

The double-volume living area opens out onto Eastern views to Sydney Harbour and beyond



CLEAR VISION

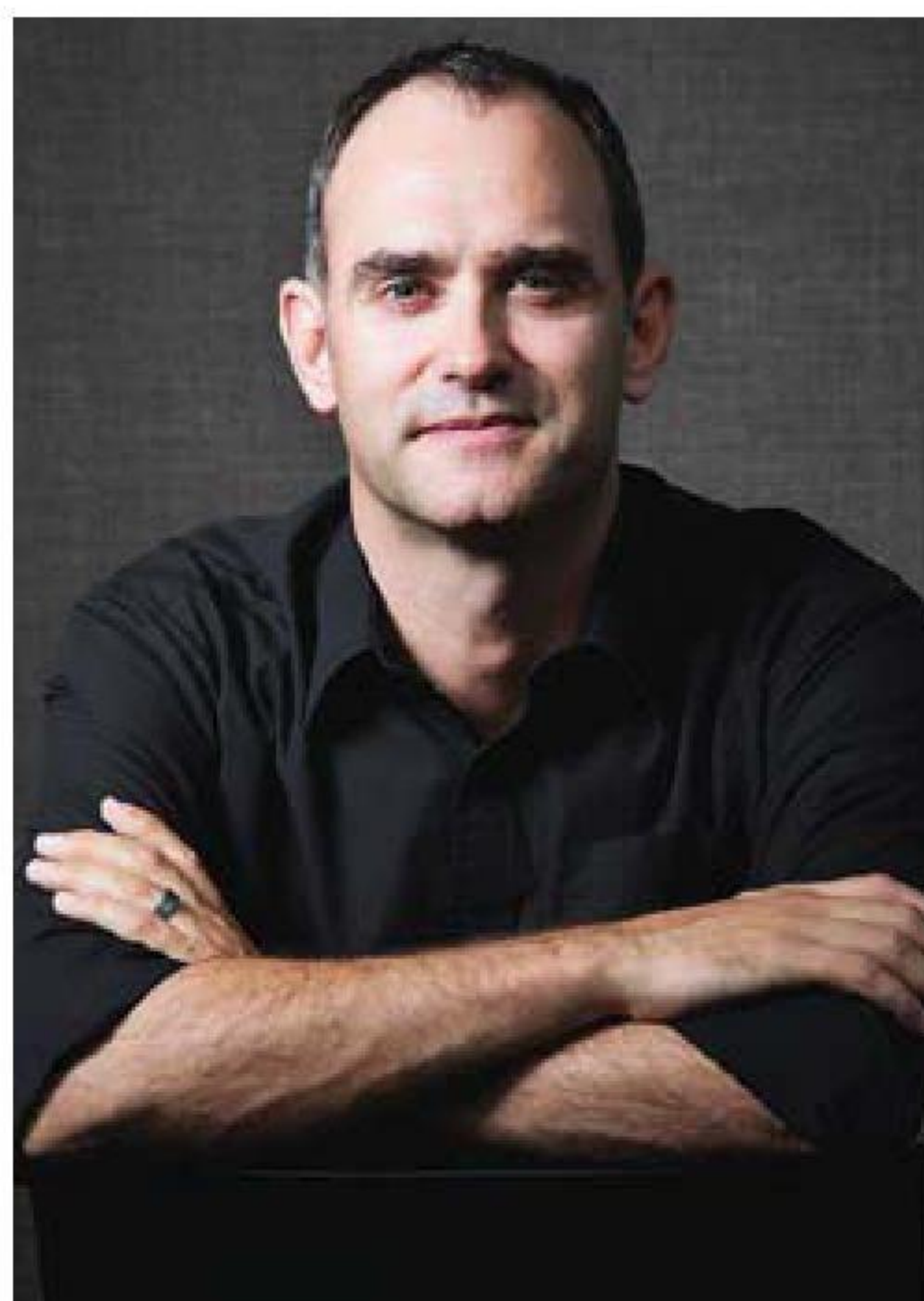
BOLD YET TIMELESS, THIS SYDNEY HOME EMBRACES EFFORTLESS FAMILY LIVING WHILE MAXIMISING ON ITS SWEEPING VIEWS

TEXT PIET SMEDY PHOTOGRAPHS JUSTIN ALEXANDER





CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP
'Our Midnight' artwork
by Kerry Armstrong
hangs above a Kristalia
'Boiaccia' desk and
Barbera 'Uccio' stools;
Philip Olmesdahl of
SAOTA; the family
room features an
L-shaped sofa and
'Lady Fat' ottoman with
tray, both by B&B Italia



The search for the ideal place to raise their family brought a young couple to the picturesque suburb of Mosman, Australia. Just north of Sydney harbour, with sweeping views across the bay, this quiet, leafy suburb would provide the perfect location. However, unlike the surrounding architecture, which is rooted in a classical Victorian aesthetic, the couple had a different, bolder, architectural approach in mind, one that drew them to the design principles that have become synonymous with South African firm SAOTA.

'One of the key things is that they wanted a home that was contemporary and timeless,' explains Philip Olmesdahl, SAOTA director and project leader. 'They were quite conscious of not wanting a home that was too current, which may fade.'

As a result, the design of the house is at the same time simple and classic, purposefully avoiding design trends in favour of clean lines and functional, open-plan spaces that flow into each other – ideal for both private family living as well as entertaining large parties.

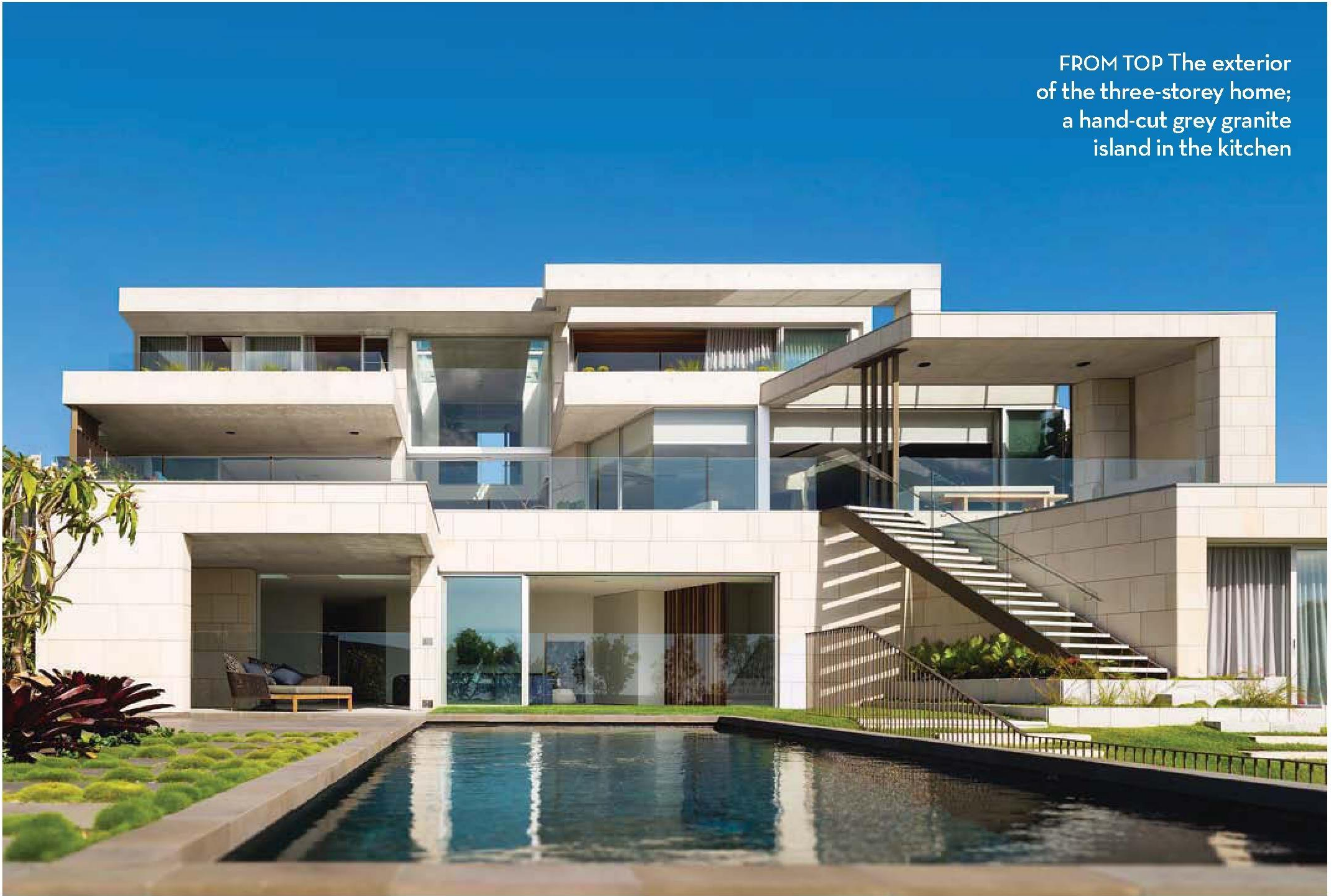
'ONE OF THE KEY THINGS IS THAT THEY WANTED A HOME THAT WAS CONTEMPORARY AND TIMELESS'
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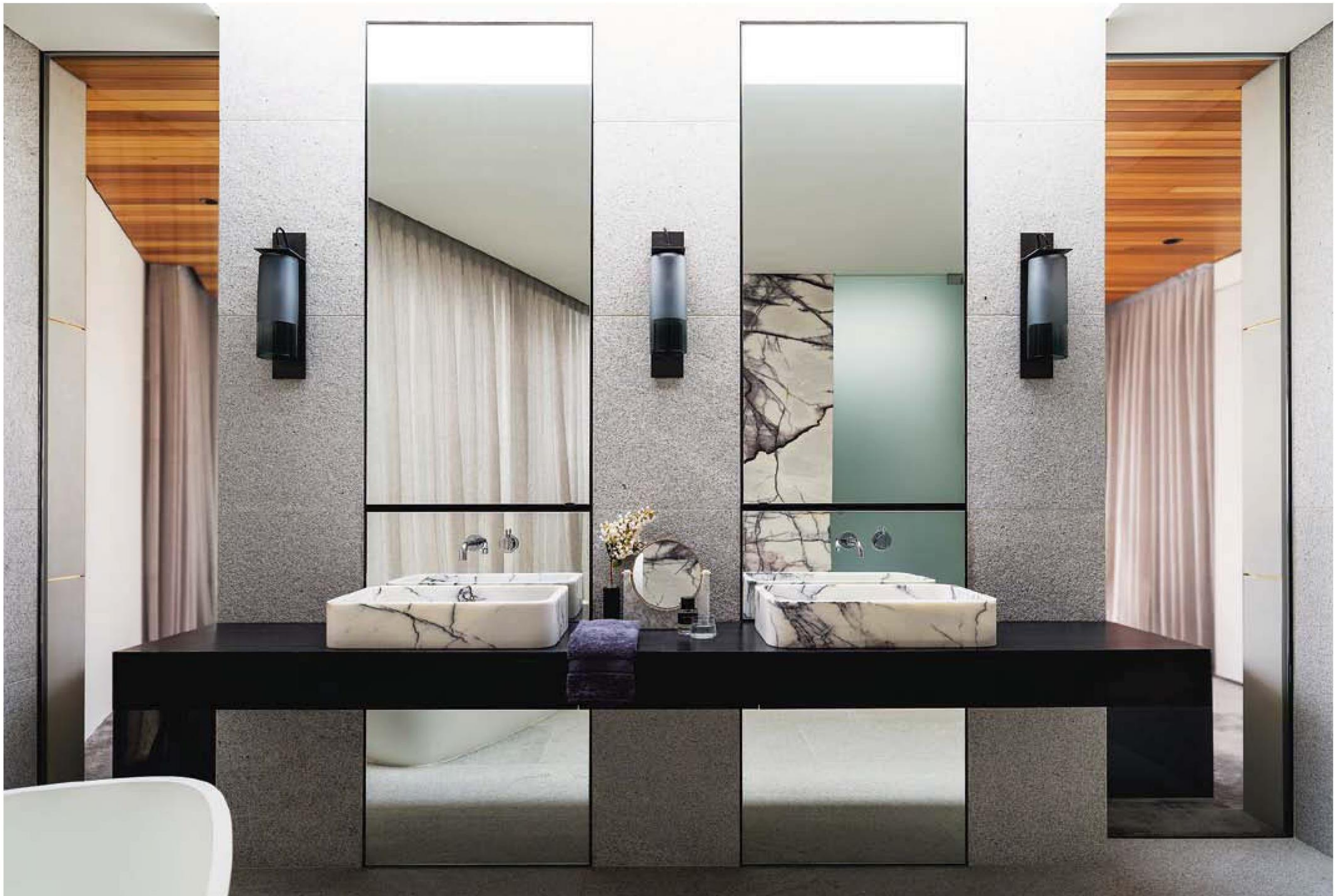
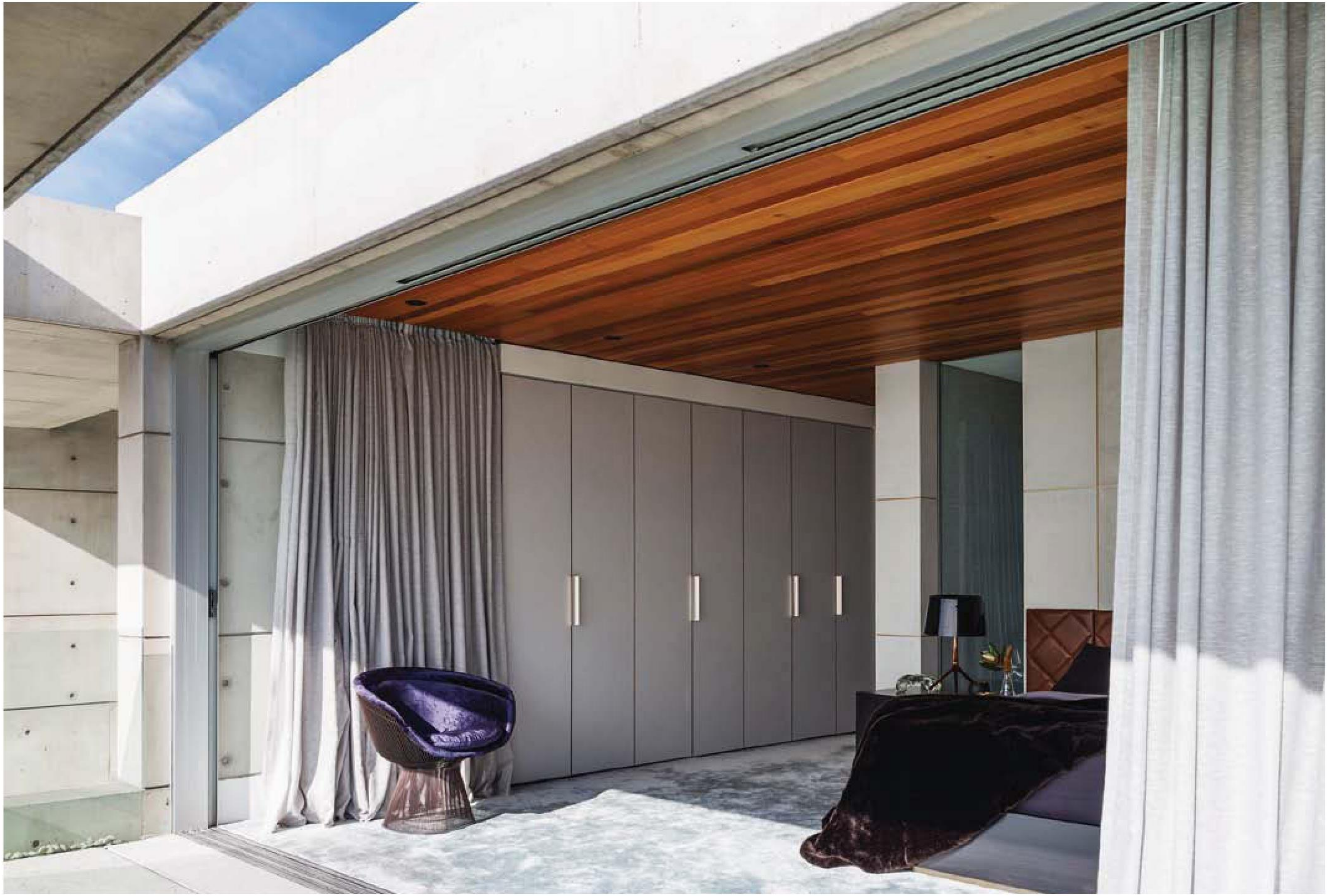
'The components of the home are geared towards an effortless lifestyle that corresponds directly to the family's needs,' explains project architect Erin Gibbs, who worked with Sydney-based executive architects TDK Architects to bring the project to life. 'We took these components and stacked them vertically.'

The house is accessed across a bridge at the top level of the home that leads either directly into the bedrooms or guests are invited to descend a sleek, open-tread steel-and-glass staircase that leads onto the main living and entertaining areas. 'The creation of a dramatic, open living space was always the key aim,' says Erin. 'It forms the heart of the house in that regard, opening out onto the terrace and harbour views while being flooded by natural light from both sides as well as from the skylight above the double volume.' Perhaps one of the home's most striking features, this predominantly transparent living level is contained between the



FROM TOP The exterior
of the three-storey home;
a hand-cut grey granite
island in the kitchen





more solid private first-floor rooms above and a sandstone-clad plinth below, creating the effect that the level is in fact floating above the base.

This design language is continued in the home's interior, which features liberal use of neutral tones and subtle textural variations in materials. Sandstone, a firm fixture on the Australian architectural scene given its abundance, corresponds well with the expanses of grey concrete. Wood and marble were also used in selected internal spaces to bring warmth to the large home. This contrast between materiality and finish reaches its ultimate conclusion in the kitchen island, a massive slab of hand-cut granite with a distinctive quarried look that sits in stark contrast to the smooth finishes and geometric proportions of the surrounding interior. 'The desire was to shape an understated, natural palette which, externally, would allow the building to visually recede into its context, rather than stand out,' says Erin. 'Internally, the spaces feel cool and refreshing with focal elements, such as select furniture pieces, given the chance to pop against the neutral background.'

'AS YOU MOVE THROUGH THE SPACE YOU ARE TAKEN ON A TACTILE JOURNEY' Alexandra Kidd

When it came to choosing these pieces, the homeowners turned to interior designer Alexandra Kidd, who extended the neutral palette but relied on intense jewel tones and plush fabrics to soften the concrete surrounds. 'As you move through the space you're taken on a tactile journey,' says Alexandra. 'You're encouraged to take off your shoes and run your hands over the surfaces to feel the story of the finishes and the furniture.' To create this sophisticated tactile undertone, she introduced touches of brass, leather and linen. Muses Alexandra: 'There is a tension between the interior and the architecture that gave the decor a voice within the structure.'

Through its carefully considered simplicity the home transcends notions of trendiness without seeming inappropriate in its otherwise more traditionalist setting. 'This house is quite a departure from its neighbouring architecture, making it very striking in its surrounds,' says Philip.

▪ SAOTA saota.com



FROM TOP Exposed concrete in the guest bathroom; the living space opens onto a secluded garden; a glass-and-steel staircase descends into the main living area
OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM TOP The main bedroom opens up completely onto the terrace; the master en suite

