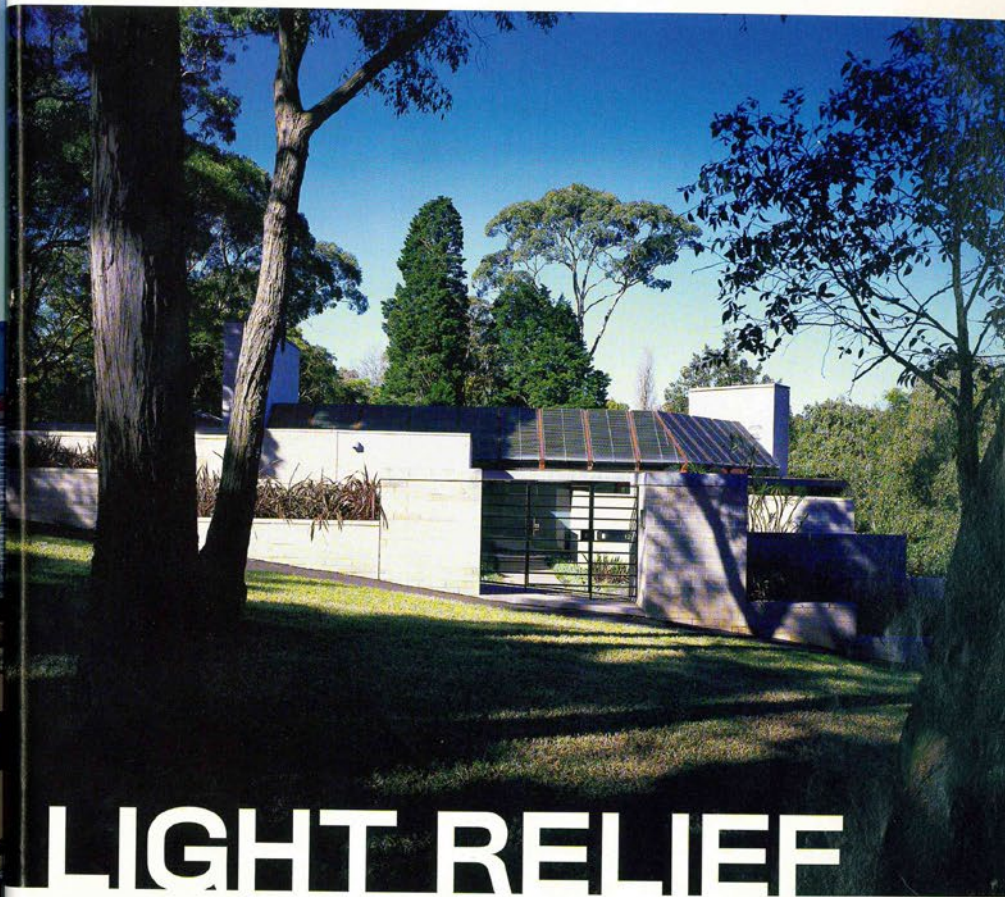




TO DYE FOR: TEXTILES IN ART



In the formal living area, THIS PAGE, a floating corner and chimney symbolically terminate the house's 'L' shape. The large open fireplace has a terrazzo hearth and concrete mantel and is one of three in the house. The 'Asu' dining table and 'Tamu' chairs are by B&B Italia, from Space; the sandstone pavers are from Gosford Quarry. OPPOSITE: the front facade is designed for privacy. The brick is a honed concrete block by Boral, while the aluminium louvres form a "skin of metal" when closed.



# LIGHT RELIEF

Privacy and luxury are key elements of a home on Sydney's North Shore that goes against design convention with its mix of solid and sheer: 'closed' to the street, it opens to courtyards

PHOTOGRAPHER: ROSS HONEYSETT PRODUCER: FIONA MAINE





Victorian ash flooring is a feature in the marquee-like living room, ABOVE LEFT. Edra "Wing" combines a chaise and leather worktop; 'Apta' coffee table by Maxalto, both from Space. Vases and sculpture from Orson & Blake; faux fur throw from Cruz. ABOVE RIGHT; tiny glazed windows provide privacy in a bathroom that borders a driveway. The ceiling is laminated glass with cedar beams. Italian glass mosaic tiles cover the floor and walls; the vanity is made from Western red cedar; soaps and lotions from Orson & Blake. OPPOSITE LEFT; the main bedroom forms a pavilion at the end of the bedroom wing and opens onto a courtyard. The carpet, from Synteko, is pure New Zealand wool, custom-made and laid in one piece; king-size 'Sombre' bed by Cassina from Speco; linen and cushions from Orson & Blake. RIGHT: beyond the 14-metre pool is the family room and kitchen.

THIS NEW KID ON THE BLOCK has raised a few eyebrows in the quiet, conservative suburb of Lindfield on Sydney's North Shore. Its unconventional design caused owner/builder Eddie Bechara to mistake the plans for those of a factory when he inspected them in the offices of architect Jorge Hrdina. Turning a blind eye to the street with its impenetrable brick facade, the building unravels from within to reveal a private world of rarefied luxury.

Such is the scale of the property, with its tennis court, pool, sauna and gym, that the real-estate blurb declares it a "mini estate". The 412-square-metre house forms a massive 'L' around 222 square metres of outdoor entertaining area, consuming much of the half-acre (0.2 hectare) site. "We consciously made the decision to keep to a single storey," says Hrdina. "The building evolves as it moves around the site, responding to and interacting with the outdoors. You're able to include nature a lot more on one level."

A series of small internal courtyards brings intimacy and introspection to the large, open living spaces either side of the entry and within the bedroom wing, and, with sliding screens, prevents the long corridors from becoming tunnel-like. Not wanting to arrange the living spaces along the street-side elevation, Hrdina had to draw in sunlight without sacrificing privacy. Against architectural convention, walls are solid along much of this northern facade, while the roof section is glazed and light levels controlled

by five banks of automated aluminium louvres. A similar configuration protects the bedroom wing along its eastern wall, where trees instead of louvres filter the light through glazed roof panels.

"We kept the top of the walls to a level of 2.4 metres and above that everything is glass partitioning," says Hrdina. "This maintains the human scale and a sense of proportion in what are quite high, vertical spaces, so the roof appears to float above the house."

Inside the L, glazed walls and sliding cedar-framed glass doors embrace the outdoors, tempered by white external blinds along the bedroom wing. When closed they change the facade, as do the aluminium louvres at the front, which form a metal skin when shut. The glazed walls give way to a roof section of Rhinezin, a zinc and titanium product. "The titanium gives it almost stainless-steel properties in that it won't corrode," says Bechara, "and it has a soft quality, too, blending with the colour of the gum trees."

Materials and finishes reinforce the link to nature. The brick, by Boral, is a honed concrete block with a terrazzo-like finish. "Harry Seidler used this one a fair bit," says Bechara. In each of the five bedrooms, custom-made wool carpet is fitted in one piece. The same Italian glass mosaic tiles are used to cover both the floors and walls in the bathrooms. Forming a dramatic focal point between formal and informal living spaces is a glass-lined spiral staircase, which accesses the basement garage and wine cellar. **JULIE SIMPKIN**