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Custom printed curtains by Think Positive harmonise  
with the café's avocado exterior

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The down-to-earth menu suits the brown shades and  
natural finishes of the 1970s-style décor



Michael Ico and Dan Harrison's new retro-inspired café in Sydney delights with vintage pieces and one-off artworks thanks to YSG Studio's novel approach to interior design

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Painted an unapologetic shade of avocado-green, the exterior of Superfreak is an invitation to the vintage vibe found inside

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Vinyl records provide the musical backdrop to coffee and cakes, with favourites ready to spin on a turntable near the banquettes



There's something groovy to look at no matter where you perch at the Superfreak cafe in Sydney's Inner West suburb of Marrickville. A recent opening by hospitality duo Michael Ico and Dan Harrison, the quirky, nostalgia-filled space was designed by award-winning YSG Studio.

The building, which once served as the Serendipity ice-cream factory, had been previously subdivided to house a Pilates studio at the back and a street-side small-goods store, where Superfreak now resides. YSG gutted the interior of the store and added caramel-hued cork flooring (to help with acoustics) and maple timber joinery, as well as a sunken lounge-like enclosure featuring integrated vinyl storage and a plinth for a record player. To create a retro, 1970s

vibe, the studio opted for plenty of brown, butter yellow and avocado green hues, and covered the banquette seating, the side of the seated counter and high stools with brown carpet. "You can't get more 1970s than that," jokes Yasmine Ghoniem, director of YSG Studio. "Our clients also wanted the carpet to cover the floor, but it just wouldn't work in a hospitality setting."

Vintage timber dining chairs sourced from online retailer 1stDibs bring more old-school charm to the 30-seat space, which serves homey, down-to-earth food. "Michael and Dan wanted a place where locals felt like they could hang out rather than race in, eat, gulp coffee and dash, especially as the café is in a predominately residential area, albeit on a main road," explains Ghoniem. "They also wanted ☺



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Butter yellow walls, a pea-green ceiling and natural cork flooring give the space retro credentials, enhanced by Creative Finish's garden mural



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An artwork by Nadia Hernández adds a pop of colour to the walls and is a subtle nod to the socially-conscious art that was so prevalent 50 years ago



**“When you think of the 1970s, you automatically cue thoughts of chilling out, lying back and feeling the abundance of real-time, which is the opposite of how we all operate these days”**

the café to provide easy access for take-aways, plus super cosy, uninterrupted lounging spaces backdropped by vinyl tracks, so the carpeted seating, including the stools, resolved that.”

The intention is that Superfreak will serve several waves of customers: those coming in for a leisurely lunch or a nourishing snack post-Pilates, and later those seeking a cosy nook for a late-night tête-à-tête, pending licence approval. Knowing this from conception stage,

Ghoniem crafted a space that would be equally welcoming to all. The timber U-shaped banquette is a cosy spot, while sconces, pendant lights and lamps give off mellow light. “The proprietors wanted to welcome Pilates students after class to stretch out comfortably on lounge-like seating during the quieter mid-week periods,” explains Ghoniem. “So a key component, after we stripped the white space, was to build a sunken, lounge-like setting with banquettes that created

a comfortable enclosure.” A central, low-set tiled table attracts groups to perch on stools, which conveniently tuck underneath it.

Gentle nostalgia runs throughout Superfreak. Working with a modest budget, Ghoniem decided to commission a lamp by American artist Autumn Casey. Inspired by glass Tiffany lamps, it now has pride of place beside the coffee machine. Retro custom-print pea green and brown curtains, crafted by local makers ☺

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A Tiffany-inspired lamp by Autumn Casey glows like a jewel and picks up on the greens of the exterior and ceiling



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Covered with brown carpet, the banquette seating becomes its own conversation pit, inviting visitors to linger



Think Positive, match the colourway perfectly. They also created a silk-striped fabric, which Ghoniem made into a screen that can be raised to enable DJs to operate decks more freely on weekends (and eventually in the evenings). Meanwhile, the open kitchen's activities have been concealed by a timber privacy screen, which has been decorated with an abstract garden landscape mural by the studio's long-term collaborators Creative Finish.

Superfreak's other eclectic and playful touches include small cushions crafted from vintage Japanese fabrics with raw-stitched edges and a suspended artwork in the shape of a fan by Venezuelan-Australian artist Nadia Hernández that is emblazoned with the word 'DESTINO' (destiny, in English). "When you

think of the 1970s, you automatically cue thoughts of chilling out, lying back and feeling the abundance of real-time, which is the opposite of how we all operate these days," says Ghoniem. "Excluding the Wi-Fi connection, it's an analogue space as even the music spins on vinyl."

The inviting eatery has been a resounding success, with people coming from as far as Bondi Beach to spend time here. The proprietors couldn't be happier with YSG's thoughtfully crafted design. "Now we understand the value of using higher-quality materials like the timber to cradle the space, plus the unique lights," says co-founder Michael Ico. "We have a 'forever' space that will never date because it's one of a kind." ■