

The beachside site of
a weather-beaten Sydney
bungalow is re-created
as a sophisticated,
light-washed
urban home.

SPIRIT OF THE SEA

THIS PAGE: custom dining table
in Tasmanian oak from HERMON &
HERMON; Carl Hansen & Son 'CH36'
oak chairs by HANS J WEGNER from
Cult; AY ILLUMINATE pendant lights
from Spence & Lyda. OPPOSITE PAGE:
Euromix Proyalbi white set from Euroset;
'Ash Fossil' floor tiles from Artedomus;
Figure on Slate artwork by GRAHAM
FRANSELLA. Details, last pages.



By Chris Pearson
Photographed by Anson Smart

In the living room, 'Flap' sofa by JENS EILERSEN from Spence & Lyda; Carl Hansen 'CH25' chair, as before; PHOENIX coffee tables from Hub; Water Sprit (2013) wall sculpture by TRACEY DEEP from Koskela; artwork by JOSHUA YELDHAM.

Sea and sky meld into one when viewed through the three-metre-high sliding glass that fronts this clifftop aerie with bird's-eye panoramas. The margins between the house and its setting are similarly blurred, the light-washed interiors by designers Hare & Klein breathing in the everchanging seascape beyond. But while fluid and dynamic, the space also owes a debt to Sydney's eastern suburbs, which stretch out behind. Combining coastal cool with city sophistication, this may be a beach home, but it's no beach house.

The site was shamelessly squandered by the latter when the owners bought it 10 years ago. But beauty lay beyond the weather-beaten bungalow. "There was something magical about the view," says the owner, who lives here with her husband and two children, both under 10.

So, in 2011, they brought in the bulldozers and replaced it with this home by architect Brian Bass of Popov Bass. An 'urban beach' aesthetic topped their wish list. Bass captured the view with an ingenious split-level design — usually reserved for a sloping landscape rather than a relatively flat site such as this — so both front and rear of the house are soaked in light and vistas. A suspended staircase aids access to the view from the different levels. While the home is open plan, the split level also nurtures an intimacy throughout.

Curved walls don't just echo the ebb and flow of the ocean: "They make the spaces flow, add softness and help pick up the view," the architect says. "And when coupled with the waxed rendered finish in the hallway, you just want to touch the wall. Hare & Klein just got that texture thing."

Bass wasn't the only one who thought so. The home owner had seen principal Meryl Hare on a TV renovation show, aptly as it turned out, giving tips on how to revamp a beach home. "It resonated with me," she says. "Meryl talked about textures and layers. It all made sense. She was so sensible and passionate about what she was doing."

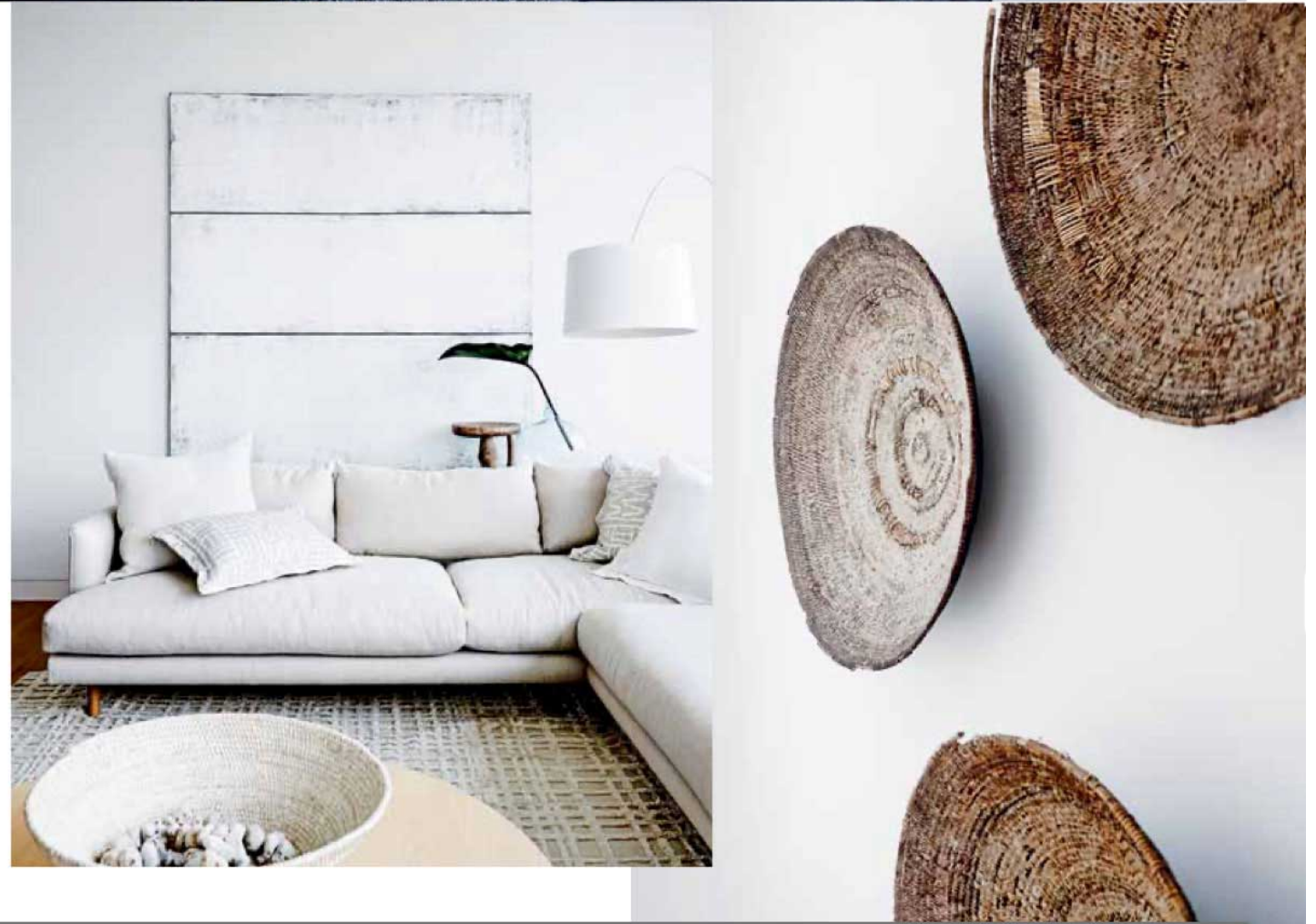
In her brief to Hare and the firm's senior interior designer, Eloise Fotheringham, the owner specified interiors that were "authentic and not showy", and practical for two small children. And an aesthetic that borrowed from the cityscape as well as the ocean spread out before it. »

*"Curved walls make the spaces flow,
add softness and help pick up the view"*
— architect Brian Bass

THIS PAGE: kitchen bench made from precast concrete; TORREMATO 'Ram' pendant light from Lightco. OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: in the study, Classicon 'Euvira' rocker by JADER ALMEIDA from Anibou; DCW 'Mantis' floor lamp by BERNARD SCHOTTLANDER from Spence & Lyda; joinery by Hare + Klein; GERVASONI 'Ghost og' chair from Anibou; photographs by PETER MCCONCHIE. Baskets on the passageway wall from Orient House. In the family room: custom sofa from Fanuli; 'Oxo' coffee table from MARK TUCKEY; Foscarini 'Twiggy' floor lamp by MARC SADLER from Space Furniture; artwork by JENNIFER TOPFER.



"This is our home, not a holiday house. It had to be true to its environment" — the homeowner





« “We live by the beach, but this is our home, not a holiday house,” she says. “It had to be true to its environment.” So no shells or sailboats — this had to subtly evoke the spirit of the sea rather than being literal in its references. It also had to be calm and relaxed, says Fotheringham, with washed-out tones and natural textured finishes. “We wanted to get away from lots of white, because it can be too stark and glary. Instead, subtle, natural tones in silvery greys and khakis soften and ground the spaces. And the darker elements actually recede.”

“With driftwood tones and shards of white, the colours relate to the colours of the ocean,” adds Hare. Meanwhile, the Joshua Yeldham print in the living area and the dark pendants over the dining table create contrast that anchors the airy open plan.

Tactile finishes — including concrete, waxed plaster, sandblasted stone and timber — are echoed in the furnishings and accessories, such as paper-cord chairs, sisal rugs, woven baskets, knitted silk-and-cashmere pendants and wall sculptures by Tracey Deep. Many of these, too, have a found quality as if crafted from objects cast up by the tide. Even the shapes allude to the ocean, the organic coffee table recalling stones smoothed by the waves.

In contrast, the more earthy study on the city side of the house has a darker tribal, den-like feel, the two monochrome prints being the starting point for the decoration.

Oversize sofas, a banquet-size dining table and a massive architectural plan cabinet recast as a sideboard complement the generous, airy spaces, their ample proportions creating a dialogue with the smaller furnishings and accessories. “Texture also comes from the interplay of large and small pieces,” says Hare.

Like a beachcomber, Fotheringham painstakingly amassed the accessories piece by piece as the project evolved. For example, the chunky, weathered timber tray on the sideboard sat beside her desk for months awaiting its new home. “They are found pieces gathered over time,” she says. “You can’t find unique pieces in one day.”

In a house that straddles different worlds, the breezy, relaxed interiors embrace another intriguing paradox. “They show an amazing level of detail,” says the owner. “They look so spontaneous and yet they’re not.” *VL*

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THIS PAGE: in the main bedroom, SOCIETY raw linen throw in Charcoal from Ondena; Chinese bench and Moroccan runner from The Country Trader; Salt Narrative (2014) by MARK ELLIOT-RANKEN. OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: in the guest bathroom, custom basin by BOYD ALTERNATIVES and ASTRA WALKER Icon tapware, both from Candana. In the living room, GERVASONI InOut '43' and '44' side tables from Anibou; artworks by TERRI BROOKS. In the main ensuite, APAISER 'Seascapes' bath from Rogerseller; Icon tapware from Astra Walker; sculpture by TRACEY DEEP. In the kitchen, STONE ITALIANA Superwhite Grain benchtop; photograph by GRAHAM FRANSELLA. Details, last pages.