



Dark arts

DANIELLE WRIGHT visits the home of Chelsea Hing, which, with its dark walls, has become her personal portrait



INTERIOR designer Chelsea Hing has always loved a beautiful room. At 15, she set to work rearranging the furniture in her parents' living room, well before she knew the terms "good bones" or "personality pieces". As a young girl, she remembers always making things with her hands and learning to sew on an old Singer sewing machine under the close eye of her grandmother.

She seemed destined for a creative career, but then she decided to become a lawyer.

Fate intervened just in time, and she turned back to design. Fresh out of design school, she worked for one of Melbourne's oldest interior design firms — Nexus Designs — which proved a fertile training ground. There she worked in interior design from renovation through to decoration.

"You need a very technical brain filled with construction knowledge and a capacity to talk to builders and trades with a million decisions to make, as well as a brain wired for the decoration part of the equation," Hing says.

"I think designers should do their own home as soon as they can in their careers to learn it's not just about selecting cool stuff, it's about responding to what people need to live better than they're living."

Hing's home project for the past four years has been an apartment in an Italianate Victorian block in St Kilda, which she shares with her four-year-old son Louis Epifanidis.

"Living in a small apartment, the challenge is to make it function as a beautiful home, while still being robust enough for kids," Hing says.

"Nothing is too precious, but there's still a level of luxury and enjoyment."

Hing's open-plan kitchen and living room has an interior wrapped in Sheffield Grey walls, creating a moody, romantic atmosphere when coupled with her classic, luxurious furnishings.

Above the black fireplace is a light sculpture of a neon cross by Sanja Paboki, which sits next to a selection of books topped by a gold Warhol banana sculpture. In the corner, a Boston ivy in a large white pot tries valiantly to reach the ceiling up a metal chain, while a painting by Kristen Daniels on perspex shows off the dark wall behind splashes of colour.

The apartment is also peppered with intimate black and white portraits of family life by Hing's former partner, photographer Nik Epifanidis.

The impact of the glamorous pieces against the dark walls creates an enchanting feel to the space and Hing says it changes dramatically from day to night.

"Originally, we painted it all white and had dark floorboards. It was a very classic palette and we injected colour with the furnishings," Hing says.

"It was pretty transformative when we painted the walls dark, but it works."

One of her tips is to put personality into the utility spaces of a home, such as the bathrooms and kitchen, by adding rugs, lamps, sculptures and artwork to create less of a cold, functional area.

"A space evolves, just as a person does," she says. "I don't think a space is ever really done and in many respects a person's home is a personal portrait. If a person continues to evolve, then so should their interior."



Personal project: Interior designer Chelsea Hing has channelled her creativity over the past four years into her St Kilda apartment, which features dark walls, black and white portraits and splashes of colour in the furnishings.

PICTURES
NICOLE CLEARY



Inside knowledge

What first attracted you to the property?
The fact it's a significant St Kilda building built around the 1880s. I also love my home to be a bit romantic and classic, something that creates an emotion and a poetic mood, so this home ticked all the boxes.

Favourite room?
The living room, because there's a lot of scope to express myself in the interior – I'm always adding and subtracting design pieces. It has dark walls, so it comes alive at night, which is when it's really beautiful.

Favourite piece of furniture?
My gold Atoallo table lamp. It's a classic and beautiful piece created by one of my favourite designers, Achille Castiglioni. I have a pact with myself to acquire a piece from all of my favourite designers.

What's been done to the house?
The developers wanted to rip out the fireplace and some period features, but we managed to save most. We had to turn our plans around in under two weeks, so didn't have too much time to consider everything. We made the long skinny study into a bathroom and laundry, turned the bathroom into the bedroom and made another small room fit into the floor plan. A lot was done to the kitchen in terms of the joinery and, two years after moving in, the walls were painted.

Bit you've learnt to live with?
In old buildings, there are always things you have to live with, such as windows that vibrate with the wind, cracks that appear and a few draughts. But, I have the privilege as a designer not to have to live with anything, because I can always change things. Overall, it's a great little pad.

Still on the to-do list?
The bathroom. At the moment, it just has the standard finishes that came with the apartment. I'd like to bring it more in line with what the rest of the home is like.

Favourite country for sourcing items for the home?
In my business, the great stuff comes out of Italy. There are so many great designers from this century who were European and Italy is very well known for carrying the torch for furniture and interior design. I've been trained in the classics and the old guard runs through my design DNA.

Biggest party the house has hosted?
I haven't had any parties yet, but I plan to.

Styling tip/advice?
If you're working with dark colours on the walls then it works best when you wrap the whole interior space in it. One thing I've found is you need to up the lighting by double – or triple – and find artwork that pops, it has to be gutsy.

weekend superquiz

- Longines and Rolex are brands of what accessory?
- What is the largest species of parrot in the rainforest?
- Who wrote the book *The BFG* (*Big Friendly Giant*)?
- The image of which president appears on the US \$1 bill?
- What is regarded as the world's most common contagious disease?
- Which team won the 2015 AFL premiership?
- In which area of London did Jack the Ripper kill five women in 1888?
- Bardinet, Napoleon and St Agnes are brands of which alcoholic spirit?
- Which Australian capital city has the Ascot and Belmont Park horse racetracks?
- Who starred as Deloris Van Carter in 1992 film *Sister Act*?
- In Morse code, which letter is indicated by one dash?
- Which advertising character was "bad, mean and mighty unclean and he spread disease with the greatest of ease"?
- In which country was Pope Francis born?
- Who is Charlie Brown's pet beagle in the comic strip *Peanuts*?
- What type of creature is a beluga sturgeon?
- Name the author of the 2015 colouring book *Secret Garden*.
- In which years did Lauren Jackson win MVP (Most Valuable Player) awards in the WNBA?
- Who received the 2015 Young Australian of the Year award?
- Who was president of North Vietnam (Democratic Republic of Vietnam) from 1945-69?
- Who plays Captain Tony Stone in 2009 film *The Messenger*?
- What is the main ingredient of the dish called "angels on horseback"?
- Gwydion is a magician, hero and trickster of which country's mythology?
- Name the two children of Prince Andrew, Duke of York.
- For what crime was Chicago gangster Al Capone jailed for 11 years?
- Mandible is the scientific name for which bone in mammals and fish?
- The Galapagos Islands is a province of which country?
- What is regarded as the normal body temperature of a human being?
- What is the maiden name of Jacqueline Kennedy/Onassis?
- Which Australian actor was the voice of John Tracy and The Hood in TV series *Thunderbirds* (1965-66)?
- Who starred as James T. Kirk, commanding officer of the starship *Enterprise* in *Star Trek: The Original Series*?



1. Watches; 2. Macaw; 3. Road Dahl; 4. George Washington; 5. Common cold; 6. Hawktry; 7. East End; 8. Randy; 9. Perth; 10. Whipped Goldberg; 11. T. 12. Louie the Fly (Mother); 13. Argentina; 14. Snogopy; 15. Fish; 16. Johanna Bastard; 17. 2003; 2007 and 2010; 18. NIG Murdoch; 19. Los Angeles; 20. Woody Harrelson; 21. Oysters; 22. Wales; 23. Bearice and Eugene; 24. Tax evasion; 25. Jay Barrett; 26. Ecuador; 27. 37C (98.6F); 28. Bouvier; 29. Ray Barrett; 30. William Shnerer; 31. Louis Botha; 32. World Cup of football (soccer); 33. Israel; 34. 1978; 35. Squeezee; 36. Alice Hurne; 37. 27 years; 38. Brandon Walsh; 39. Oliver Cromwell; 40. Taj Mahal; 41. 1976 in Montreal; 42. Brazil; 43. Perth; 44. 1978; 45. Shoulder blade; 46. Ebla; 47. 27 years; 48. Oscar Wilde; 49. Carlton; 49. Nicole Kidman; 50. 30.48cm.

ANSWERS