

With an elevated view of Sydney Harbour, this and this translucent showstopper by architects

house had to be equally spectacular – PopovBass doesn't disappoint.

# High ideal

Words **CHRIS PEARSON** Photography **PABLO VEIGA**







Previous pages Eschewing the need for balustrades on the lower levels, the house soaks up the spectacular views as it steps down the hill. Royal Botania 'Jive' low chairs from Parterre. Bronze rain drum side table from Orient House. Buxeuil limestone pavers from Artedomus. Ezarri Iris pool tiles from Europe Imports. **This page** The off-form concrete wall extends up a void across three levels, ensuring all the living spaces are immersed in daylight and have access to the amazing harbour views. Malmic 'Dune' armchairs upholstered in 'Nambala' from Unique Fabrics. Arteriors 'Lou' coffee table in Bronze and 'Beckham' concrete cocktail table in Matt Black, both from Boyd Blue. Custom-designed hand-tufted wool and silk rug from Tappeti. 'Horizon Cantilever 1500' fireplace from Jetmaster. Hearth in Nero Assoluto granite from Granite & Marble Works and surround in Dulux 'Natural White' and 'Black'. Vase on mantel from Curatorial+Co. Eterno Massivo 'Ardesia' flooring from Tongue n Groove. **Opposite page, from top** 'Kute 018' hand-knitted steel pendant lights from Spence & Lyda. 'Pikaia Four Legs' dining chairs from Fanuli. Caesarstone benchtop in Pure White. Dining area benchtop in E veneer 'Ristretto' veneer from Elton Group with stained spotted gum edging. Gessi Emporio 'Oxigene' kitchen mixer in brushed nickel. Joinery in Dulux 'Natural White' and E veneer 'Ristretto' veneer. Gas cooktop and semi-integrated dishwasher, both from Miele, Qasair rangehood, Sub-Zero built-in refrigerator/freezer and Wolf M Series 'Professional' double oven. In the entry, knitted totems by Ruth Levine from HK Edit. Walls in WoodWall 'Ristretto' from Elton Group.



While the occupants of this luminous home in Sydney's eastern suburbs enjoy dress-circle views, anyone contemplating the facade savours a spectacle just as striking. Reaching skyward, the house steps up the hillside in a series of planes, which its creator, architect Brian Bass of PopovBass, compares to an Aztec temple. While its sculptural form may be as worthy of wonder – for its design and its construction – fortunately the only thing sacrificed here was the uninspiring 1960s house that greeted him when he arrived four years ago. “The site was so much better than the house on it,” says Brian. “Because the property is on the high side of the road, it commands amazing views of the harbour and the city, as if surveying the landscape below.”

The brief was for “a standard four-bedroom family home, with a large living and dining space,” says Brian, understating what he and colleague Anthony Zonaga produced for the owners. As they are also great entertainers and love cooking, often hosting up to 25 people, the kitchen had to be part of the action. And, unsurprisingly, the house had to soak up those sensational harbour views. “They wanted to take advantage of that view from the living room and main bedroom, which both run the full width of the site,” says Brian.

“The new house claims the hillside with a series of steps,” he adds. “There’s a ground plane with a building on it, stepping up on high and facing the view.” The pool is the first storey above the street and a broad concrete staircase “folds up the hill” to the living room, eschewing any balustrades that might “clutter” that vista. To the same end, there are no support columns between the walls on either side, achieved with a giant U-shaped steel beam that ingeniously creates a bench seat in the main bedroom, which in turn frames the panorama laid out before it. »



These pages The owners are keen entertainers and this generous table, extending the full length of the dining area from one outdoor area to another, is designed for a crowd. Riva 'Sky Natura' dining table from Fanuli. 'Aver S' dining chairs from Casa Mia upholstered in 'Frida' fabric from Fabric Pavilion and 'Barkley' fabric from Verve Fabrics. Mix of 'Kute' pendant lights from Spence & Lyda. Bark artwork on table by Ruth Levine from HK Edit. Custom rug from Tappeti. Antonia Mrljak artwork from Becker Minty.





“AS WELL AS A FAMILY HOME WITH PICTURE-FRAME WINDOWS, WE WERE AFTER A LITTLE PIZZAZZ, EMBODYING SOMETHING WE HAD NOT DONE BEFORE.”



This page, from top With no central support columns and few balustrades along the facade, the spectacular gun-barrel views all the way to the Harbour Bridge remain uninterrupted. Manutti 'Kobo' outdoor sofas and chairs from Cosh Living. Outdoor dining table and chairs, clients' own. Because the home is north facing it is often drenched in sunlight which needs to be controlled through louvres above. Manutti 'Kobo' sofa and chairs and Tribù 'Branch' coffee table, all from Cosh Living. **Opposite page** Pool chairs from Pure Home Living. Bronze rain drum side table from Orient House. Buxeuil limestone pavers from Artedomus. Ezarri Iris tiles from Europe Imports.

«As well as a family home with picture-frame windows, we were after a little pizzazz, embodying something we had not done before,” says the owner. Brian and Anthony overlaid a simple Modernist form with texture and materiality for richness, persuading the owners to push their comfort zone with off-form concrete to dramatic effect.

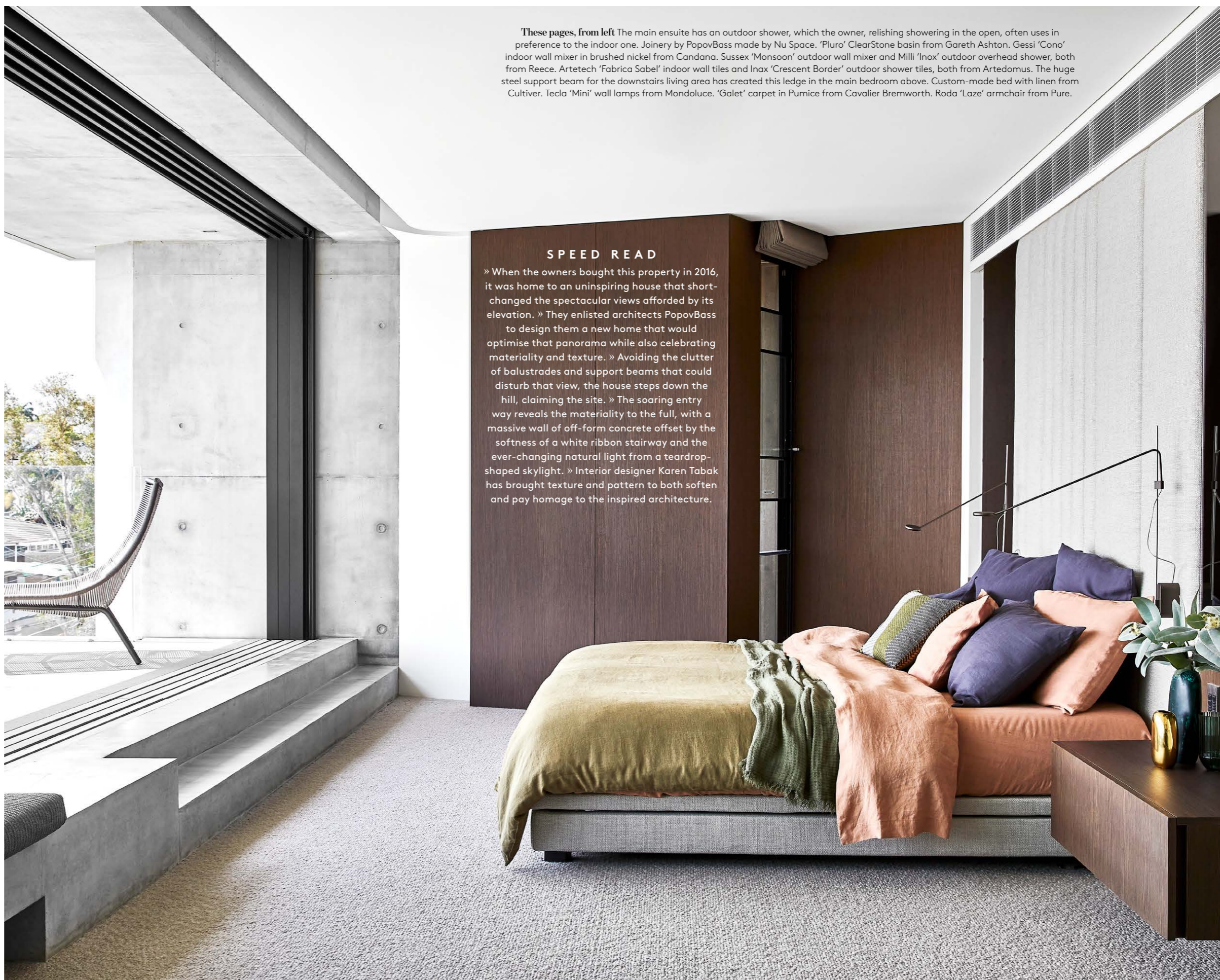
In the main entry on the south side of the house, the treatment of levels is startlingly different from the facade, but equally as elevating. The visitor steps into a cathedral-like, three-storey void. In an interplay of curves and straight lines, a staircase with a ribbon-like balustrade wends its way up towards a tear-shaped skylight. Those elegant lines are offset by a massive off-form concrete wall, illuminated by that skylight, with the light ever-changing through the day. “It’s a sculptural space, a grand gesture,” says Brian. “Everything comes off that concrete wall, which is rough, but the white ribbon and the grey-washed timber floors work off that roughness to create softness and movement, the staircase an organic ribbon that folds in on itself under the skylight.”

The ground-floor layout, too, has an ebb and flow which lures you through. Creating a sequence, the house opens up and then closes in on itself, says Brian, but the view can be enjoyed from just about any room. The pool leads to the grand concrete stairs that take you to the kitchen and then to a small courtyard in the middle of the house, which circulates the air and lets in the northern light. Beyond this sits a more intimate sitting and dining area at the back, which then, in turn, leads to the expanse of the backyard.

Interior designer Karen Tabak paid homage to the inspired architecture, especially the concrete wall and those organic »







These pages, from left The main ensuite has an outdoor shower, which the owner, relishing showering in the open, often uses in preference to the indoor one. Joinery by PopovBass made by Nu Space. 'Pluro' ClearStone basin from Gareth Ashton. Gessi 'Cono' indoor wall mixer in brushed nickel from Candana. Sussex 'Monsoon' outdoor wall mixer and Milli 'Inox' outdoor overhead shower, both from Reece. Artetech 'Fabrica Sabel' indoor wall tiles and Inax 'Crescent Border' outdoor shower tiles, both from Artedomus. The huge steel support beam for the downstairs living area has created this ledge in the main bedroom above. Custom-made bed with linen from Cultiver. Tecla 'Mini' wall lamps from Mondoluce. 'Galet' carpet in Pumice from Cavalier Bremworth. Roda 'Laze' armchair from Pure.

#### SPEED READ

» When the owners bought this property in 2016, it was home to an uninspiring house that short-changed the spectacular views afforded by its elevation. » They enlisted architects PopovBass to design them a new home that would optimise that panorama while also celebrating materiality and texture. » Avoiding the clutter of balustrades and support beams that could disturb that view, the house steps down the hill, claiming the site. » The soaring entry way reveals the materiality to the full, with a massive wall of off-form concrete offset by the softness of a white ribbon stairway and the ever-changing natural light from a teardrop-shaped skylight. » Interior designer Karen Tabak has brought texture and pattern to both soften and pay homage to the inspired architecture.

« curves, by selecting tones from the palest grey to deep charcoal, with texture and pattern added for softness and interest.

“The finishes are earthy, tactile and grounded,” she says. “Floors include oversized solid European oak timber floorboards in a soft grey wash with warm undertones, natural Buxeuil limestone in honed and flamed finishes, and a chunky felted wool loop-pile carpet in the bedrooms. Oversized area rugs soften the hard off-form concrete and anchor the furniture.”

Semi-transparent textured fabrics bring delicate movement to the full-height windows, while layers of textured fabrics lend energy to the upholstery. “The neutral palette allows the architectural details, furniture and artwork to sing,” says Karen. “The house has a zen quality, with simple and calming elements, uncluttered and clean.”

“It’s a rectangular block, but the house is an exercise on how to make it interesting,” says Brian, summing up. And it uses the site it’s been blessed with to the full. “You can see and feel that view,” enthuses the owner. “I really love the staircase and the way it starts off solid and earthy, and it gets lighter and lighter as you go up towards the teardrop skylight, all the while taking in that aspect. It’s so uplifting.” [popovbass.com.au](http://popovbass.com.au); [karentabakinteriors.com](http://karentabakinteriors.com); [buildingfoundations.com.au](http://buildingfoundations.com.au)