

Words **JUDY PASCOE** Photography **RORY GARDINER**



These pages, from left intimate views of the beach and water are the main attraction of this Sydney apartment, but the interior decoration is equally dazzling. The third bedroom was opened up to allow for a larger living and dining zone. A European still life from auction house Shapiro hangs above a Spanish console from Tamsin Johnson. In the dining area is a Spanish c1910 oak table and four Audoux Minet chairs bought in Paris. The two end chairs, by Charlotte Perriand, were bought in Spain and have custom seat pads by AP Design House. Vintage Tuareg rug from Perryman Carpets. C1940 plaster wall sconce is one of a pair, bought in Paris and finished with a custom linen shade by AP Design House. 'Triangle' pendant light by Anna Charlesworth. Large artwork by Struan Teague from Fox Jensen Gallery. Ceramic platter on table sourced in Paris. Linen blinds by AP Design House.



RHAPSODY *in blue*

A deftly curated selection of vintage pieces, many

sourced in Paris, finds eloquent expression in

this chic beachside apartment in Sydney.



With the pellucid blue waters beckoning beyond the windows and a casual, eclectic vibe inside, there's more than a suggestion of the Riviera about this stylish beachside apartment on Sydney's lower north shore. In fact, it's very easy to visualise Tom Ripley sprawled out along the length of the custom sofa, basking in the elegance around him.

Alexandra Ponting of AP Design House has conceived this mise-en-scène, and finessed it to the max. The apartment is in a modernist red-brick block that dominates the northern end of Balmoral and overlooks Edwards Beach. Once home to the fabled Star Amphitheatre, the building was constructed in 1951 and remains largely unchanged today.

The owners, a downsizing couple, were understandably attracted to the property because of its position and priceless views to Sydney Heads. They engaged architect Michael Robilliard & Associates to renovate and rejig the apartment prior to moving in, altering its three-bedroom layout to two, enabling the creation of a larger living and dining space within the footprint.

Alexandra came to the project on a chance encounter through Instagram. "The client was particularly drawn to two Jenny Topfer artworks we have hanging in the studio. She popped in one day and introduced herself and there was an immediate >



This page The living room has a relaxed and open feel. Belgian linen sofa by AP Design House, a vintage Italian timber armchair with blue-and-white striped upholstery and an armchair in Italian navy linen sit on a custom jute rug. Brutalist-style coffee table with slate top bought in Paris on a custom limestone base by AP Design House. Bamboo side table by Vivai del Sud. Blackened steel side tables by AP Design House. Table lamps sourced in Belgium with custom shades by AP Design House. Large artwork by Jenny Topfer from Fox Jensen Gallery adjacent to a smaller 1960s lithograph by Antoni Tàpies. Artwork on wall in foreground sourced in Paris. **Opposite page, from top** A banquette seat runs the length of the windows and is an inviting spot to take in the exquisite surrounds. The softness of the Belgian linen sofa is contrasted with the Brutalist coffee table. The dining space looking towards the living area with a c1880 Arts and Crafts oak credenza bought in Paris. The c1940 plaster wall sconce is one of a pair, bought in Paris and finished with a linen shade.



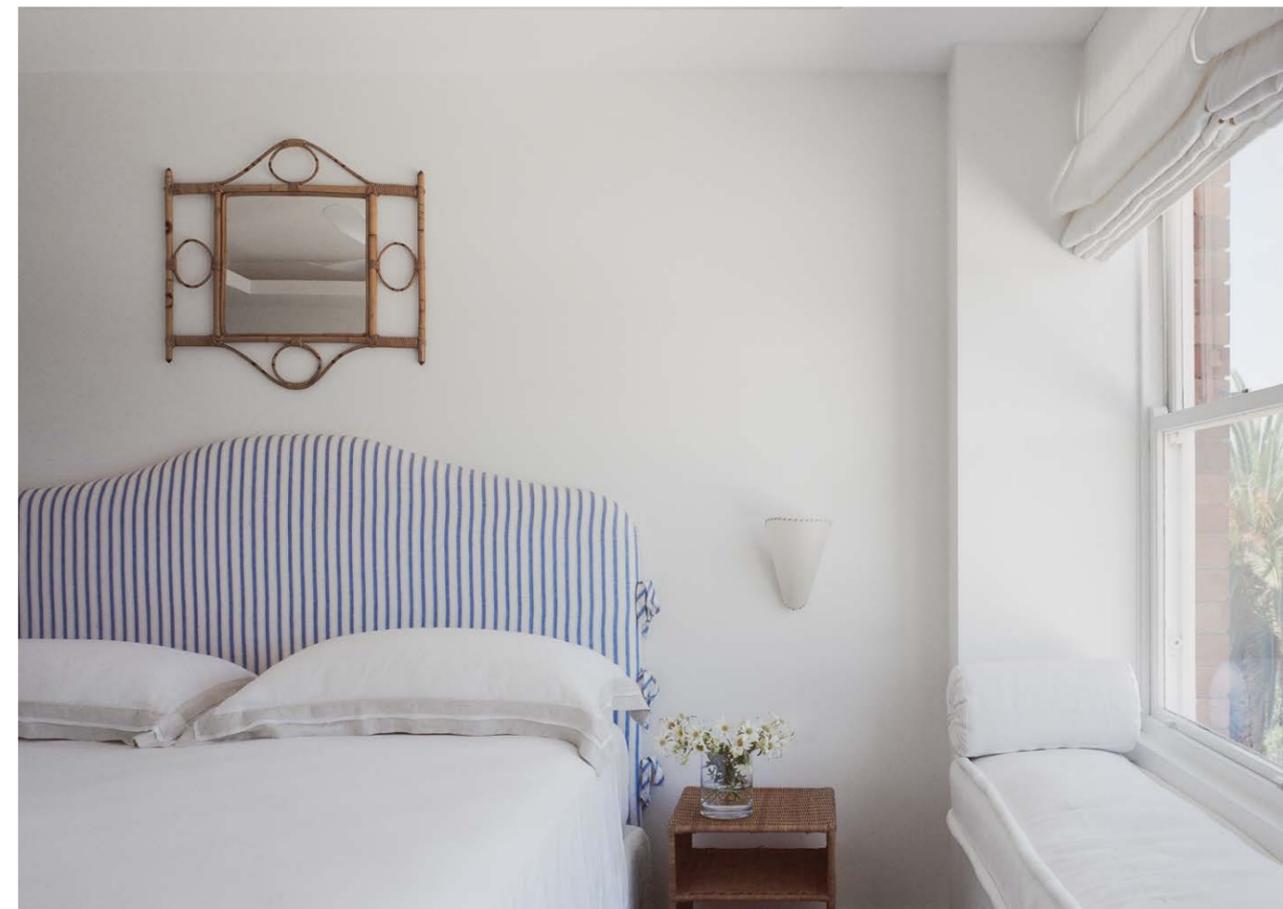


These pages, from left The c1910 Spanish oak dining table and four Audoux Minet chairs were bought in Paris. The two end chairs are by Charlotte Perriand and were bought in Spain. The chairs have custom seat pads by AP Design House. The c1940 plaster wall sconces were bought in Paris and finished with custom shades by AP Design House. Pendant light by Anna Charlesworth. Ceramic platter on table sourced in Paris. Linen blinds by AP Design House. Artwork by Isaac Nixon. The entrance hall offers a tantalising glimpse of the view. Custom jute runner with border by AP Design House. Console from Porta Romana holds a vase by Alana Wilson. Custom parchment and leather wall lamp, custom joinery and wall render by AP Design House.



SPEED READ

» Alexandra Ponting of AP Design House was tasked with delivering the decoration to this beachside apartment on Sydney's north shore. » Located in a 1951-built block the apartment's floor plan was reconfigured from three bedrooms to two by architect Michael Robilliard and Associates, allowing for larger living and dining spaces. » To counter the absence of an outdoor area Alexandra specified built-in banquettes that run the length of the windows in the living room and main bedroom, and offer mesmerising views across the water. » A buying trip to Paris unearthed some eclectic furniture pieces and accessories that provide texture and personality against the backdrop of the rough rendered walls. » While the scheme is neutral, a sprinkling of blue and white stripes throughout adds to the charming coastal aesthetic.



This page The main bedroom enjoys the same sublime vista as the living area. Banquette seat with linen upholstery and bolsters, linen roman blinds and bedhead, all by AP Design House. Bed linen by Olatz. Vintage cane bedside tables bought in Paris. Custom leather and parchment wall light by AP Design House. C1960 bamboo and rattan wall mirror, in the style of Franco Albini, sourced in Paris. **Opposite page** Custom dresser designed by AP Design House and made by Jonathan West. Table lamp by Lucy Montgomery with custom parchment shade by AP Design House. Custom jute rug by AP Design House. French artwork in original frame from Studio ALM.

« affinity between us,” she says. The client was also attracted to the design studio’s casually elegant aesthetic and its facility for including unexpected elements.

While the structural work was being completed, Alexandra devised a neutral palette for the apartment based around another Jenny Topfer work which now is a focal point of the living room. Tactile finishes enhance the subdued nature of the scheme with custom rough render on the walls and materials such as wicker, slate, stone and metal granted equal billing. “It goes without saying that the blue water and stunning view is the hero of the apartment and our design choices worked to support this and not overtake it,” says Alexandra.

While the apartment had been almost completely gutted the original tall casement windows were retained allowing for the magic view to take centre stage, and the simplicity of the interior architecture called for graphic design notes. “Our brief was to complement and soften the sharp lines through decoration,” says Alexandra.

In the monochrome living room an Italian timber armchair with custom striped upholstery and a custom swivel armchair covered in navy Italian linen add punch, with occasional tables in bamboo, blackened steel, and slate and limestone creating punctuation points.

To counteract the absence of an outdoor terrace, Alexandra specified a linen-upholstered banquette seat that runs the length of the windows in both the living area and main bedroom. “It creates the illusion of hovering over the beach,

almost as if you are lying on the water,” the designer says. “It is incredibly special, and there is always a wonderful breeze that blows right through the apartment.”

In keeping with the classic coastal ambience, blue-and-white stripes have been dotted throughout, from the upholstery on the Italian armchair in the living room to the bedhead in the main bedroom and the banquette seats.

A buying trip to Paris yielded many of the standout pieces for this special abode, including the Brutalist slate-topped coffee table, Audoux Minet dining chairs, c1880 oak credenza and the Spanish oak dining table, and for the main bedroom, a 1960s bamboo and rattan mirror, and vintage cane bedside tables. To that were added custom pieces such as the cream Belgian linen sofa, the jute hall runner, and a parchment and leather wall lamp, as well as Tuareg floor rugs, sculptural pendant lights by Anna Charlesworth and Charlotte Perriand dining chairs from Spain. All add texture, personality and a sense of permanence.

It’s a breezy, insouciant mix assembled with an assured hand yet it feels completely effortless. There is an artisanal, curated quality emphasised by the accessories, from the vase by Alana Wilson, a hand-painted ceramic platter found in Paris and a vintage French sketch in its original frame.

The owners, who use the apartment as a retreat as well as a place to entertain family and friends, say they love every single thing about it. “It is just the best home. It feels so beautiful. When I walk in, my heart just feels so happy.”

apdesignhouse.com.au; michaelrobilliard.com.au