

This page The ultra-modern seven-bedroom, five-bathroom home enjoys a breathtaking outlook. Opposite page A large cabinet in the family room delivers sleek built-in storage. "The only way to survive in an open-plan house with a family is to have lots of places to put things away," says interior designer Brett Mickan. Artwork by Martin Campbell.



HE HAD ALWAYS DREAMED OF A CASUAL BEACH SHACK WHERE HE COULD FLING OPEN THE DOORS TO SEA BREEZES.



This page: A handwoven Beni Ouarain rug from Kulchi anchors the space in the formal living room. Minotti 'Braque' leather sofa from De De Ce. Antonio Citterio 'Repos' swivel chair from Space. 'Sabrina' mini timber stool from Zuster. Poolside Gossip artwork by Slim Aarons. Opposite page: top Oak and polished concrete stairs make a statement in the entry. The concrete was tinted a taupe shade to mimic the nearby sandstone cliffs. Barbera 'Lovelock' coat stand from Catapult. Bottom: Light floods into the stairwell via louvred windows which open to sea breezes. Scatter cushions rest on a built-in storage cabinet.

With a vast sea and skyscape dominating the outlook and taking up much of the oxygen on this street in Sydney's eastern suburbs, a man-made structure might fade into the background. Not so for a recent entrant to this coveted Clovelly location. The clean lines of this low-profile contemporary home disguise a structure of grand proportion.

When a rare opportunity arose to buy into the spectacular setting, this successful business couple didn't hesitate. Letting the property to its former owner, the pair began imagining what they desired for their home-to-be. Three years later, they demolished the house and assembled a team of architects and designers to bring their perfect home to life.

Sydney-based interior designer Brett Mickan and the owners were simpatico from previous collaborations, so communication and trust were a given. Calling on architect Tzannes Associates and Brett to create their new home, the couple had drafted a long list of wants and needs, including a few conflicting desires.

He had always dreamed of a casual beach shack where he could fling open the doors to sea breezes and lope barefoot to the water. She, however, had a highly developed fashion sense and aesthetic and wanted a sophisticated but low-maintenance home. "Blending these sounds like they're coming from complete opposites but it was really about getting that simple clean beach aesthetic and having key pieces and art so that the home feels impressive. And because the architecture is so simple I wanted to highlight it rather than let the interiors dominate," says Brett.

There were other desires to be reconciled for the seven-bedroom, five-bathroom home. The couple agreed the home had to make a statement, as they regularly welcome up to 100 guests for parties. And, of course, it needed to function as an escape for themselves and a comfortable home for their five children.

Building the generous three-storey home with its three-metre ceilings and 200-square-metre footprint for a total volume of 500 square metres called for fresh thinking as costs began to escalate and building on site looked problematic for access and traffic reasons. While the bottom floor, with garage, sauna and two-bedroom apartment, was excavated and built on site, prefabricated building expert Tessellate a+d was called on to construct the top floors in Melbourne. The middle level, which includes the family living area, kitchen and terrace and rear formal living room, and the top floor, comprising five bedrooms, were customised and built in 10 modular pieces and transported to Sydney on seven trucks. This move cut the spend to two-thirds the cost of building from the ground up and construction time was slashed to nine months from an estimated two years. "I saw the floors being craned into place but I can't tell where the joins are," says Brett.

The views dictated references to sea, sky and sandstone for the interiors. "Because you're looking straight out onto ocean and cliffs you want it to feel seamless," says Brett, so the main colour is a sandy rather than stark white to connect to the surrounds.

Natural surfaces with inherent irregularities were specified to soften the architecture's defined lines such as the oak floors and limestone-lined bathrooms. The polished concrete in the entry was tinted to tone with the local stone. "For the formal living area at the rear I amped up the sculptural look with the Minotti sofa and the stunning Kulchi rug," says Brett. The artwork – a painting of the Clovelly shoreline by Joanna Logue – was a gift from the husband to the wife. And the views steal the show once again. ■

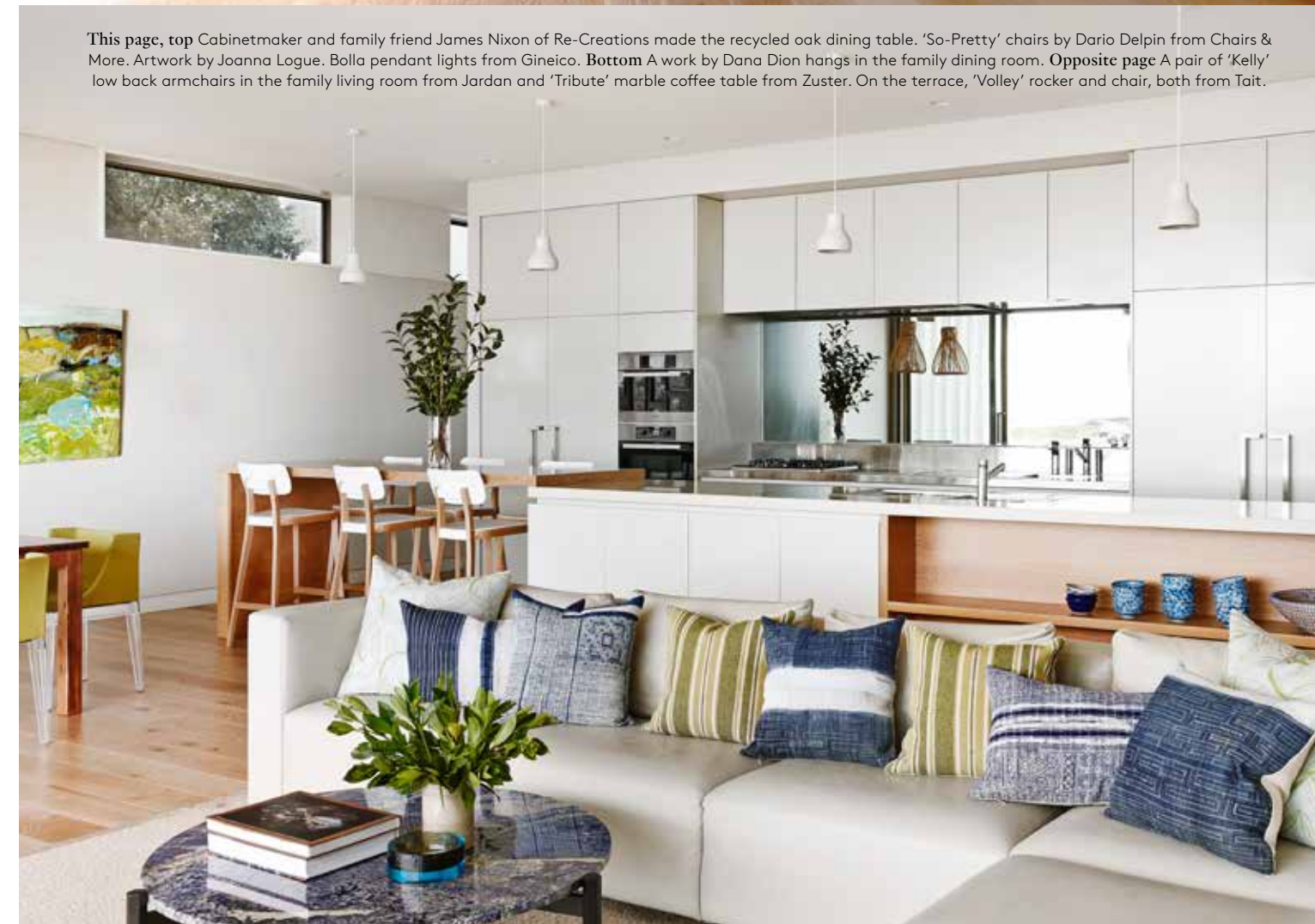
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This page, top Cabinetmaker and family friend James Nixon of Re-Creations made the recycled oak dining table. 'So-Pretty' chairs by Dario Delpin from Chairs & More. Artwork by Joanna Logue. Bolla pendant lights from Gineico. Bottom A work by Dana Dion hangs in the family dining room. Opposite page A pair of 'Kelly' low back armchairs in the family living room from Jordan and 'Tribute' marble coffee table from Zuster. On the terrace, 'Volley' rocker and chair, both from Tait.



This page Soaking in the views in the main bedroom on the top floor. Flaxfield 'Siena' bed cover from Ivy Lane Traders. Scatter cushions from Fond Industries. Artwork by Martin Campbell. Opposite page Kado 'Arc' freestanding bath. One Third 'Asymmetric' side table from Stylecraft. Limestone floor and wall tiles from WK Marble & Granite.



SPEED READ

» A couple bought into a Sydney street with expansive ocean views. » They built an impressive three-storey home that answered a list of needs and wants including a substantial entertaining area and an easy-to-maintain space for their family of five children. » The top two floors were built offsite in Melbourne in prefabricated modular sections which saved cost and time. » Natural surfaces with their inherent irregularities were specified for the interiors to soften the architecture's crisp lines. » Sculptural materials and handmade pieces enhanced the organic look.