

a wonder down under

Interiors studio Arent&Pyke has anchored this Sydney Harbour newbuild firmly in the Australian vernacular with indigenous art, native hardwoods and a palette of outback-inspired tones, to create comfortable and compelling interiors

TEXT **EMMA LOVE**
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TERRACE This open seating area at the back of the house offers impressive waterside views. The decking is made of blackbutt timber and the furniture is a mix of mid-century designs by Thonet and contemporary pieces from Italian brand Paola Lenti

The designers have combined natural and understated grey-green hues with native hardwoods and dolomite stone



SITTING AREA The 'Fat Tulip Sofa' and 'Molloy Coffee Table', designed by Adam Goodrum for Nau, are on a rug from Cadrys. **Artworks** by Joshua Yeldham hang on the wall. **KITCHEN** An island made of dolomite stone and smoked oak is teamed with 'Form Barstools' from Normann Copenhagen. The **wall light** is Le Corbusier's 'Lampe de Marseille' from Nemo



DINING AREA The plywood ceiling and polished-concrete floor run throughout the ground floor of the house. In the dining area, a dark red 'Preston' **sideboard** from Jordan serves as a focal point. The vintage dining chairs are from the owners' existing furniture collection. **LIBRARY** This sunken area – 'the cosiest part of the house' – has an eye-catching 'Serie Up 2000' **armchair** and **footstool** by Gaetano Pesce for B&B Italia and **shelving** by Vitsoe displaying books and glassware. Isamu Noguchi's sculptural Japanese paper 'Akari E Pendant' **light** from Vitra illuminates a large grid of framed pages from Thirties wine catalogues



When Sarah-Jane Pyke first walked round this three-bedroom new-build in a quiet part of Sydney Harbour, she could immediately see the potential – even though the ground-floor slab had only just been laid and the brickwork for the exterior walls was still under construction. ‘The site is unusual because, at the back, there’s no barrier between the house and the waterfront, so the two feel very connected,’ explains Sarah-Jane, the co-founder of the design practice Arent&Pyke, which is based in the Surry Hills area of the Australian city. ‘There was a pair of big, old, beautiful trees – a eucalyptus and a jacaranda – which framed the views and really set the tone for the interior.’

Equally unusually, the street level at the front of the house is higher than the waterside terrace at the back, so the entrance is upstairs, between the study and the smallest bedroom. An enormous skylight above the staircase brings in natural light. From the top, there are sweeping views down to the open-plan sitting and dining areas and the kitchen on the ground floor – and to the harbour beyond. In 2018, the owners, who tore down a previous property on the plot to build this one, had ‘reached that point where they needed to think about materials and finishes’, says Sarah-Jane. ‘They knew they had the right number of rooms, but they were starting to feel a bit lost about how they were going to live in the house. There were lots of discussions around the flow of the spaces and where they would watch television and entertain.’

For the owners, a couple with a young daughter, it was important to keep the interiors low maintenance. ‘We asked for something relaxed and not too precious,’ explains the wife. Sarah-Jane took the laid-back atmosphere of the inner harbour and its traditional buildings as her starting point: ‘We wanted to stay with an Australian vernacular in terms of the materials and palette.’ The owners had already decided on the polished concrete floor and plywood ceiling that runs throughout the lower level. ‘This made me feel like we had to warm everything up in between,’ says Sarah-Jane.

To achieve this, Arent&Pyke added a gas fireplace with a white-glazed brick surround to separate the sitting and dining zones within the long space. The designers also chose natural and understated grey-green hues typical of the bush for pieces such as the abstract wool rug from local supplier Cadrys, and native hardwoods – tallow-wood for the doors and smoked-oak timber paired with dolomite stone for the kitchen island and units. ‘We wanted a material that was robust and strong, but not highly detailed in a decorative way; the timber has a deep richness that carries the whole room,’ says Sarah-Jane. ‘It’s our favourite space,’ the owner adds. ‘It’s functional and beautiful – definitely the hub of the house.’

As is often the case, the other major aesthetic drivers were the owners’ art collection and a few key pieces of furniture. Most of their possessions were in storage, but they were able to show Sarah-Jane two paintings of mythical landscapes by the Australian artist and film-maker Joshua Yeldham. These found a home above the sofa in the main sitting area. They also showed her photographs of their ‘Serie Up 2000’ armchair by B&B Italia. This has been taken out of storage and now anchors the sunken library – a space tucked into the front of the house at the end of the dining area with a skylight

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MAIN BEDROOM The **artwork** is by Emma Walker. Cecilie Manz designed the ‘Caravaggio Read’ **wall lights** for Fritz Hansen. The ‘**Harlosh Bedside Table**’ is from Pinch. **EN-SUITE BATHROOM** Sea-green floor tiles complement the terrazzo on the walls and counter, and a ‘Centro Duo 2’ **bath** from Kaldewei. **CLOAKROOM** On the **walls**, ‘Really Russet’ paint by Taubmans picks up on the warm terrazzo below. The ‘Lavamani’ **sink** is by Falper from Rogerseller

above but no views. ‘Knowing that the owners had chosen furniture so bold and sculptural was a little insight into their personality and the way that they would allow us to shape the interior,’ explains Sarah-Jane.

‘We decided to make the library the cosiest part of the house – somewhere they would want to retreat to in the evening – so that it didn’t feel forgotten.’ One wall is lined with open shelving by Vitsoe that houses the family’s books, colourful glassware and treasured objects. On another wall, there is a gallery of framed pages taken from Thirties French wine catalogues that the owners had never had the space to display before. A custom sofa in tallow-wood and leather was built in for watching television, while a circular Thonet table is used for crafts, board games and homework.

What knits each space together are the refined nuances of colour and texture, from the bolt of rich rust-red paint in the cloakroom – ‘Really Russet’ by Taubmans, reminiscent of the Australian desert – to the terrazzo in all three bathrooms. ‘As a studio, we see the home as a place for joy and connection, as well as somewhere to reflect,’ says Sarah-Jane. ‘We like allowing beautiful materials to shine. For us, the right balance of colour and light can make a space sing.’ Happily, the owners agree. ‘We love the light,’ says the wife. ‘And also the fact that the interior doesn’t take itself too seriously’ □

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