

# BACK TO THE FUTURE

Two worlds collide in this futuristic reworking of a classic worker's cottage on Sydney's famed harbour front



✱ **PHOTOGRAPHY** Pablo Veiga/Photofoyer  
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## EXTERIOR

Reminiscent of a Pucci print, the pool's interior features retro geometrics in a palette that picks out the blues and greens of its surroundings. 'We chose curves to echo the shape of the house's extension,' says architect Ben.

**Pool**, Senator Pools. **Pool artwork**, Janet Ottaviano. **Jak chairs**, Made By Tait. Scala travertine **pavers**, Eco Outdoor. **Landscaping**, Jila

## CABANA

Linear furnishings provide contrast to the curve above. 'The void allows light to be channelled all the way in,' says Ben. 'If you look up, you can see cloud formations three storeys above.'

*Oriole: Link Series (1970-71) painting* by Sydney Ball at sullivan+strumpf. **ClassiCon daybed**, Eileen Gray at Anibou. **Henrytimi chair**, Vbo Australia. **Teti occasional table**, Zanotta. **Agra rug** in Artichoke, Armadillo. **Vibrant Raspberry Candy cube** by Sabine Marcelis; **small Spin vessel** by Rive Roshan, both Gallery Sally Dan-Cuthbert

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### THE DESIGNERS

Architectural and interior design firm Carter Williamson renovated this Sydney home for artist Tara Eales and her husband, who works in media. The couple have three grown-up children.

### THE PROPERTY

A late-Victorian cottage on a steep waterfront site in Sydney, Australia. The original house is conjoined with a new extension spanning four storeys. In the basement there is a cabana, TV room, art room and bathroom. The lower ground floor features a games room, laundry room and kitchen-diner. On the ground floor there is a study and living room, a main bedroom suite, two bedrooms and bathroom. The top floor features two further bedrooms and a roof terrace.



Old meets new' would be an inadequate summary of the reimagining of this Sydney home, located right on the landmark harbour. In fact, rarely has there been a more striking contrast between the familiarity of a modest-looking Victorian Gothic facade and the retro-futuristic extension that ribbons from its sloping rear, which is completely invisible from the street. The brainchild of architectural practice Carter Williamson, known for its innovative use of materials such as concrete, glass and blonde brick, the house is designed to celebrate a transition from period conformity to rule-breaking architecture. 'It is entirely unexpected, given the English-style design of the original 1880s building, which virtually ignored the view and wasn't really suited to Australia's climate,' says design director

Ben Peake, who worked on the renovation alongside principal architect, Shaun Carter, and senior associate – interiors, Julie Niass. 'But the ability to create a tension between old and new is the beauty of working with a listed home.'

Originally built from sandstone quarried on site, the house featured a 1990s extension that had dated poorly. So when Australian textile artist Tara Eales and her family bought it, she opted for a bold redesign that would stand the test of time. 'We wanted a space that could house our art collection as well as my studio,' she says. 'But more than that, I was drawn to the idea of the building becoming an artwork in its own right.'

That involved an ambitious multi-level rear extension with a dual teardrop footprint – an undulating 'S' shape. 'Key to our approach was a sense of generosity – in scale, ambition and materials,' says Shaun, whose practice is known for its dramatic use of void spaces and skylights. 'Ironically, that meant subtracting in some places – such as in the large central light well created by the design. But I always find that a void gives so much more than it takes away.' Those architectural gaps are in many ways the backbone of this home – if you hit the basement cabana's sweet spot, for example, you'll be looking up through three uninterrupted storeys to a slither of sky.

That interplay with nature is integral – the house sits in part of the harbour where two rivers meet. By the jetty, you can hear the water lapping against the sandstone, while up on the roof terrace, you can see Sydney Harbour's iconic bridge and the Blue Mountains beyond. 'Any building with a harbour view comes with a big overhang of story and emotion,' says Shaun. 'In the past, the response has sometimes been just to throw glass at it; we were conscious of harnessing that view, but we were also brave enough to include solid walls so we could frame it in a considered way.'

Such bold architecture is matched by rich materiality, including timber/concrete ceilings for warmth, a dramatic bathroom featuring jet-black stone and playful retro-inspired crazy paving in the cabana. An unexpected feature is the wall in the games room, formed from sandstone bedrock excavated during the renovation. 'That discovery enabled us to pay homage to the past,' says Ben. 'It was a wonderful and meaningful way to connect all the dots between historic architecture and a new, modern expression of family life.'

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## DINING AREA

A dramatic pendant adds glamour and scale and the semi sheer curtains are drawn when privacy is needed. 'We wanted to create spaces that could be both intimate and grand,' says Ben.

Custom **table**, Adam Goodrum. Sequoia **pouffe**, Space Copenhagen at Fredericia. Globe Burst **chandelier**, Tom Dixon at Living Edge





## KITCHEN

A ceiling made from a timber and concrete mix enhances all the other rich materials used here for an overall luxurious look.

**Joinery**, Sublime Custom Cabinetry. Exuma Grey Leathered quartzite **worktops**, SNB Stone. Bizanto quartzite **splashback**, Artedomus. Mattiazzi Radice **stool**, District. Lost Profile Studio Colossal **pendant**, Est Lighting. **Flooring**, Precision Flooring

## REAR LANDING

'Here, floor-to-ceiling glass allows for an uninterrupted glimpse of the waterfront,' says Ben. Outside, a green living wall looks lush.

Contained Abstractions  
**stool**, Opt Studios at  
Onden. Squadra low **table**,  
Dimoremilano at Moebel.  
Orsola **chair** and **ottoman**,  
Tacchini at Stylecraft.  
Tenero Old Gold mohair **rug**,  
The Rug Establishment.  
*Untitled [Fragment 3/11]*  
**screenprint** on perspex,  
Bridget Riley. Bohan **lamp**,  
Rachel Donath. Still life  
**sculpture** (on table, left),  
John Baird at Arthouse  
Gallery. *Sequence II*  
**wooden sculpture** (on left),  
Hugh McCarthy at  
M Contemporary



## HALLWAY

'During the renovation we uncovered sandstone bedrock - which was first quarried when the original house was built,' says Ben. 'Seeing this bold lightning strike-style artwork affixed to it is wonderful.'

HT105 Henrytimi **chair**, Vbo Australia. *Untitled* wall **sculpture** by Dion Horstmans at Olsen Gallery

WE CONTRASTED THE BRIGHT AND LIGHT ENTERTAINING SPACES  
WITH MOODIER COCOONING SPACES LIKE THE GAMES ROOM

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## GAMES ROOM

A mix of ochres, russets, wood and textured stone give a 1970s feel to this lower-ground space. 'We used fluted joinery to echo the lines of the ceiling,' says Ben.

Sheepskin **armchair**, &Tradition. Geen-A **floor lamp**, Kartell at Space Furniture. Sander **side table**, Massproductions. Agra **rug** in Burnt Umber, Armadillo. **Joinery**, Carter Williamson







## BATHROOM

**'Brass, gold and black elements introduce pockets of glamour throughout the house,' says Ben.**

Similar **bath**, Lusso. Similar shower **fixtures**, The Watermark Collection. Karakter **coffee table**, Cult. **Dish** by Tenshin Juba. Black Fusion **stone**, Avant Stone

## DRESSING AREA

**'Light and shade is a signature motif,' says Ben. 'So we deliberately created cocooning spaces, away from the harbour views, noted for their deep colours and rich materials.'**

ClassiCon **armchair**, Bibendum at Anibou. Christophe Delcourt Tee **side table**, Ondene



## MAIN BEDROOM

**Waking up to views of Sydney Harbour never stops being amazing.**

Remnants Collection marble **side table** by Marlo Lyda at Spence & Lyda. Favela **armchair**, Fernando and Humberto Campana for Edra at Space Furniture. Centaure **fabric** (on bed), Pierre Frey. Viabizzuno Roy Lettura **floor lamp**, Vbo Australia. Modo **chandelier**, Roll & Hill