

# Upon reflection

The stars aligned when two creative studios collaborated on this harbourside home in Sydney, resulting in an airy, sunlit abode.

STORY Jackie Brygel | STYLING Strutt Studios | PHOTOGRAPHY Tom Ferguson



**CASUAL LIVING** Joinery in Laminex Paper Bark and Taj Mahal quartzite. Walls painted Porter's Paints Fresco in Rubble with Stucco Wax seal. 'Thursday' sofa in Astrid Melon and 'Molly' coffee tables, all Jardan. Floors in 'Florence' porcelain tiles, Academy Tiles. **POOL** Opposite "What I love most about this area is how it blurs the line between indoors and out," says designer Sophie Bowers. Pool by Concept Pools. 'Sola' freestanding outdoor shower set in Stainless Steel, ABI Interiors. 'Technifirma' paving in Ambrose, Eco Outdoor.



At its best, the combined creativity of architects and interior designers proves greater than the sum of its parts. This was especially the case for the visionary teams behind this three-level home in Sydney's Eastern Suburbs. Indeed, for Studio Coco and Strutt Studios - the architecture and interior practices respectively that merged forces on the project - the first-time union was the most compatible of fits.

"I think there was always a bit of mutual love and respect between our two studios," says Strutt Studios managing director Sophie Bowers. "We'd been aware of each other's work and had just been itching for the right project to merge those two design styles together and collaborate."

"Our studio came on board right around the development application approval phase in early 2022," she continues. "From then on, it was a joy to work with the Studio Coco team and the owners, given how creatively inspired and engaged they were."

Perched high above leafy canopies with expansive harbour views, the steep, sloping and compact 430-square-metre site delivered significant challenges when Studio Coco embarked on the architectural design process. The existing house was a dark and poky '70s property that had fallen into disrepair. This made the decision to demolish and rebuild a relatively easy one.

"We always favour retaining and improving existing structures where it serves the architecture," says architect Nikki Quittner, principal at Studio Coco. "But in this case the building was in poor condition, inefficiently planned and unable to support the performance and orientation outcomes the site deserved."

"The approval was intricate, yet the clients' resilience matched our own," she says. The owners, a professional couple with a young family, have a strong appreciation for thoughtful design. They were committed to the vision of a three-storey home with a rooftop terrace and a generous connection to the landscape.

The design and approval process delivered some unexpected wins. "A seemingly unglamorous challenge - a sewer pipe in the backyard - actually became one of the project's great opportunities," says Nikki. "Its position shaped a design decision that became a signature move, bringing the pool into the footprint of the home. This not only expanded the usable outdoor space, but created an ever-present visual thread running through the lower-ground living spaces." ▶

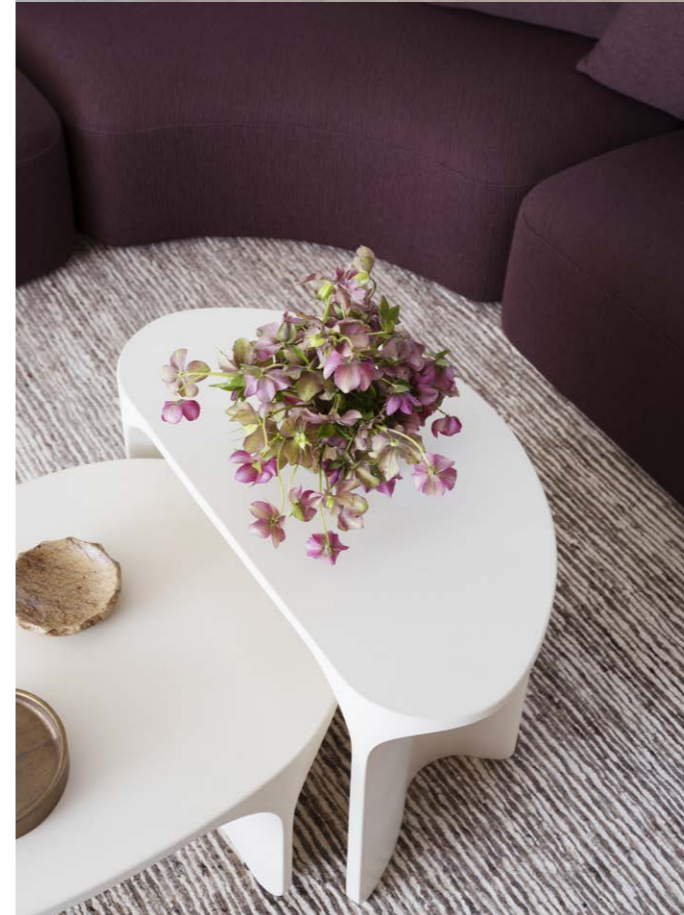
**DINING** Joinery in Polytec Aston White topped in Dekton Kraftizen Albarium, Cosentino. Curtains in Zepel 'Elegance' linen in Dune. Vibia pendant, Koda Lighting. Table, chairs and sofa, all Jardan. **KITCHEN** The subtle warmth of Taj Mahal quartzite from Lux Marble brings visual softness to the chunky form of the island. Joinery in NAV Navurban Balmoral. 'Tier' pendant light, Sabu Studio. 'Nerd' bar stools, Muuto. 'Yokato' mixer, Brodware. Vessels, Saardé.

“Our vision was to create a home that feels cohesive, calm and tactile across levels.”

AMIRA NAHAS, INTERIOR DESIGNER



**LIVING** 'Nina' sofa in Panama Cacao, Jordan. Joinery in Screenwood 'Modulo' panels in NAV Navurban Balmoral. Plinth in Dekton Kraftizen Albarium, Cosentino. Drawers in Polytec Aston White. Fireplace, Escea. *Below left* Coffee tables, Blend Concrete Design. 'Genoa' rug, Armadillo. **HALLWAY** 'Florence' floor tiles from Academy Tiles contrast with European ash from Woodcut lining the stairs. **KITCHEN** *Opposite* Joinery in NAV Navurban Balmoral. Taj Mahal quartzite, Lux Marble. Pendant, Sabu Studio. Bar stools, Muuto. Mixer, Brodware.





Claiming full advantage of the northern orientation and water views, Studio Coco's multi-living approach bestows on each of the home's three levels a distinct purpose and personality. The lower floor includes the casual living zone with a kitchenette, leading to the pool and alfresco area with a barbecue and a shower. Featured on the ground level are the open-plan living areas, formal dining room, guestroom and study. The top floor houses the sleeping quarters, including the tranquil parents' retreat, while reigning above it all is the sun-drenched rooftop terrace.

Celebrating its sense of place, the home feels immersed in the outlook. "We considered the view from every daily ritual - waking up, walking down the hall, washing dishes and arriving at the front door," says Nikki. "We created new outlook opportunities through lightwells and water features." Hallways lead to light, mirrors extend the harbour and large portals invite the gaze.

Melding with nature, the hero material of the facade is the Spanish-inspired Austral Bricks 'La Paloma' brick in Miro from Brickworks. "It has a sophisticated and soft yet luminous colour palette of a warm off-white tone, and has a subtle texture," says Nikki. "These qualities lend a timeless, material honesty."

The material and colour selection deftly incorporated by Strutt Studios appears subdued yet grounded and robust. Throughout, the tactility of natural stone and textured finishes creates depth and movement, while considered joinery and feature bronze shelving offer function and moments of personalised delight.

"Our vision was to create a home that feels cohesive, calm and tactile across multiple levels," says Strutt Studios project director Amira Nahas. "Overall, the home balances formality with warmth, sophistication with comfort, and expresses a seamless continuity."

"Every detail was designed to feel refined, practical and harmonious within the overall palette," adds Sophie.

Having settled into their new home, it's no surprise to learn the owners are thrilled with the outcome. "They're a close family who love to entertain, but also value quiet moments together," says Nikki. "And the views are even better than anticipated. There's no better moment than seeing a client gasp at what the architecture has unlocked and how all the spaces connect."

As for Studio Coco and Strutt Studios, it seems bringing this home to life was just the beginning.

"We now have an equally as special project around the corner from this house with Studio Coco, as well as another couple of things in the pipeline together," says Sophie. "It really has been a dream match. When it works, it works." ▶

**Studio Coco:** [studiococo.co](http://studiococo.co), [@studiococo\\_au](https://www.instagram.com/studiococo_au).

**Strutt Studios:** [struttstudios.com.au](http://struttstudios.com.au), [@strutt.studios](https://www.instagram.com/strutt.studios).

**Corrion Prestige:** [corrionprestige.com.au](http://corrionprestige.com.au), [@corrionprestige](https://www.instagram.com/corrionprestige).

## THE PALETTE

Porter's Paints Rubble  
(interior walls)

Taj Mahal quartzite  
(kitchen island)

NAV Navurban Balmoral  
(kitchen joinery)

**BEDROOM** "This is a quiet retreat within the home, where soft linen curtains filter light and timber floors create a sense of warmth," says Amira. 'Fin' dresser, Ellison Studios. Curtains in 'Elegance' linen in Dune, Zepel Fabrics. Bed linen, Saardé. European ash flooring, Woodcut.

**ENSUITE** *Opposite, top and bottom* A custom vanity carved from Ocean Blue travertine from Lux Marble is the focal point. Walls and floor in Terra Crea tiles in Calce, from Touch Surfaces and Di Lorenzo. Brodware 'Yokato' tapware in Statue Bronze, Candana. Towel in Clay, Saardé.

Paint colours are reproduced as accurately as printing processes allow.





**EXTERIOR** Austral Bricks 'La Paloma' bricks in Miro create a striking facade, Brickworks. A Flos 'Overlap' suspension pendant light peeks through the window portal above the custom American white oak front door by Cedar West.

“Durability was non-negotiable. The palette was built to last, aesthetically and structurally.”

NIKKI QUITTNER, ARCHITECT



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## THE SOURCE

*Enjoy quiet moments with calm, warm and tactile finishes.*



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Produced by Marissa Foye.

1 'Fluid' pendant light, \$435, Muuto. 2 'Fin' dresser in Tofu and Cosmos Crema marble, \$2799, Ellison Studios. 3 Super White quartzite basin, \$1430, Desino. 4 Muuto 'Nerd' bar stool in Oak, \$965, Miko. 5 Vintage wash bath sheet in Chocolate, \$109, Saardé. 6 Travertine candlestick, \$860 each, Space. 7 'Nomad' rug in Natural (360x260cm), \$5017, King Living. 8 'Riviera' concrete nesting set, \$3330, Blend Concrete Design. 9 The Conran Shop oak bowls, from \$309 each, Farfetch. 10 'Zepplyn' sofa, in Velvet Chocolate, \$3199, Freedom. **H&G**