

**This page** The steep site on Middle Harbour required architect Jorge Hrdina to create a horizontal plane across the contours of the land so the outdoor areas could be linked seamlessly to the home and the family given easy access to the garden.

# Boundless spirit

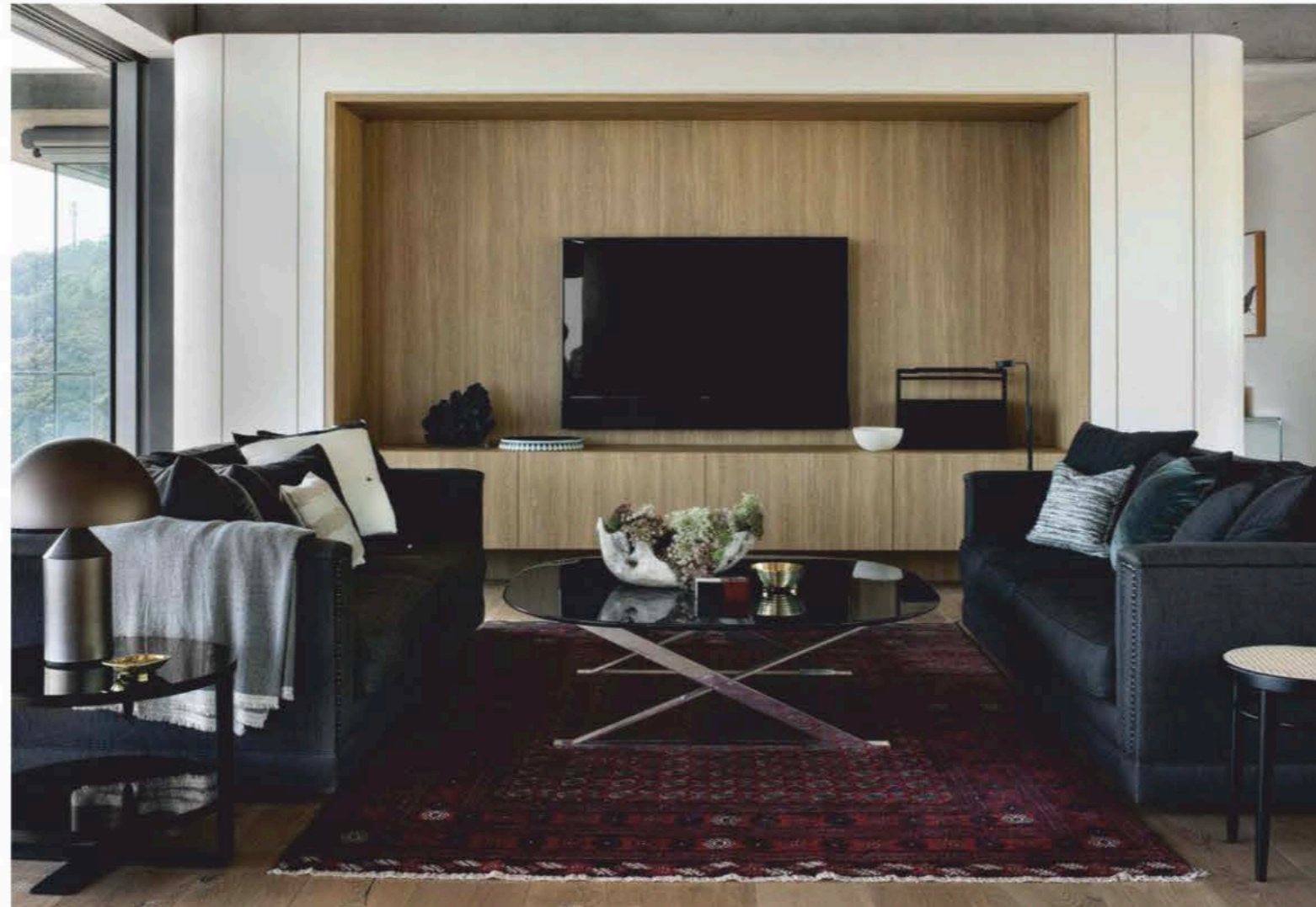
Rejoicing in thickly wooded hills and sapphire waters this uplifting home treads lightly on its 'living platform'.

Photography **BRIGID ARNOTT** Styling **STEVE CORDONY**



This page, clockwise from top left The kitchen joinery was made by Caruana Kitchens with metal panels painted in bronze by Rebecca Neill of Set for Art and an island bench in black granite over barstools from Freedom. The kitchen island also encloses an upholstered seat, which is paired with a custom breakfast table designed by Aquestra Stott, made by Artifex and topped with ceramics by Shellie Christian. On the terrace, 'Marillo' outdoor dining chairs from Eco Outdoor surround a table from Cosh Living with a timber bowl from Water Tiger and a jug from Hay. In the living area, 'Atollo' lamp from Euroluce, B&B Italia 'Eileen' side table and Maxalto 'Pathos' coffee table, both from Space, and rug from Bijan Exclusive Rugs. Opposite page, clockwise from top left The impressive front door features a sculptural handle by Artifex. The home's extensive use of glass opens internal spaces to the spectacular views and allows the rippling roofline to seemingly float. Cassina 'Pilotta' dining chairs from Space are paired with a Riva 1920 table from Fanuli with a Guax vase from Conley & Co. Credenza from Oishi.

Overhanging Sydney's Middle Harbour on a steep site with magical views, this home was the result of a farseeing collaboration between owners Aquestra Stott and James Hone and architect Jorge Hrdina. *What was the brief?* Aquestra Stott: The original brief was to knock down and rebuild a 1950s cottage that had been extended in the 90s and create a family home that was a better use of the unusual plot. The views were beautiful and we felt that the land deserved to have an iconic piece of architecture on it to reflect its stunning surrounds. *What were the challenges of the site and how did you resolve them?* Jorge Hrdina: One of the greatest challenges on a steep site such as this is to create what I refer to as a 'living platform', a usable horizontal place to live where the outdoor areas are fully and seamlessly connected with the home, and a place children will be able to easily frequent. The solution was to design the home across the contours in a fan-like shape, thereby optimising the 'cut and fill' and resulting in the creation of a garden flush with the main living areas. The garden is a great place for children to play and adults to potter around, all the while capturing northern light and beautiful vistas to the water beyond. *Are there any particular considerations when designing a home in a coastal setting?* JH: Coastal sites often have particular challenges. Notwithstanding spectacular views, the aspect to the water in this case is west, so passive thermal treatments are critical. Some of the solutions included specially treated glazing, extra wide eaves with rated external shading systems and sheltered outside areas (maintaining views) that provide protection from the occasional strong coastal winds. Careful consideration of views and light also plays a major role in the architecture, adding to the making of beautiful spaces that uplift the human spirit. On reflection, light and the connection with nature are probably the most important aspects to consider but of course none of this is achievable without great clients, which we were most fortunate in having! AS: James and I had lived in the old house for a number of years before deciding what to do with it. We were keen to use windows that could thermally protect us from the



elements so we could stay comfortable inside for the whole year. *How would you describe the completed home?* AS: Peaceful and reflective. James loves the roof, seamless glass, views from the master bedroom and bathroom, and all the outside spaces. *How does it respond to the surrounding landscape?* AS: The use of glass allows the landscape to surround us and there is nowhere in the house that we can't see water or trees. *What informed the selection of furniture, art, fittings and finishes?* AS: We have been collecting a few beautiful pieces of furniture over the years. As a family we grow and our needs change so we have been shedding the skin of early childhood and are entering the uncharted waters of teenage years. We invested in core pieces so they have become part of our family DNA. The dining table bears its scars proudly and can be

easily rejuvenated with sanding and oil. Finishes have been selected to reflect the natural environment and not be too precious so that it's welcoming, relaxing and robust to use. *What do you enjoy about living here?* AS: We spend a lot of time in the kitchen with me in the study. James loves the outside lounge and during lockdown the dining room became his office – not a bad spot to be in! *What is the appeal of coastal living, and particularly the location of this project?* AS: We love living here. It feels as if it's further up into Pittwater and miles from everything but it's just 20 minutes to the city. The family can access all it has to offer but still feel as if we have gone on holiday when we get home. The sunsets here are inspirational and a blessing. It would be lovely if our family overseas could come and share it with us – sometime soon, hopefully. [jorgebrdina.com.au](http://jorgebrdina.com.au)



**This page** Soft, neutral curtains made by Simple Studio and a swathe of carpet from Cavalier Bremworth create a serene mood in the master bedroom that highlights the breathtaking views. Bed linen from Ondene.