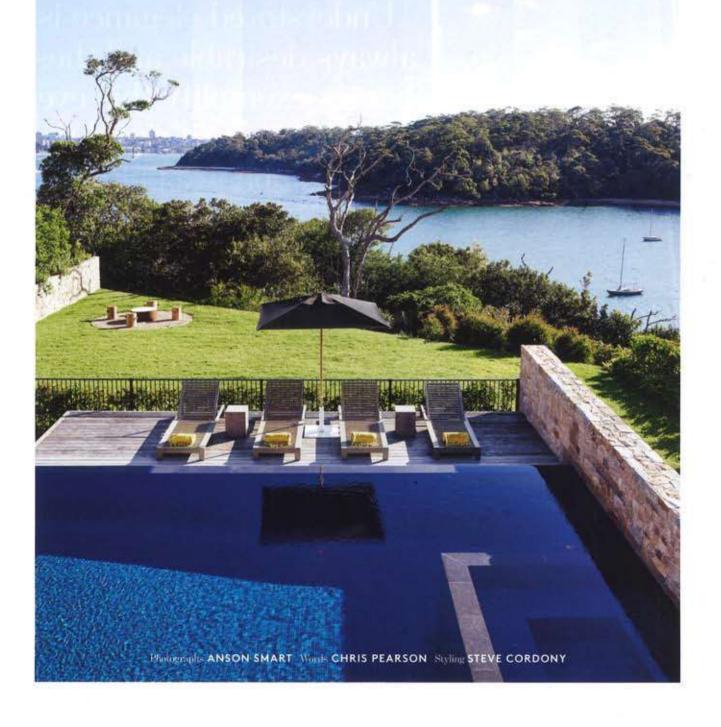
POOL PARTY

This harbourside home on Sydney's lower North Shore was designed to create an indoor-outdoor setting that's perfect for entertaining.





lean and crisp, this home might be Modernist in its inspiration, but brimming with sunshine and energy, it thinks way beyond the minimalist box. Its architect Shaun Lockyer labels his take "subtropical Modernism" and, with foliage seductively cascading from the roof, and light-soaked, airy, yet intimate spaces seamlessly blending inside and out, there's nothing chilly and unwelcoming here.

The owners had been living in the same street on Sydney's lower North Shore when they saw this property for sale. It was then occupied by a 1980s home, which failed to optimise the sloping site with its dress-circle harbour views. They hired architect Shaun Lockyer and interior designer Justine Hugh-Jones, both of whom they had worked with on previous projects, to design a brand-new three-level house that would blend with its setting, creating a seamless indoor-outdoor connection and offering year-round outdoor living.

"I love the modern Brazilian look of glass, steel, stone and rich woods, the inside-outside concept, with sliding doors that disappear and incredible gardens that look like part of the room," says the owner. "I wanted a modern family house, sophisticated, but down to earth and liveable, and also for entertaining and dinner parties – super-glamorous at night, casual by day near the pool."

Drawing inspiration from the work of Brazilian Marcio Kogan, other South American architects and some from South Africa, Shaun has designed a home with walls of glass and dramatic cantilevers, in timber, stone and concrete. On one side is a courtyard, created by excavating down into the site, so the garden on that side connects uninterrupted through walls of glass to the living areas and then to the pool and harbour beyond. As a result, the house appears transparent.

Deep cantilevers create all-weather outdoor living areas, while ensuring the home retains its green credentials. Shaun's design not only celebrates the lush landscaping by William Dangar, but the cantilevers control sun, providing shade in summer and warming sunlight in winter, while the concrete construction provides thermal mass, storing heat or cool when necessary.





Copious concrete is used both structurally and for the finishes. Board-form concrete softens the ceilings: "Concrete when smooth can be brutal and hard. With board-form, it takes on the form of timber grain. The brain sees it differently - it's a warm, beautifully textured material," says Shaun, who has also used slicker off-form concrete on the walls to create a counterpoint. But, lest the rooms become "a timber sandwich", says Justine, instead of wood, the floors feature terrazzo in its infinite variety of colour and pattern.

Throughout, rich textures and pops of colour add warmth and interest. "The living area is like a jewellery box, with the teal velvet sofas, the gold-leaf accessories and the rich, deep silk rug," Justine says. Sapphire blue chairs in the adjoining dining area heighten the effect. "The beautiful jewel-like colours are reflective against the raw concrete. The contrast gives it an energy; it may surprise when you expect to see a more minimalistic style, but I wanted impact."

The living room, adds Justine, "is a grand statement, but also very comfortable". While the Minotti furniture is elegant and glamorous, "at the end of the project, this animal appeared, the whimsical Baxter furry chair". That and other unpredictable, quirky touches ensure the house does not take itself too seriously. "The red door with its huge weathered brass handle is like a calling card - stylish, but fun and laid-back in its effect," she says. As is the camouflage fabric on the banquette, the citrus green dining chairs at the breakfast bar, and the turquoisetiled spa on the ground floor. "I love the surprise of the colour against the silver travertine; it's another jewel space that says 'look at me'," according to Justine.

By contrast - and she has used contrast to great effect throughout this home - the informal living area makes an earthier statement. In ochres, chocolates and terracottas, with brown leather chairs sitting on an ethnic rug under two massive vintage 'Artichoke' lights with an aged patina, it creates a cosy nook beneath soaring concrete ceilings.

The US-born owner is totally at home in this house with not only South American references, but a few North American ones, too. "It borrows on the US aesthetic of wide, flat houses with all the living spaces on one level and the bedrooms on another," she says. "It's a big house that doesn't feel that way. The rooms are intimate spaces, thanks to the use of texture and subtle divisions in the open plan."

The interplay between expansiveness and a human scale pervades, "My favourite aspect is the indoor-outdoor living," says the owner. "With all the doors wide open, there's no difference between inside and outside. All the outdoor spaces are covered, so you can sit there in comfort and watch it raining." 15

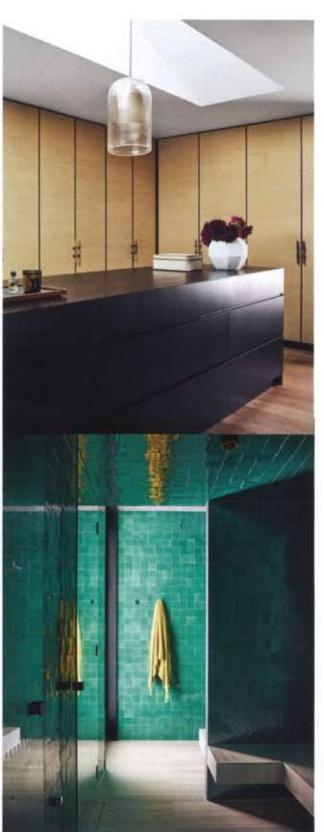
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» Drawing inspiration from Brazilian architect Marcio Kogan, Shaun created a 'subtropical Modernist' style with deep cantilevers and vost walls of glass ensuring outdoor areas can be enjoyed in all weather. » Interior designer Justine Hugh-Jones has filled the home with pops of colour and tactile materials, providing a light-hearted, whimsical touch.

