



*Designer David Flack in his Melbourne studio. His pinboard features inspiration gathered from magazines and books alongside his own designs and floorplans.*



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: the gallery wall in the stairwell includes artworks by Madeline Kidd, Minna Gilligan, Sean Bailey, Katherine Hattam and Jordan Marani, all from Daine Singer; Judith Sinnamon from Edwina Corlette Gallery; Christopher Pennings; Derek Swallow and Adam Pyett. In the studio, 'Two Tier, Four Lamp Pendant' by Anna Charlesworth; Yarra Bend Morning photograph by Christopher Pennings and (below right) 'The Vanishing (2016)' by John Nicholson; 'Dessein 'Spool Stool', Fruit Plate Abstraction (2014) by Madeline Kidd from Daine Singer; Eames 'House Bird' from Vitra. The spoodles, Frank and Alfie. In the kitchen/dining area, Bunnings Rack It storage system with custom insert shelving; Akari 'A' table lamp by Isamu Noguchi; 'Shiva' vase from BD Barcelona.



# FLACK MAGIC

David Flack may be the force behind one of Australia's most innovative design brands, but that doesn't mean he can't still have a little fun.

The fleshy pink typeface on the French navy business card that issues from David Flack's back pocket ciphers the interior designer's brand of 'bodacious' modernity. "It's so NICE TO MEET YOU", the message flashes in super-size sans serif. "BABY GOT FLACK", seconds the one shared by his business manager and partner, Mark Robinson, an award-winning filmmaker whose discipline in production budgeting and scheduling has slapped Flack Studio into formidable shape.

The couple stand, all welcoming smiles, on the doorstep of their inner Melbourne home — a three-level Fitzroy terrace, circa 1890s, that is jointly shared by Flack Studio and two wildly excitable spoodles, Alfie and Frank. "We've only been here about 15 months," says the 32-year-old Flack, whose fulsome portfolio — 18 projects completed, 24 underway — infers the output of a mid-40s professional. "Pretty soon we'll need somewhere bigger, but until such time..."

Flack guides passage down an all-white hallway, the high-Victorian archways of which open to the engine rooms of his interior industry. He introduces the design crew — "Erin, Hannah, Josh, Hugh and more upstairs" — while fossicking for their respective calling cards. "THANKS FOR BEING AWESOME", he says, reading the missive on one. "RIGHT FLACK AT 'CHA", he recites, scanning another.

This familiarity is declared deliberately unbusinesslike by Flack, who admits to finding the cards' corpulent-coloured print "frankly gross", but then a bit of vulgarity is visibly the order of all studio creativity. According to the curly-topped designer, who presents in a crisp Kenzo suit that says 'smart but subversive', this levity is the language of their aesthetic. "We need to speak it," says Flack, "and Mike's been a big part of that."

He refers to creative director and designer Mike Giesser, formerly of Studio Round, who has translated the practice's dippy classicism into deceptively simple brand statements that differentiate Flack from the flock. "We have to keep asking, are we doing different differently?" says the designer, while flicking on a television screen in the cosy rear-of-house kitchen that caters for small parties, client pitches and morning coffees. "Are we being disruptive enough?"

Flack scrolls through a show-and-tell of the studio's portfolio — a slick package that puts the dry design process in the language of therapy ('Listen, Translate, Craft and Amaze') and evidences it with a richness of scheme for retail, residential and restaurant. Think equal parts Gio Ponti and Vincent Van Duysen with a dash of Dame Edna and you've got the Flack brand of slightly bonkers nostalgic modernism.

It's a brand with a studied background. Yes, Flack is an overachiever who 'duxed' his high school — "I owe it all to my art teacher, Rhonda Alexander" — graduated in interior design (bagging top honours) and completed a business and marketing degree before seeking employment at interiors practice Hecker Phelan & Guthrie (HP&G), where he wedged a foot in the door with his offer to "clean the toilets and make the coffee". »



By ANNEMARIE KIELY  
Photographed by SHARYN CAIRNS



FROM TOP: in the second-floor living area, USM Haller storage unit; sculptures by Jo Wilson (far left) and Karen Black (on tray); Artemide 'Sbogun' table lamp; Indirect Response Black Screen 3 (2015) by Simon Degroot. Flack and his partner, Mark Robinson, by the rooftop garden.



« While there, he struck an aesthetic chord with HP&G director Kerry Phelan, who, in 2009, left to set up her own practice, taking Flack with her. Phelan's influence reads in the many design monographs that stack on library shelves, but the contra-indicated colours across 1970s ceramics, the tomes on mid-century Californian architecture (Flack conducts tours of 'Case Study' houses in Los Angeles and Palm Springs) and the post-modern makings of Memphis are pure Flack.

And there are "bits of the bush", says the self-described country boy from Bendigo, who recalls attending site meetings with his builder parents (now living in a Flack-designed house) so as to glean details that might be deserving of his backyard cubbyhouse. "I repainted it a new colour every year," says Flack, laughing at the memory of his father finally connecting it to the mains power. "But sadly I fell to the schoolboy pressure to grow up, and so shut the door on it in grade five."

Design interests weren't shelved, just redirected to the covert sketching of shopping centre schemes — one of which conceptualised May Gibbs' adorable bushland babies into the Gumnut Plaza. "Okay, so I was 12," says Flack, climbing stairs to the second-level mix-up of master suite, samples room and accounts office. "It might still have legs."

But until such time as the Banksia Men abstract into a shopping mall, Flack is seemingly reprising the cubbyhouse on the top living-level of his Fitzroy terrace, where a happy naivety of colour and pattern connect to an upper deck that drinks in the Melbourne skyline. "The after-school cordial now comes a little stronger," says Flack. "But you still need a password to party." Cue, the new card with a coded comment — "OMG, LOVE IT!" *VL*

Visit [flackstudio.com.au](http://flackstudio.com.au).

FROM TOP: in the main bedroom, Baxter 'Nepal Little' chair from Criteria; Flos 'Tab' LED table lamp; bed linen from Inbed.com; Wattle Flower and Eucalyptus (2014) by Adam Pnyett; de Elaine (2015) by Jabonne Pasco-White from Daine Singer. In the rear courtyard, 'Orgone' chair by Marc Newson for Cappellini from Mode 707 Vintage Melbourne.

“We have to keep asking, are we doing different differently? Are we being disruptive enough?”

In the kitchen/dining area, custom marble table by B by Design; Gubi blue velvet 'Beetle' chairs' from Criteria Collection; Zepel Allusion sheer linen curtains with black velvet bems from In Vogue Blinds. Details, last pages.

