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# LOFT IN SPACE

TO MAKE THE MOST OF THE **MODERN DESIGN** PIECES THEY COLLECT, **NEW YORK-BASED FIONA SCRYMGOUR AND HER PARTNER, GEOFF,** CALLED ON THE SERVICES OF AN **INTERIOR DESIGNER** THEY KNEW COULD **TRANSFORM** THEIR **SOHO LOFT** – FIONA'S TWIN SISTER, TRUDI.

"Well, we can't do the shoot on Friday because we're going to the Knoll Museum in Pennsylvania," explain Geoff and Fiona, the owners of the loft featured here. The Knoll Museum is a Mecca for aficionados of modern design. When you own a few pieces of original Knoll furniture, as this couple does, asking them to cancel their trip would be like asking a tennis fanatic to give up tickets to Wimbledon. We choose another day for the shoot.

From the street, the building that houses the loft looks like any other SoHo address: it's a flat-fronted warehouse, dating from last century, with an exposed fire-escape. I buzz and am told to wait in the foyer. The foyer contains a dilapidated velvet couch, a few old phone books and a perilous wooden stairway, seemingly to heaven. The goods lift clunks to the ground floor to collect me and then moves heavily up to the third floor, where I am greeted by a bright open space filled with graphic shapes and colours. Huge windows look out to the fire-escapes of the buildings across the cobblestone ▶



Detail of the Trudi Scrymgour-designed bookcases. Giraffes are by Tom Ford for Gucci. Below: The 1959 wall unit in living area is by George Nelson for Herman Miller; the Florence Knoll lounge chair was designed in 1952.

KEEPING THESE AREAS DEFINED WHILE MAINTAINING THE FLOW OF SPACE WAS THE BRIEF FOR SYDNEY DESIGNER TRUDI SCRYMGOUR.

street. "SoHo really started out as a frontier for artists," says Fiona. "We bought this loft from a photographer who used it for printing and storage purposes. It was originally used as a plastic-fruit painting factory." Now, it's a dream living-and-working space.

The creative couple – Geoff, a photographer, and Fiona, an Australian graphic designer who's lived in New York for the past 10 years – required studio, office, bedroom, kitchen, bathroom and living areas. Keeping these areas defined while maintaining the flow of space was the brief for Sydney designer Trudi Scrymgour – part of the FORM follows function design team, with partner Keith Glover, and Fiona's twin sister. "Fiona and Geoff had strong ideas about what they wanted. They drew a basic layout requesting that the studio be in the middle for light reasons and that the bedroom be a private zone. The bathroom and kitchen were to utilise existing services. Living and dining areas also had to double as client meeting areas," says Trudi.

Working on a transcontinental brief had its fair share of problems "I had to work from photographs, dimensions and space requirements ▶



ALL THE PIECES IN THE LOFT ARE COLLECTIBLES, EVEN DOWN TO THE 1960S OFFICE FURNITURE AND CAMERA EQUIPMENT. EDEN, A PIECE OF 1970S PIERRE CARDIN FABRIC THAT SEPARATES THE STUDIO AND DINING AREAS, WAS FOUND BY TRUDI IN SYDNEY.



that were sent to me from New York, and then interpret Fiona and Geoff's floor plan." Trudi only saw the space for the first time two weeks after construction had started. Tyranny of distance wasn't the only hurdle; language also proved to be a challenge. She found herself drawing in metric (for her own proportions) and in imperial measurements for the builders. Even building terminology in America is different to Australia's.

One certainty upon which Trudi could rely was the love of modern design she and Fiona share. While Trudi is influenced by the International Style – architects such as Le Corbusier, Neutra and Giò Ponti – and has a passion for hunting down original Verner Panton chairs, her New York-based twin collects Emilio Pucci shirts and handbags, vintage Courrèges clothing and Eames furniture.

In fact, all the pieces in the loft are collectibles, even down to the 1960s office furniture and camera equipment. Eden, a piece of 1970s Pierre Cardin fabric that separates the studio and dining areas, was found by Trudi in Sydney. A 1948 Eero Saarinen for Knoll Womb chair and matching ottoman sit in the living area next to the 1958 George Nelson for Herman Miller credenza. The only reproduction piece is a 1951 ESU storage unit designed by ▶

In the raised bedroom, a 1970s television stands on a 1956 Eero Saarinen for Knoll side table. Top right: The Arne Jacobsen Vola taps in the bathroom were designed in 1969.

Clockwise from right: All the furniture and lighting in the living room were designed around the Fifties or Sixties; detail of the kitchen; on the bed, Pucci velvet cushions from the Sixties.



Charles and Ray Eames for Modernica. "An original is very hard to find today," explains Fiona. "This one is made to the original specifications."

Even the taps have designer credentials: they're Vola taps, designed in 1969 by Arne Jacobsen. "We're living in this very minimal, modern space but there's one time period we're totally fascinated with," say the couple.

"Working with such high ceilings meant we could play with levels. We elevated the bedroom to give a different dimension to the space," says Trudi, referring to the mezzanine sleeping area. It also means there is now a lot of "crawl space", which can be utilised for the storage of archival material, job files and so on. The cantilevered bookcase designating this private zone becomes a design feature as well as having a practical function, housing a collection of rare photography books.

"Everything flows," says Fiona. "All the doors are 2.4 metres high and so Trudi set herself this line that works throughout the space. The kitchen cabinets are 2.4 metres high and so is the bookcase in the living area."

Colour has been used extensively throughout the loft. "The planes within the space are emphasised by the use of strong, bold, contrasting colour," says Trudi.

"Trudi knows me very well and she's the one who suggested orange for my office. I was very hesitant about it. But she was like, 'No, this is your colour. It's called Macaroni and Cheese.' She was right. I absolutely adore working in that office," laughs Fiona.

"I knew they could handle it – it's a Pucci colour," adds Trudi. Geoff also decided to paint his darkroom in the same colour, liking the quirkiness of opening up such a small space with such intense colour.

Fiona is eager to show me her latest find, a mint-condition, calf-length Courrèges coat in bright macaroni-and-cheese orange. What else? ■  
Contact details: FORM follows function, tel (02) 9331 6227.

The photographic studio opens onto the office, which features a George Nelson desk and 1959 desk light by Arne Jacobsen. Opposite page: in addition to transforming the loft's interior, Trudi Sorvigour designed the bookcase on the left-hand wall. Womb chair and matching ottoman by Eero Saarinen for Knoll are visible in the living area.

