee Young-Hwa's painting presides over the living room.

3 / In the bedroom hangs Jochen Pankrath's painting *Landschaft mit Baum*.

4 / In the study sits a ceramic sculpture by Alexandra Standen.

5 / In the open plan kitchen and dining rooms hangs (from left): Chris Wake's *Diva in the Paddock with Flying Dog*; Del Kathryn Barton's painting *If You Leave with Me*; and Alex Seton's sculpture *A Paddle 2014*.

PHOTOS: SHANNON MCGRATH. COURTESY: LUCY CLEMENGER, MELBOURNE