

Extroverted Interior

Breaking the rules of interior design, George Freedman's exuberant scheme for restaurateur Gloria Staley is a sequence of contrasting personalities, colours and moods.



When Gloria Staley, one of Australia's leading restaurateurs, commissions George Freedman to design her and husband Blythe's Melbourne apartment, design sparks fly. The result is powerful interiors.

Gloria Staley has been acclaimed for over thirty years as a leader in restaurant style and for magnificent food. Fanny's and Glo Glo's immediately became the favourite Melbourne restaurants for luxurious and wonderfully pampered dining. Their continued success has made the Staleys east coast dwellers rather than Melbourne residents in the past few years. Their restaurant interests have expanded, and they now travel frequently to stay in Sydney, where they have the beautiful Chez Oz restaurant, and to the Gold Coast, where they own Le Beach Club at Marina Mirage.

"There is a different concept with each restaurant," Gloria explains. "Le Beach Club is unique, every table has wonderful views over the water, while, Chez Oz is an inner city, trendy place. The restaurant business is like theatre, every night is an opening night." Sentiments like these sum up the pace and intensity of the Staleys' professional lives.

Gloria understands the public's need to be entertained from her time as an actress. With a dramatic talent, a great interest in food tied to a love of beautiful things, and a high sense of style and fashion, she is a formidable and innovative force in influencing the image of restaurants and the way food is served.

At every Staley restaurant, Gloria is in charge of all the menus, every dish, how it is presented and even the direction it faces on presentation. She is a businesswoman with a highly developed visual sense.

"I go through stages with decorating," Gloria says. "I feel that I have progressed, never stopped learning and improving. Strong interests keep you from being bound to the past." In fact, as far as presentation of food goes, her current preference is for a move away from the cosmetic. "If it is beautifully cooked and tastes good it will find its own placement, as Italian food does," Gloria explains.

The Staleys recently moved from their large family home to a spacious apartment. "We have too many other interests to worry about keeping a traditional family home," Gloria says. "We commissioned George Freedman to turn this apartment into our Melbourne home. It

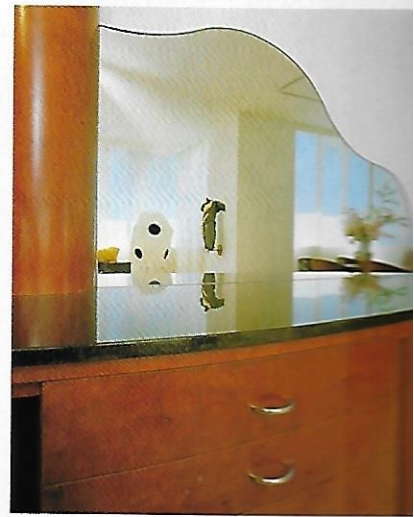
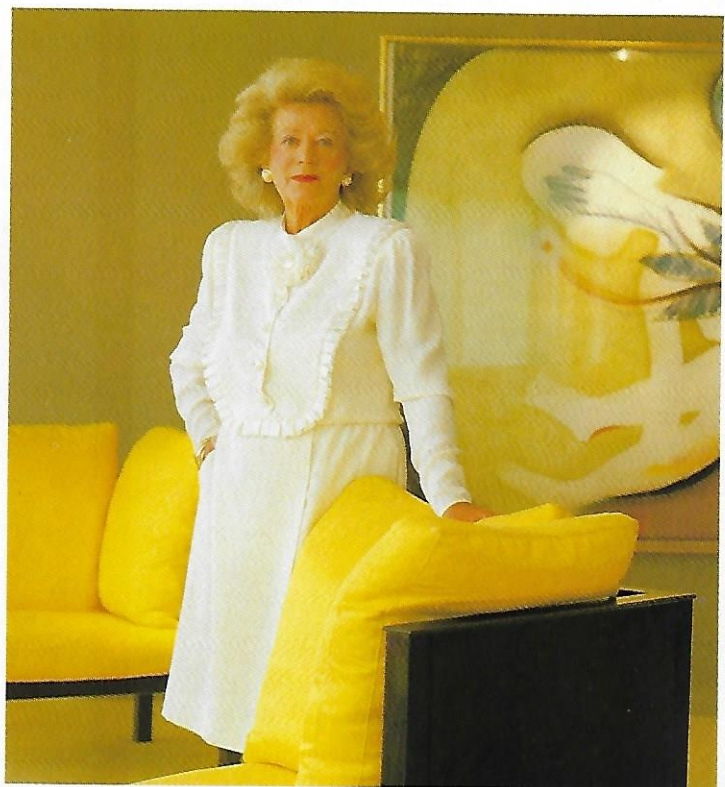
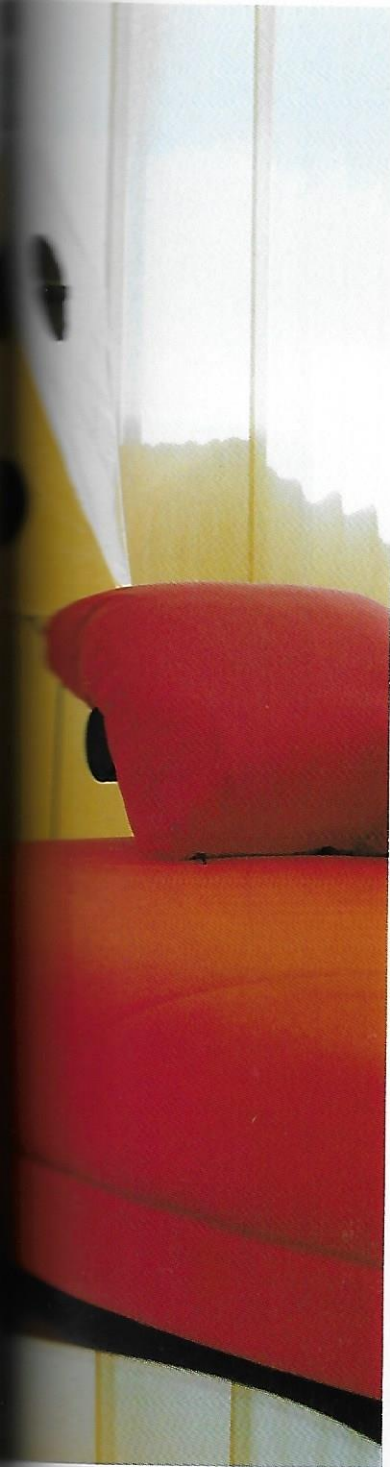


is the third home he has designed for us. He did our previous house and our Surfers Paradise apartment."

The apartment, on the first floor of a medium-rise block, was a clever choice. Set in splendid botanical grounds, it has wonderful views of the luscious gardens, lawns that rise into hillocks and the grand deciduous trees that shade sculpted beds of annuals – a pleasant change from the

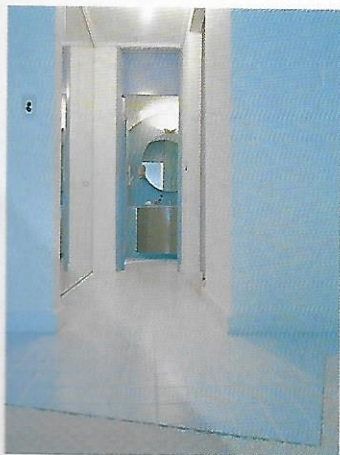


According to Freedman, the personality of the living room, preceding pages and above, is extroverted. Fuchsia and tangerine sofa from the Sity collection by B&B Italia from Artes Studios-Arredorama; black and white paper lantern by Noguchi. Flowers from Kevin O'Neill, South Yarra. The curves of the madonna burl bar unit, top right, break the rectangular lines of the apartment. Confident of her style, Gloria Staley, right. Far right, bottom, view from the bedroom to the living room.











barren sky many apartment dwellers see through their windows. "This apartment has great interest," Gloria adds. "Each area is completely different." It is a home full of surprises, at every turn there is a new style and colour. There is an illusion of space, rooms and halls seem to open one onto the other forever.

"Gloria wanted something elegant, a look to knock them on their ear," George

Freedman laughs. "It was an expensive renovation and it took a long time, but the result is a sophisticated, chic and colourful space. We didn't reuse anything. Everything is brand spanking new."

Talking about the fundamentals of apartment design, Freedman makes a clever point: "The entry foyer is a critical area. In an apartment visitors are dumped immediately into the most private rooms from the public hall, so the entrance area needs an exaggerated degree of formality. Here the foyer makes the arrival."

Freedman describes the different areas in the apartment as having different personality types. The large, light and powerful sitting room, he says, is extroverted. The specially woven, linen-look, pale yellow carpet is sensationally understated against the hot coloured B&B Italia furniture. A parody on coir matting, Freedman says. The Noguchi Akari paper lantern is witty and whimsical. It all comes toward you with the force of a charging locomotive. This is a turbo room, full of colour, energy and youth.

The study is more introverted. "It is the intimate boudoir, a private space," Freedman says. "The textures, colours and patterns are all outside what I normally select. The influences here are very Franco-Italian. The room is lined with loosely falling Italian silk, along the lines of the Napoleonic tenting system inspired by the Paris apartment of Pierre Chareau. The sofa design is from the Farnasina palace in Rome." It is a truly romantic room.

The main bedroom changes pace yet again – a synthesis of glamour. White on white, satin on satin. Freedman describes it as a reference to designer Syrie Maugham. The rug is Irish, it looks like a huge, wonderful sweater stretched across the floor.

Freedman's work in the Staley apartment is unusual because it is compartmentalised, each room displaying a unique style and personality. This treatment has not diminished the effect of the whole but has made it more powerful because the execution has been so complete. Glimpses are given into style vignettes. It is an apartment that is virtually impossible to label.

Maybe this apartment reflects the style and mystique of George Freedman's client: you can't label Gloria Staley either, she just keeps the surprises coming. □

ZINTA JURJANS

Surface treatment enlivens the entrance hall, preceding pages. The right-hand wall is panelled in sycamore. The far wall, painted in Riviera blue, from Evergard Industries, is finished in a high gloss lacquer. Low voltage downlights by Reggiani. White satin from Order Imports covers the bed and is pleated across a curved recess behind, in the main bedroom, this page far left. In the study, left and above, tapestry fabric covers the sofa while an Italian silk is tented behind the bookshelves.