

# VOCAL LIVING

AUSTRALIA

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# DECORATE

**STREET STYLE FOR A SYDNEY INNER-CITY TERRACE**  
**ROLLING OUT THE SEASON'S BEST RUGS AND CARPETS**

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# TRUE TO FORM

A SERIES OF CONCRETE PAVILIONS DESIGNED BY ARCHITECT VLADIMIR IVANOV HUGS A STEEP SLOPE ON SYDNEY'S NORTH SHORE WHILE GENTLY STEPPING DOWN TO THE WATER'S EDGE. IT'S A HOME WHERE SIMPLICITY AND COMPLEXITY WALK HAND IN HAND.

PHOTOGRAPHER: MIKKEL VANG PRODUCER: HELEN REDMOND



MONUMENTAL AS ANYTHING, FRAMED IN RAW CAST CONCRETE, DARK GREY PIETRA CHIARA STONE STEPS DESCEND FROM THE STREET-LEVEL ENTRY TO THE MAIN LIVING AREA. THE PAINTING IN THE FOYER IS BY ABORIGINAL ARTIST RONNIE TJAMPITJINPA. OPPOSITE PAGE: THE OFF-FORM CONCRETE WALLS WERE CAST ON SITE, A CHALLENGING AND EXACTING PROCEDURE, AND THEN LEFT IN THEIR NATURAL STATE. IT'S A NATURAL COMPLEMENT TO A SINGLE BOLD COLOUR NOTE, SUCH AS ORANGE, IN A BOY'S BEDROOM. DETAILS, LAST PAGES.





**OPPOSITE PAGE:** AT ONE END OF THE LIVING AREA THE DINING TABLE IS FRAMED BY A SERIES OF BOLD RED STORAGE CUBES PAINTED IN HIGH GLOSS POLYURETHANE, WHICH PAYS TRIBUTE TO THE WORK OF ARTIST DONALD JUDD AND ECHOES THE COLOUR PALETTE OF A PAINTING BY ABORIGINAL ARTIST MINNIE PWERLE. LOUVRES PROVIDE CROSS-VENTILATION WHEN THE FULL-HEIGHT SLIDING DOORS THAT CONNECT THE ROOM TO THE VERANDAH ARE CLOSED. **LEFT:** AT THE OPPOSITE END OF THE LIVING SPACE ARE GREY NORMAN + QUAIN SOFAS AND STOOLS FROM LIVING EDGE, A CUSTOM-MADE CORIAN CREDENZA CONCEALS SOUND EQUIPMENT AND A POP-UP TELEVISION SCREEN. **BELOW AND BOTTOM:** VIEWS OF THE INNER HARBOUR.



THE FIRST IMPRESSION of this residence, hugging a steep site overlooking the water on Sydney's North Shore, is so discreet you could easily be forgiven for not noticing it at all. A pebble-covered flat surface that seems, for all intents and purposes, to be a Japanese-style garden and a deceptively simple grey front door is all that catches your eye.

It's not until you are closer that you see the first signs of the house itself (the pebbles disguise the roof) or notice the attention to detail that marks it as distinctive. The weighty front door made from aluminium channels of precisely differing widths is painted in Sydney Harbour Bridge grey. It sounds severe but is in fact enticingly tactile.

"The orientation of the site," says architect Vladimir Ivanov, "dictated much of the design, as the block faces east and had a neighbouring house to its north. The design had to protect both the owners' and the neighbours' privacy and make the most of the water views."

The entrance, a simple space of off-form concrete (think Tadao Ando) and stone, is both technically complex and aesthetically simple. There is a sense of weightlessness that defies the actual materials, and vast expanses of sky and water in front are simply framed. A low narrow window directs the eye down to a reflective pond and a low bench, while the floor of dark grey Pietra Grey stone is laid in a pattern of four different sized tiles that were pre-cut and numbered in Italy.

"It is an honest house," says Ivanov. "There are no smoke and mirrors." Ivanov, who won a 2003 RAIA commendation for his Brooks Residence, spent five years working for Harry Seidler & Associates. It shows in his use of materials and adherence to a modernist simplicity: concrete, stone and wood are all used without unnecessary ornamentation, so that the whole house has a gravitas inherent in the best architecture. "Luckily I had dream clients with whom I had worked previously, so there was a great deal of mutual trust and compatibility."







AT THE HEART OF THE LIVING AREA IS THE WHITE CORIAN KITCHEN SET ON A RAISED PLATFORM OF WHITE PIRELLI RUBBER FLOORING. ABOVE THE WORK SURFACE IS A 'STILO' LIGHT BY XENON ARCHITECTURAL LIGHTING. THE SOLID EXPANSE OF WHITE BENCH IS INTERRUPTED BY A SINGLE SPLASH OF BRILLIANT RED, ECHOED SUBTLY IN SOFT FURNISHINGS AND CABINETRY. THE CAPPELLINI 'HI PAD' STOOLS ARE FROM DEDECE, AND THE WHITE GLASS VASES ARE FROM PARTERRE.





ABOVE: THE ENTRANCE IS THE FIRST POINT OF CONTACT WITH THE VIEW, FRAMED IN A CONCRETE BLOCK TO CONTROL ITS IMPACT AND KEEP THE FULL EXPANSE FOR THE LIVING AREA ON THE LOWER LEVEL, **ABOVE RIGHT**, A CONCRETE WALL SUSPENDED FROM THE CEILING, **BELOW**, BLOCKS UNSPECTACULAR VIEWS OF A NEIGHBOURING BUILDING, **BELOW RIGHT**: A WORLD MAP IN A CHILD'S BEDROOM,



Above all, the owners wanted a discreet, private space without ostentation that would both meet the demands of a growing family and last the test of time. It is unsurprising to learn that they lived and worked in Japan, an experience that has had a lasting impact on their aesthetic sensibility: the house purrs with peace and tranquillity.

Functionally, the main floor of the house is divided into two pavilions – a dining/living/kitchen space (off which is a separate area for the adult bedroom/bathroom) and a pavilion for the three young children of the family.

Two separate sets of folding doors open back into jarrah frames that allow the entire main space of 19 metres to be opened to a long wooden deck, a melding of the external and internal that makes the most of Sydney's climate and almost doubles the usable area.

Simplicity is amplified by a sycamore bulkhead, which runs the entire length of the room and conceals all the electrical cabling and the airconditioning duct. Renzo Piano-designed 'Lingotto' uplights are boosted by a deep lightwell which pours daylight in from above, reflecting it gently from surface to surface. From the far end of the room, the dining room glows with seven waist-high red



**LEFT**: THE FAÇADE OF THE BUILDING PRESENTS AS A SIMPLE, SOLID BLOCK, WITH A WEIGHTY FRONT DOOR MADE FROM ALUMINIUM CHANNELS OF VARYING WIDTHS, THE DOOR PIVOTS OPEN TO REVEAL VIEWS THROUGH THE HOUSE AND BEYOND, **RIGHT**: THE SERIES OF CONCRETE PAVILIONS ARTICULATES THE BUILDING EXTERNALLY, DOWN THE STEEPLY SLOPING SITE TO THE WATER BELOW, THE SIMPLE INTERCONNECTING FORMS EMPHASISE THE SEPARATE LIVING AND SLEEPING SPACES,

minimalist storage cubes – Ivanov's homage to artist Donald Judd – and opens to a small courtyard (with a tranquil pond and a beautiful sandstone wall), adding further light and allowing for cooling cross breezes on steamier days.

But it is the kitchen that takes the centre stage – literally in this case – with a raised floor covered in white Pirelli rubber flooring (kinder on the legs than concrete) that runs behind a long white Corian bench. "It is a stage," Ivanov says with a twinkle, "on which the cook may perform." Hidden discreetly in the wall is every gourmand's dream – the walk-in pantry – surely one of the more practical ways of maintaining a minimalist look and something more kitchens should include.

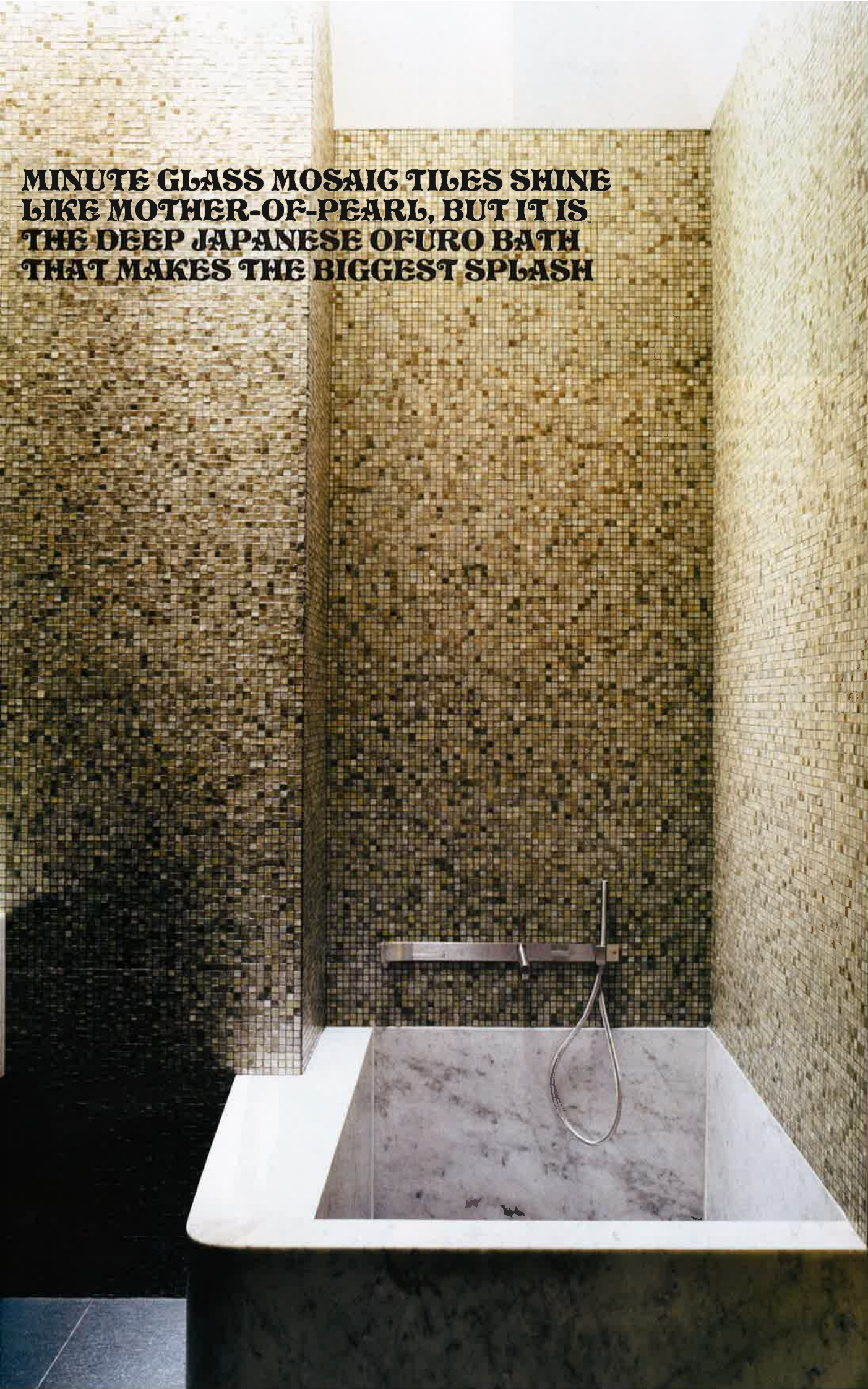
Behind the main pavilion is the children's wing, a flexible space that can be closed off with a weighty sliding door, allowing a shelved area with a long banquette for watching TV and reading to be either enclosed or open. A corridor of polished American walnut, that at first appears to be a row of cupboards, conceals a bathroom as well as two boys' bedrooms. High rows of louvres provide cross ventilation while maximising wall space for books and storage.



ARCHITECT VLADIMIR IVANOV, **BELOW**, BELIEVES AUSTRALIA IS LARGELY IN THE EXPERIMENTAL STAGES OF CONCRETE CONSTRUCTION, UNLIKE EUROPE AND JAPAN WHICH HAVE A LONG HISTORY WITH THIS TYPE OF CONSTRUCTION, **LEFT**: TEXTURED STONE SURFACES AND A REFLECTION POND CREATE VISUAL INTEREST IN AN INTERNAL COURTYARD, YUNCKEN CONSTRUCTION GROUP BUILT THE HOME, WITH ENGINEERING WORK BY PARTRIDGE PARTNERS,







**MINUTE GLASS MOSAIC TILES SHINE LIKE MOTHER-OF-PEARL, BUT IT IS THE DEEP JAPANESE OFURO BATH THAT MAKES THE BIGGEST SPLASH**

THE MASTER BEDROOM, RIGHT, IS IN A SEPARATE PAVILION OFF THE MAIN LIVING AREA. ABOVE THE BED IS *TINGARI CYCLE* BY ABORIGINAL ARTIST THOMAS TJAPALTJARRI. AT THE END OF THE HALL, BELOW, CORIAN CUBED SHELVES ARE BACKED WITH METALLIC GOLD PAINT, THE ENSUITE BATHROOM, LEFT, FEATURES A JAPANESE-STYLE OFURO BATH LINED IN CARRARA MARBLE SLABS, THE TAPS ARE BOFFI, LIT BY A TALL LIGHTWELL, THE PEARLY CHESTNUT MOSAIC TILES FROM BISANNA REFLECT THE LIGHT, DETAILS, LAST PAGES.



The main bedroom area, which is down a few stairs and separate from both the other pavilions, is lit by a soaring five metre-high lightwell. The bathroom here is covered in minute glass mosaic tiles that shine like mother-of-pearl, but it is the deep Japanese Ofuro bath that makes the biggest splash. Made from five solid pieces of marble and lit by a tall lightwell, it is for vertical, rather than horizontal, bathing and is invitingly seductive; a place for luxuriating, not simply washing.

More or less tucked away on the ground floor, reached by either an exterior or interior staircase, is a guest wing. Here, a bedroom with separate living, kitchenette and bathroom, as well as a home office and a large rumpus room complete with billiard table, can access both the swimming pool and the harbour. Though this doubles the usable living space and makes this a large family home indeed, the effect is discreet and flexible; the house feels as if it would be as comfortable for two people to live in, as it would be for five – no mean feat.

It is from here – looking back at the house from the water – that a sense of the complete design is revealed and that the pure and clean lines of the concrete box, traversed by a cantilevered staircase, can be best appreciated. It is at once both deceptively simple and remarkably complex, allowing for a multiplicity of functions without being in any way conspicuous. A very successful performance. CANDICE BRUCE