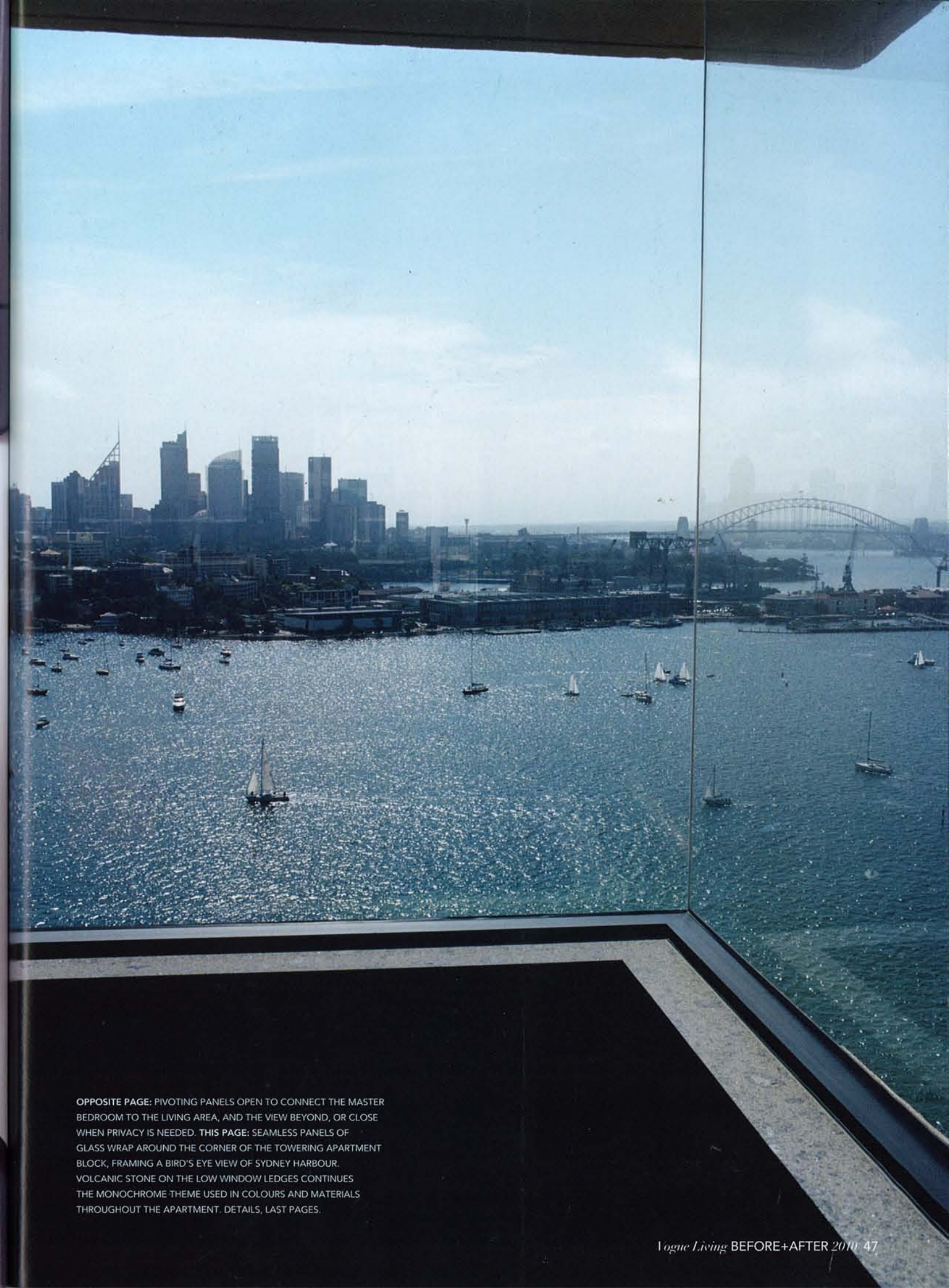


# THE *big* PICTURE

*The viewfinder of an apartment that juts out confidently over Sydney Harbour is adjusted for a 180-degree composition from the seventeenth floor.*

PHOTOGRAPHER: PRUE RUSCOE PRODUCER/WRITER: HELEN REDMOND



OPPOSITE PAGE: PIVOTING PANELS OPEN TO CONNECT THE MASTER BEDROOM TO THE LIVING AREA, AND THE VIEW BEYOND, OR CLOSE WHEN PRIVACY IS NEEDED. THIS PAGE: SEAMLESS PANELS OF GLASS WRAP AROUND THE CORNER OF THE TOWERING APARTMENT BLOCK, FRAMING A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF SYDNEY HARBOUR. VOLCANIC STONE ON THE LOW WINDOW LEDGES CONTINUES THE MONOCHROME THEME USED IN COLOURS AND MATERIALS THROUGHOUT THE APARTMENT. DETAILS, LAST PAGES.



OPPOSITE: THE IRREGULAR PATTERN OF THE SHELVES GIVES ITS ECLECTIC CONTENTS COHESION. BACKED IN FROSTED PLEXIGLASS THEY FILTER LIGHT FROM THE ADJOINING KITCHEN. A SPLIT-LEVEL CEILING INCORPORATES THE AIR-CONDITIONING UNIT AND BECOMES A SCULPTURAL LIGHTING PANEL. RIGHT: A CURVED WALL OF WALNUT VENEER CONCEALS A WARDROBE AND LINKS THE HALL TO THE REAR STUDY. A DOUBLE WALL, BELOW, INSULATES THE STUDY AGAINST NOISE FROM THE ADJOINING LIFT LOBBY. A PIVOTING DOOR FOLDS BACK SEAMLESSLY INTO THE CORRIDOR WALL WHEN NOT NEEDED FOR PRIVACY. BANDS OF WALNUT TIMBER MASK DOORS ALONG THE CORRIDOR. THE 'WINNY' SOFA BED IS FROM FLEXFORM. BELOW RIGHT: THE HORIZONTAL SHELVES ARE ALSO MADE OF THICK PLEXIGLASS.





ABOVE: THE DEMOLITION OF MANY OF THE WALLS WAS POSSIBLE AS THE INTERNAL WALLS WERE NOT LOAD BEARING. BELOW: NARROW PIVOTING SHUTTERS CONNECT THE KITCHEN TO THE DINING AREA AND NORTHERN VIEW BEYOND. THE MAXALTO TABLE AND B&B ITALIA 'SOLO' CHAIRS, COVERED IN BURNT-ORANGE ULTRASUEDE, ARE FROM SPACE FURNITURE. THE MICHAEL SCHLIEPER PAINTING PICKS UP THE COLOUR ACCENTS. OPPOSITE PAGE: WINDOWSILLS WERE LOWERED TO SIT BELOW THE BACK HEIGHTS OF THE FLEXFORM 'GROUNDPIECE' SOFA. TO THE RIGHT, THE PIVOTING PANELS SHARE THE VIEWS WITH THE MASTER BEDROOM. THE ORIGINAL KITCHEN, BELOW RIGHT, WAS DOUBLED IN SIZE AND EXTRA WINDOWS WERE ADDED TO THE WESTERN WALL. BELOW LEFT, CABINETS ARE FINISHED IN SATIN POLYURETHANE WITH A STAINLESS STEEL ISLAND AND SMALL EAT-IN AREA.

THE COVETED 180-DEGREE views from the 17th floor of a 1960s tower block built on the edge of Sydney Harbour give a feeling of what Sydney architect Luigi Rosselli refers to in Italian as "the seventh sky". "Taken from Dante's division of paradise, the seventh sky is the closest to god," he explains. "The tower was built during a short-lived period when everything was allowed, then further towers were not permitted, so it sticks out from the harbour coastline like a sore thumb – but when you're in it, you are very happy to be in a sore thumb."

The view was frustrated by small aluminium-framed mullioned windows, with thin glass panes that created noise in high winds and had poor thermal retention. For the owners, an academic couple downsizing from a larger house, taking full advantage of the apartment's view was crucial – as was their need for a more compact environment, a space conducive to peaceful work with storage for a large quantity of books and room for two separate studies. They consulted interior designer Pia Francesca, who had worked on their previous home, and who in turn called on Rosselli to work on the structural and architectural alterations.

Unusually, the strata block allowed individual apartments to modify external window fittings, so the first step was to replace the existing windows with large glass panels that had to be craned into place externally. The expansive windows wrap seamlessly around the corners of the living and dining room to create an uninterrupted viewing platform, and additional windows were added to the kitchen wall. The replacement of the windows revealed a planning bonus that was not evident at first – none of the apartment's interior partitions were load bearing, enabling a complete re-consideration of the layout of the internal spaces.

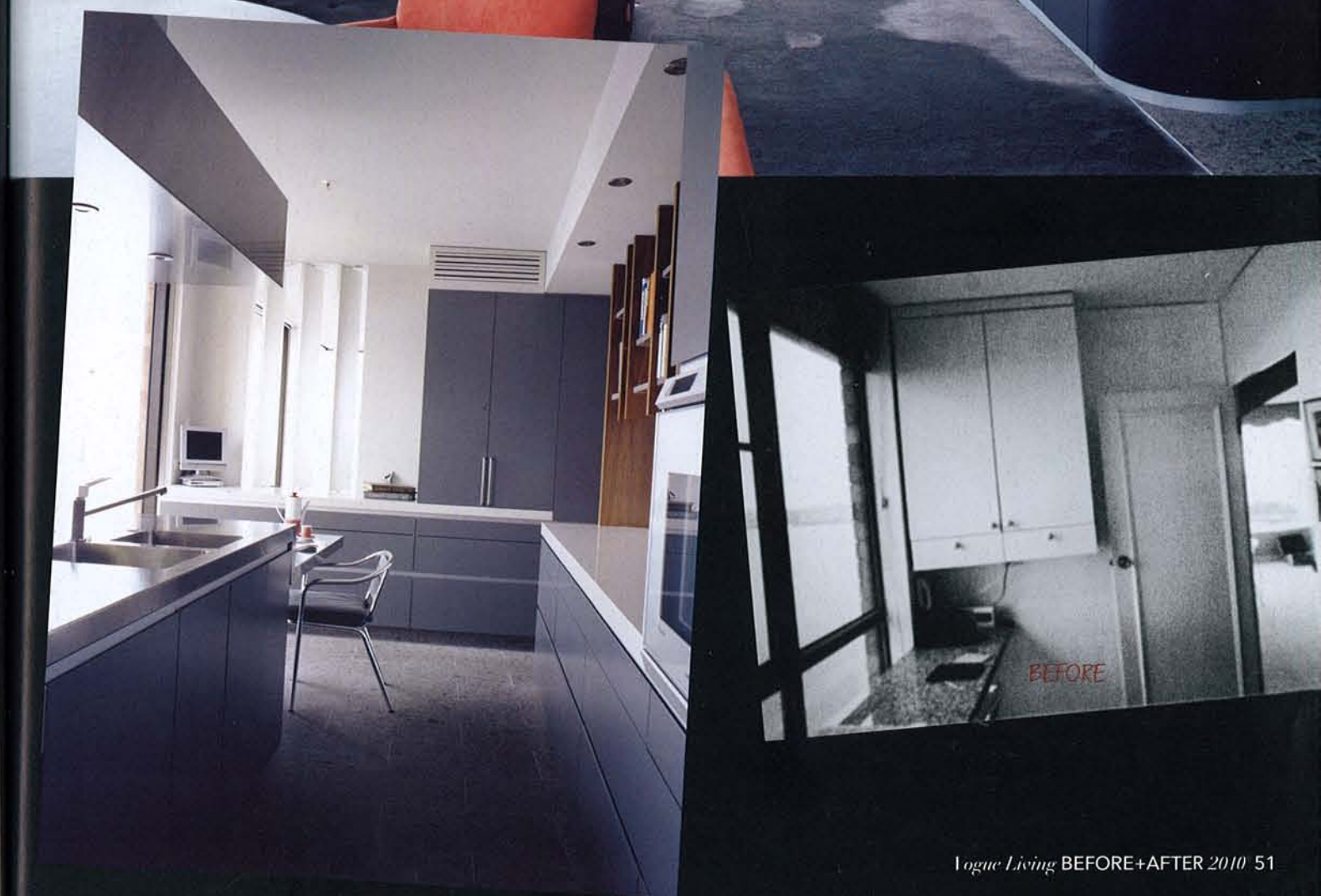
Only one internal wall was kept in place. The front door originally opened to a blank wall and tunnel-vision hallway. By taking advantage of the converging exterior lines of the building Rosselli created an enlarged entrance, which forms part of a triangular hallway that leads to the view, side-lit by a wall of plexiglass-backed shelves. The custom-designed bookshelf houses a collection of objects and travel mementos as well as books, and channels diffused natural light from the adjoining kitchen. The kitchen was enlarged to encompass space originally allocated for the second study – deemed unnecessary when the mobility of a laptop computer freed the owner to work in the dining or living area rather than be shut away from the view.

Full-height ceilings were retained where possible. Rather than creating a false ceiling to incorporate services and air conditioning, the ceiling in the living room was taken up to the level of the concrete, with no overhead lighting. An air conditioning unit is installed in a split-level bulkhead over the entrance hall, which also acts as a lighting panel. A complex system of double blinds gives sun control, concealed by a small pelmet above the windows to minimise any loss of height in the ceiling. Selected smaller opening windows provide effective cross ventilation so that only on extremely hot days is there need for air conditioning.

The most dramatic change for the clients, however, was opening up the rooms to take advantage of the northerly view. A series of pivoting panels at differing heights connects the kitchen and master bedroom to the northern view, operating so that the view can be appreciated from bed or when preparing a meal, or closed when entertaining guests.

"It was important for the clients to feel as comfortable in the space when they are entertaining as when there is just the two of them," says Rosselli.

*"The backdrop is compelling but you actually become blasé about a view unless there is a spectacle happening, whereas inside it has to be almost the reverse"*





A double wall installed in the rear study insulates the room from external lift and lobby noise. The thickness stops at the entry to the room, where a full-height pivoting door folds back seamlessly into the wall when privacy for guests is not needed. Vertical timber battens lining the rear corridor walls disguise the entrances to bathroom and bedrooms. Existing plumbing lines meant the two bathrooms remained in the same position, but the master bedroom was realigned to give greater width to the hall as well as incorporate storage.

Rosselli workshoped the details of the joinery with Francesca, and they worked closely on the selection of materials – a palette of mostly greys and whites, picking up colour variations from the volcanic stone that leads from the front door to the kitchen. Glass mosaics in the bathroom accent certain tones and the carpet was custom-coloured to continue the flow. “It comes back to what I see as my signature of ‘less is more’,” says Francesca, “with subtle changes in texture and colours, where there’s a seamless flow that allows the colour of a bedhead, a chair or an artwork to be introduced. The space also needed to adapt to the clients’ changing artworks.” The natural tones in the upholstery and the subtle interplay of the monochromatic surfaces complement rather than compete with the view. “The backdrop is compelling but you actually become blasé about a view unless there is a spectacle happening, whereas inside it has to be almost the reverse.” **VL**

JOINERY WAS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE FIT-OUT, LEFT AND BELOW. MORE THAN 80 PER CENT OF THE MASTER BEDROOM WALLS, INCLUDING THE BEDHEAD, WAS BUILT FOR STORAGE. PIVOTING SCREENS BETWEEN THE LIVING ROOM AND BEDROOM ARE ANGLED TO CONNECT TO THE NORTHERN VIEW, OR CLOSED FOR PRIVACY WHEN THERE ARE GUESTS. OPPOSITE: THE GUEST BATHROOM WALLS ARE TILED IN OPALESCENT VIXEL GLASS MOSAICS FROM ARTEDOMUS. HONED VOLCANIC PEPERINO STONE FROM BISANNA TILES SURROUNDS A KALDEWEI UNDERHUNG BATH. STONE FLOORS AND SURFACES WERE INSTALLED BY EURO MARBLE. DETAILS, LAST PAGES.



# B+A

**Aim of renovation** To open up the apartment to the northern view and to “de-compartmentalise” the home – to make it more open and fluid, with spaces that are connected and can be totally open or shut away.

**The solution** To replace the windows and put additional windows in the western wall, and kitchen and dining room. We repositioned the walls to create a new entrance and give all rooms a northern aspect.

**How long did it take?** Council planning and development applications were quite fast. Getting tenders and preparation took several months and actual building took around eight months – in all just over a year.

**Is there anything you would have done differently?** No regrets. Obviously there are things other architects may have done differently, but the end result is very close to the original sketched concept. It is a very uncompromised realisation of an idea.

**Which aspect of the renovation are you happiest with?** The interaction between architect, interior designer and client, and working as a team. This freed us to experiment with ideas and materials.

**Materials used?** Stained walnut, American oak, volcanic stone, opalescent mosaic tiles, high-gloss polyurethane.

**Architect** Luigi Rosselli Architects, 15 Randle Street, Surry Hills NSW, (02) 9281 1498; [www.luigirosselli.com](http://www.luigirosselli.com).

**Project architect** Simon Rosewell, Fairlight NSW, (02) 9907 8746.

**Interior designer** Pia Francesca Design, PO Box 985, Woollahra NSW, 0412 076 120.

**Builder** Sydcom Projects, 1 Bendtree Way, Castle Hill NSW, (02) 9634 8232.

**Joiner** VRD Detailed Joinery, 30/32 Norrie Street, Yennora NSW, (02) 9681 3270; [www.vrddetailedjoinery.com.au](http://www.vrddetailedjoinery.com.au).



*“The most dramatic change was opening up the rooms to take advantage of the northerly view, with a series of pivoting panels”*

