

HOME

Sydney



Sound waves

A glamorous renovation by Brendan Wong has in a P&O-style building on Sydney Harbour dreamed

These pages The living room is generously furnished with silvery grey seating including the Munna 'Luke' velvet sofa (right) and 'Queen B' armchairs, all from Regency Distribution, and a bespoke sofa that sits under *Wide the Gates*, an artwork by Alexander McKenzie from Martin Browne Contemporary. Fabricut 'Bravura' cushions from The Textile Company. Baker 'Blade' coffee table by Thomas Pheasant from Studio Cavit. JNL Collection 'Allegretto' side tables from JNL, Belgium. Lost Profile Studio 'Covenant' chandelier from Est Lighting. Astro Lighting 'Salerno' sconces from ECC Lighting+Furniture. Flooring in Calacatta Verde marble from Granite & Marble Works.



restored the soul of this apartment
up by a 1930s radio producer.

Words **CHRIS PEARSON** Photography **FELIX FOREST**



Looking in the serene spectacle of Sydney Harbour, this elegant P&O-style apartment is reliving a glamorous past. After an inspired renovation by interior designer Brendan Wong, it celebrates its origins while embracing the present.

Behind the curves of its ocean-liner facade, which soars above a sandy beach, the four-bedroom apartment has enjoyed a voyage of its own over the years. Occupying an entire floor, it is one of three in a building commissioned in 1937 by radio producer George Edwards who hired prominent architect Samuel Lipson to create a waterfront tribute to modernism, then considered avant-garde in Australia.

When the owners, lured by its art deco aesthetic and beach location, set eyes on it in 2018, the apartment had been marooned in mediocrity, thanks to a 1970s renovation that had stripped away the original detailing. Green flock wallpaper and mismatched light fittings met them when they arrived. Yet its soul remained. “The commanding curved living room windows suggested poise, grace and distinction,” says Brendan. “The apartment was tired and needed enhancement but the bones were there.” Less desirable was a labyrinthine layout with poor flow that divorced rooms from the soothing water setting. “It was important to capitalise on the views and increase natural light, to create vistas throughout and to the panorama beyond,” he says.

“We chose Brendan because his designs are both stylish and comfortable,” say the owners. “We didn’t want anything fussy and precious because we are right on the beach. It had to reflect the beach and be part of it.” Keeping within the footprint and without sacrificing bedrooms, Brendan was asked to insert a master ensuite, powder room in the foyer and a separate guest suite at the rear in place of a little-used library. He removed internal walls to create openness and better connection between spaces, while enhancing natural light and bringing the water setting into most rooms. A generous new east hall links the harbour to a once-hidden rear garden. New steel-framed windows returned the facade to its former glory. »



This page Art deco elegance defines the kitchen with joinery by MelMac Interior Joinery in white fluted panels, brass details, ebonised oak and Axolotl metal finish with benchtops in Calacatta Verde marble from Granite & Marble Works. 'Lounge' pendant light from JNL, Belgium. 'Celsius Arc' tapware from Zip. L'Objet 'Ionic' bowl from Becker Minty. Opposite page, from top MDF Italia 'Tense Intarsia' dining table with Carrara marble inlay from Hub with custom dining chairs in Vittoria 'Cloud' leather from Decor Design Centre. Sideboard by Brendan Wong Design with straw marquetry doors by Arthur Seigneur. A *Quiet Place* artwork by Kathryn Ryan from Flinders Lane Gallery and *Nude #10* sculpture by Janos Korban and Stefanie Flaubert from Korban/Flaubert hang on opposite walls. In the kitchen is an artwork by Waldemar Kolbusz. In the entry hall, Baker 'Perspective' mirrors by Thomas Pheasant from Studio Cavit (one of a pair) expand the sense of space. Sculpture by Charlotte Bakker from May Space. Arte 'Facet' wallpaper from Unique Fabrics. Parquetry flooring by EuroStyle Floors with custom marble and brass inlay. *Semblance* by Agneta Ekholm from Flinders Lane Gallery is seen through the archway.

This page Ocean-liner detailing in the main ensuite includes joinery in custom Laverna marble shroud with shagreen and brass drawer fronts and 'Gaumont' drawer pulls from Spark & Burnish. City Plus 'Lever' brushed brass tapware from Brodware. Pierre Frey 'Nubem' cloud wallpaper from Milgate. *Milan 2018* painting by James King from Becker Minty. Opposite page, clockwise from top In the loggia, Paola Lenti 'Kabà' sofa from Moebel. Tribù 'Mirthe' armchairs and coffee tables from Cosh Living. Travertine flooring in Silver Ash from Granite & Marble Works extends onto the terrace where Kartell 'Audrey' chairs from Space surround an Emu 'Terramare' outdoor dining table from Ke-Zu. 'Souffle' ottoman by Kelly Wearstler from 1stdibs sits in the main ensuite. City Plus 'Lever' tapware and towel rail, both from Brodware. Vanity in Elba marble with Laverna marble inlay, both from Granite & Marble Works. In the east hall, a custom chair upholstered in velvet sits at the desk in Laverna marble from Granite & Marble Works. Metal box from Ralph Lauren and 'Carmen' table lamp in agate and shagreen from R&Y Augousti, Paris.





These pages, from left New steel windows open to harbour views in the main bedroom which features a bespoke bed in mohair and leather by Brendan Wong Design, embroidered 'Palo' quilt and sheets from Abode, and Kravet Couture 'Front Row' embroidered cushions. Fromental custom hand-painted silk wallpaper behind bed. 'Henri' lamps by Suzanne Kasler from Visual Comfort. Custom armchair upholstered in Donghia NYC fabric from South Pacific Fabrics. Pedestal shagreen table from R&Y Augousti, Paris. Donghia glass bowl from South Pacific Fabrics. Joinery in Elba marble with brass inlay and marquetry by Arthur Seigneur by MelMac Interior Joinery with 'Gaumont' pulls from Spark & Burnish topped with 'Halston' vase by Greg Natale. In the guest suite, a statuette belonging to the owners sits on a desk custom-made in Laverna marble with a chair upholstered in velvet. The custom mirror wall trimmed with brass reflects the Articolo 'Fizi' wall sconce from Est Lighting.



SPEED READ

» In 2018, when the owners first encountered this P&O-style harbourside apartment in Sydney's eastern suburbs, it was a shadow of its former self. » Most of the original features of the home, part of a block of three commissioned by radio producer George Edwards in 1937 and designed by renowned Sydney architect Samuel Lipson, had been stripped in a previous renovation. But the original layout remained as a warren of poky rooms, many of which were shut off from the tranquil harbour view. » They hired interior designer Brendan Wong to return the apartment to its glamorous origins, but with a modern twist. After removing many internal walls and opening it up to the vista, he added an ensuite to the main bedroom and restored architectural detailing such as cornices and architraves, together with steel windows in the facade. » Drawing their cues from the harbour, he and project designer Georgia Hawkins chose a palette of "gentle greens and greys" overlaid with an abundance of brass, marble and mirror, intricately crafted in the spirit of the 1930s, for timeless luxe.



« While honouring the apartment’s past, Brendan and project designer Georgia Hawkins have given its art deco echoes a modern edge. Curved cruise-ship lines inform details such as the rounded corners of the kitchen island, main bedroom joinery, bathroom mirrors and vanities. Similarly, references to the apartment’s gracious past abound in the lines of the tailored, handcrafted furniture and key materials such as brass, marble and mirror, all painstakingly applied with attention to detail, again typical of the 1930s era.

George, the consummate entertainer, would have loved the sophisticated living room, complete with bar framed by a collage of mirror, fluted glass and stone, materials that recur throughout. In the foyer, marble and brass used in the custom architraves are repeated in inlays in the herringbone floors and then those luxe materials reappear in bedroom joinery. Meanwhile, the focal point in the new master ensuite is the vanity, comprising a curved marble ribbon framing shagreen and brass-fronted drawers. Heightening the drama, three brass-framed mirrors descend from the ceiling, silhouetted against a picture window equipped with external louvres for privacy.

While paying homage to the era, Brendan and Georgia have eschewed art deco’s more flamboyant flourishes – clean, contemporary lines inform the furniture and furnishings, complemented by modern art, premium sustainable textiles and crisp, sculptural light fittings, while the palette reflects the setting. Muted green and grey hues in the open-plan living areas yield to sky blue in the main bedroom, all of which share the harbour frontage. A prevailing sense of calm is enhanced by the textures throughout, including the crafted smoky oak floors, sheer curtaining and tactile, hand-finished walls. Evocative cloud-motif wallpaper behind a custom leather-and-velvet bedhead provides an individual touch to the main bedroom and draws the outside in, while a teal velvet buttoned chair and agate-encrusted brass lamp make the hall desk much more than simply a workspace.

Perhaps reflecting the times, this once-famous entertaining hub capably performs two other key roles for its owners: as a sanctuary and a place to work. The owners affirm that it’s “so relaxing and peaceful, such a nice retreat”. Apart from the living area, a favourite spot is that desk that enjoys views of the garden on one side and the harbour on the other. Not only is it a charming place to sit and reflect but in these days of working from home it’s sure to get plenty of use. ▮