

# Chrome finds its shine again

Words by Sanam Goodman

Once emblematic of the '70s, chrome is finding its way back into contemporary design – but not as the loud, mirrored finish you might recall. Today, it's brushed, burnished and layered to create a material that brings subtle sheen and understated sophistication.

"Chrome has a rich architectural legacy," says Dominic Pandolfini, founder of Pandolfini Architects, a Melbourne-based practice known for its textured approach to residential and commercial design. "Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich's 1929 Barcelona Pavilion was an early example of using chrome to elevate architecture. The chrome window frames and columns seemed to disappear, creating optical intrigue."

Pandolfini sees a similar effect happening now. "Stainless steel and chrome act like a palate cleanser," he says. "Their reflectivity distorts space, creating moments that ground and expand interiors. It's not just about the shine, it's about how it interacts with surrounding materials."

In his South Yarra House project, Pandolfini used natural zinc externally and internally to establish a visual dialogue. "The zinc will patina over time, while the interior remains polished," he says. "That interplay adds depth."

Jay Jermyn of Objects for Thought sees chrome as a link to the past. The studio's sculptural lighting and furniture embrace a tactile, industrial aesthetic. "Every designer has a magpie moment," Jermyn says. "For me, it was the Anna G corkscrew by Alessi. It's so shiny and playful, almost cartoonish in its simplicity."

That sense of nostalgia runs through his Sequence lamp collection, where polished aluminium nods

to the hardware of Moog synth racks and Roland drum machines. "Chrome is like a visual riff on music hardware," Jermyn says. "It has that retro quality, but it still feels fresh."

At Fearon, a Melbourne-based design studio co-founded by brothers Jack and Mark Fearon, the focus is on minimalism and clean lines. "We love how chrome patinas," Jack says. "Especially when we go with a brushed finish. It's softer than people expect."

Their latest piece, the New Chub, is a compact stool with curved legs designed to catch and shift light without stealing focus. "It's not about being loud," Jack explains. "It's about subtlety and finding a way to blend it in."

For Yasmine Ghoniem of YSG Studio, chrome is a way to add movement and fluidity to a space. In her Checkmate project, chrome balustrades twist around timber columns – a nod to old-school skate parks. "It's slick and minimalist, but it can also feel retro," she says. "There's a coolness to it that works beautifully against warmer materials."

Ghoniem advises restraint. "Too much chrome and a room can feel industrial," she says. "But used sparingly – a chair leg here, a light fixture there – it adds moments of reflection that bounce light around the room."

Pandolfini agrees, noting that chrome's reflectivity can be a powerful tool when used thoughtfully. "In South Yarra House, the zinc serves as a connecting thread," he says. "Its patina evolves, softening and warming over time."

The key is juxtaposition. "Pairing chrome with raw concrete, natural stone or Venetian plaster creates contrast," Pandolfini says. "The coolness of the metal against warmer textures can add depth and dimension to a space." ■



**Warm and cool:**  
Natural stone paired with chrome to add dimension.

LILLIE THOMPSON



**Chrome accents:**  
Balustrades nod to old-school skate parks.

PRUE RUSCOE

**“Chrome is like a visual riff on music hardware. It has that retro quality.”**

*Jay Jermyn*



**South Yarra House:**  
Pandolfini contrasts zinc against white marble and timber.