

Follow the sun

An injection of warmth brightens this small, modern apartment

Words Eliza Hope Photography Mark Taylor

In his compact, modern apartment, Joel Bartfeld has succeeded in defying the purist minimalist approach to interior design that contemporary spaces often dictate.

Although the interior is pared back and unfussy, he has managed to imbue a genuine sense of warmth and homeliness, along with subtle traces of his personal style and taste.

And style and taste are two qualities synonymous with both Joel and the company he founded six years ago, SunnyLife, which sells a range of summer-inspired products for the home and outdoors.

"I came up with the brand concept for SunnyLife when I was travelling through Europe," Joel says.

"I wanted to create a quintessentially Australian concept that captured the simple, unembellished lifestyle we live when the weather is good."

Ironically, for someone whose whole life is all about outdoor living, Joel's apartment only has one small, enclosed outdoor courtyard. But with long days spent at his Richmond office and his frequent overseas travel, a low-maintenance apartment makes perfect sense.

However, there is undeniable evidence of



Artwork by Fred Bartfeld

the SunnyLife aesthetic in his home.

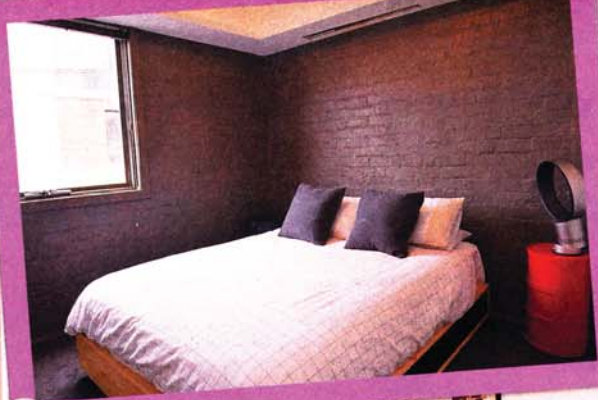
While the interior decoration is understated, there's definitely a sense of fun and colour, created with elements such as the vibrant striped Missoni throw rug and a quirky wall-mounted wooden deer head from Space, in Richmond.

"I guess I would describe myself as a

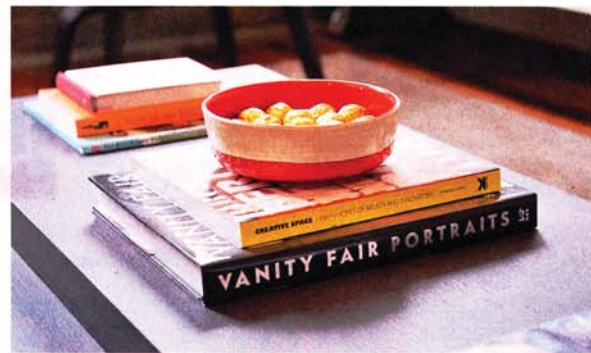


Above left A simple yet stylish display Above right Warm colours bring life to the space Right A small but comfortable area Left The deer head watches over the kitchen

Right The red Kartell storage unit makes a bold statement in the bedroom
Below right Old meets new in the Poliform dining table and classic bentwood chairs



Artwork: fabric and Reconstruction by Roger Hankey



Postscript with Joel Bartfeld

What's great about living in Middle Park?
 It's a truly cosmopolitan village. It's close to everything – the city, lake and beach – but still quiet. I don't like to talk about it too much because I don't want to let out the secret of how good it is!

What do you love most about your home?
 I love the fact it's contained. It's small, but feels really spacious. Everything has its place.

What's next on your shopping list for your home?
 I should say cookbooks, but probably some new art.

What are three of your favourite shopping haunts for home items?
 Safari Living, in East Prahran, for imported brands like Missoni Home and Muuto; Minimax for everything kitchen; and Poliform, in Richmond, for splurging on furniture.

Was it a challenge to get all the furniture up the narrow staircase?
 Yes! When I bought the couch I specifically took my dad with me to make sure I chose one that would fit, but we both misjudged the space, and because my dad felt responsible, he organised a crane to drop it over the outdoor courtyard.

love it!
 A built-in cabinet in the living room provides great storage and display space



minimalist, but that said I also like to show a bit of personality and the fact that someone lives here," Joel says.
 Joel's apartment is one of four in a beautiful, old converted warehouse in a quiet back street of Middle Park. The original solid redbrick facade has been retained, as have the rustic timber floorboards.

"I was living in an old 1960s place in Toorak and, when I saw this apartment, I immediately loved it," Joel says. "I'm lucky in that I've always been able to identify exactly the space that will work for me." But it wasn't all luck – Joel's time living

in a little cottage around the corner years ago gave him some insight and background knowledge of the area.
 Joel has expressed his style in his small space by carefully selecting a few significant designer pieces of furniture: a beautiful low, deep 4M couch; an elegant Poliform coffee table; two classic black Eames moulded plywood chairs; and a Poliform glass-topped dining table teamed with four timeless Thonet bentwood chairs.
 In the bedroom, a simple Ikea bed and a single vibrant red Kartell storage unit are the key elements.

As well as using his innate creative talent, Joel gleans inspiration from architecture and interior-design books and magazines, many of which are neatly stacked atop and beneath the built-in cabinet in the living room.
 "I'm obsessed with architecture," he says. "My dream is to design my own home. I often lie awake at night thinking about all the possibilities."
 This is all part of Joel's work and lifestyle philosophy: that good architecture, design and interiors can improve life and "make it more pleasurable".