

A Melbourne design duo converts a ramshackle artist's loft in SoHo into the Manhattan home of their dreams.

By *TIFFANY BAKKER*  
Photographed by *HALLIE BURTON*

# ONLY IN NEW YORK



THIS PAGE: in the family room, *LessLess* dining table by JEAN NOUVEL for Molteni & C; *Atollo* table lamp by VICO MAGISTRETTI for Oluce; *Wishbone* chair by HANS J WEGNER for Carl Hansen & Son; shelving unit by Molteni; *Tori System* lighting by REGGIANI; sculpture by ROBERT OWEN; yellow and red sculptures by PETER D COLE.  
OPPOSITE PAGE: in the entryway, *Peacock* chair by DROR BENSHETRIT for Cappellini; *Renaissance* floor mirror by RACHEL ASHWELL for Shabby Chic Couture; spot painting by DAMIEN HIRST.





THIS PAGE: in the dining area, *LessLess* dining table by Jean Nouvel for Molteni & C; *Wishbone* chair by Hans J. Wegner for Carl Hansen & Son; custom-made sideboard and display unit by GRAHAM MOSS; *IC 2* table lamp by MICHAEL ANASTASSIADES for Flos; *Dark Floral* wallpaper by ELLIE CASHMAN.  
 OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: in the kitchen/dining area, joinery by Molteni & Co; *Dixon Dowel* bar stools from Cite; *Smithfield S* pendant light by JASPER MORRISON for Flos; black accessories by CAPPELLINI; painting by Josh Gurrie.



When Melbourne design duo Jane Sinclair and Steve Cornwell sold their graphic studio, Cornwell, and made plans to relocate to New York two-and-a-half years ago, they discovered early on the frustrations inherent to the city's real estate. "I initially looked at 15 apartments, and I was getting really depressed about how tiny, dark and claustrophobic everything felt," says Cornwell. And of course, coming from Australia, the couple and their two teenage sons were keen to have a sense of space.

Things were looking pretty grim until their agent mentioned a loft on SoHo's Wooster Street. "He said, 'It's in pretty bad condition, it's an artist's loft, it hasn't got a street view, it's in the middle of a bunch of buildings,'" says Cornwell, now creative director at the Howard Hughes Corporation. "He just made it sound terrible."

But the search stopped there. When the designer walked in the front door, he knew immediately the stunning 372-square-metre loft with its stately 4-metre-high ceilings was destined to be his family's new home. "When I came in what struck me most was the light, the high ceilings and how quiet it was — it was so peaceful," he says. "There's an air and a height here that I feel is really grand and spacious and relaxing."

Coincidentally, the loft had been home to another Australian — the artist David Rankin, and his wife, the writer Lily Brett, who had lived in the space for 20 years. And Rankin had left an unmistakable footprint on the area. "The front was just smothered in paint and oil — it wasn't pleasant," Cornwell remembers.

Enter interior designer Graham Moss, who just happened to be an old friend of both Cornwell and Sinclair. (The trio went to Melbourne's Monash University together where they all studied graphic design, and Moss was later best man at the couple's wedding.)

Moss, who's been based in the US for the past 14 years and lives in the nearby Flatiron district, became the couple's interior designer — or, as he describes it, "guidance design guy".

"Jane and Steve bring an Australian cultural aesthetic, which I understand," Moss says. "A lot of [US] designers might not understand or be on board with it as much. We have similar points of view."

Indeed, Cornwell and Sinclair knew they wanted the loft to retain its classic structure, while still planning to add their own design flavour to it. They didn't cover the pressed-metal ceilings and left the loft's impressive cast-iron columns intact, keeping the industrial essence of the space. "We didn't want to live in an apartment that felt like we could be anywhere," he says. "For us it feels like it's a real New York experience living here."

They also kept the kitchen, which was designed by Molteni in New York, and the bathrooms, which feature Circulaire printed concrete tiles from Morocco, in their original places — shaving at least a year off the renovation process.

When it came to furnishing the space, a trip to Turkey inspired the whole design. "We bought four rugs at the Grand Bazaar and they ended up framing the rooms," Sinclair explains. Those rugs helped them figure out how to "do" the spectacular Patricia Urquiola 'Tufty-Time' sofa, the centrepiece of the family's main living space, which is also offset by the room's striking colour-coded library, a major »



*In the family room/library,  
Tuffy-Time sofa by PATRICIA  
URQUIOLA for B&B Italia;  
spot painting by Damien Hirst.*

« visual element to the home. “I would say every person who comes in here mentions the library first, which is probably because people don’t buy books anymore,” Cornwell reasons. “People are immediately drawn to the books.”

The loft’s windowless, dark-green front room, which boasts, among others, works by Damien Hirst, Spanish artist Eduardo Arranz-Bravo, Australian artist Peter Daverington and Sinclair’s father, the artist Bob Sinclair — has become like a gallery for their impressive collection. “I feel like it’s this really cool hotel foyer,” says Sinclair.

“Instead of fighting that lack of light, I feel like we just embraced it,” Moss adds. “It’s like a really sexy nightclub.”

The main cave-like bedroom is concealed nicely off the front room, separated by largely inconspicuous closet spaces (also designed by Molteni). Sinclair says she was initially concerned by the lack of light, but has grown to love it. “It’s very peaceful,” she says, “and a very relaxing space to retreat to.”

The couple says they’re thrilled with the end result. “I think we’re a little freer here than we were in Melbourne,” says Sinclair. “And maybe not as precious.” *VL*

JANE SINCLAIR  
AND STEVE  
CORNWELL'S

## *New York*

**1 BDDW** is a great store in SoHo showcasing an American line of handcrafted, rustic-modern hardwood furniture and decor. [bddw.com](http://bddw.com)

**2 GROUND SUPPORT CAFÉ** We love the Melbourne-quality coffee and ham-and-cheese toasties on Sunday mornings with our French bulldog, Bentley. [groundsupportcafe.com](http://groundsupportcafe.com)

**3 SIXTY SOHO** This hotel has a fantastic rooftop garden and bar — perfect place for a drink with friends. Also, it’s the closest hotel to our place, so easy for friends to get to us, or us to them. [sixtyhotels.com](http://sixtyhotels.com)

**4 PEGU CLUB** Great cocktails and its SoHo location mean it’s a quick stumble home for us. Also, we love the live jazz band on Sunday nights. [peguclub.com](http://peguclub.com)

**5 BLUE RIBBON SUSHI** We love it because it’s open all hours, which is great for us. Then there’s the sushi... it’s amazing! We recommend the tuna salad. [blueribbonrestaurants.com](http://blueribbonrestaurants.com)



In the front living room, black ‘Elan’ sofa by JASPER MORRISON for Cappellini; yellow Baxter ‘Chester Moon’ sofa by PAOLA NAVONE for DDC; ‘388 Sled’ coffee table by RODOLFO DORDONI for Cassina. Artworks by Damien Hirst, Eduardo Arranz-Bravo, Peter Daverington, Bob Sinclair, Naomi White, Josh Gurrrie, Juli Balla, Robert Owen and Mike Parr.



FROM LEFT: in the guest bathroom, Morphing console and bathtub by ZUCCHETTI; ‘Eggcup’ table by Mark Tuckey; Circulaire concrete tiles from Morocco. In the entryway, ‘Gilda’ floor lamp by ENRICO FRANZOLINI for Pallucco; ‘Peacock’ chair by DROR BENSHEITRIT for Cappellini; EAMES ‘Walnut’ stool for Herman Miller. OPPOSITE PAGE: in the main bedroom, ‘IC S’ pendant light by Michael Anastassiades for Flos; closets by Molteni & C.