

TONKA ANDJELKOVIC



RESTORE AND  
**RE-INVENT**

This classic penthouse apartment by **Tonka Andjelkovic** in Sydney's Elizabeth Bay gives light to the idea that to be contemporary is to borrow from the past. **Andrea Millar** discovers a timeless rendition of new and old.

“We’ve pulled together what we like from  
different places as sympathetically to our own  
environment as possible”

—  
KYM ELPHINSTONE



# scenario

elizabeth bay house — NSW, australia

TONKA ANDJELKOVIC

Given the opportunity to re-invent a period penthouse, Tony Benjamin, a property investor, and Kym Elphinstone, an arts consultant, faced the challenge of modernising a unique apartment without stripping away the layers of history and heritage.

High ceilings, original architraves and grand rooms were all period features that had been a main attraction of the home when they bought in 2007. “We had been looking for a 1920s or 30s apartment with original features because they have such a sense of history and unparalleled style,” Kym explains.

A gracious residential apartment block built in 1930 in a coveted harbour-side spot, Darnley Hall is a prized example of local Art Deco architecture, and is recognised as 12<sup>th</sup> on the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) register of significant 20<sup>th</sup> Century buildings in Australia. The penthouse is a two-level apartment with five bedrooms, three bathrooms, and two delightful terraces, one facing a 180° view of Sydney Harbour and the other towards neighbouring buildings in the Art Deco enclave that is Elizabeth Bay.

The purchase sparked a two-year period of re-modelling, restoration and pushing creative boundaries with the collaboration of interior designer Tonka Andjelkovic. “It was a difficult floor plan, so there was a lot of planning required so that we could update without ripping it all apart,” says Tonka looking past the new living room into the atrium, one of the original rooms kept and cherished. The room, which features an original leadlight dome ceiling and a fireplace, now marks the transition between the entry and the new living areas.

The floor plan was a peculiar one, and despite sales brochures given to the couple describing the penthouse as ‘renovated’, it had two poky kitchen and living areas at the back, away from the views, while the bedroom wing was split in half by a huge ballroom facing the views. Oppressive, dark panelling on walls, poor lighting and small bedrooms were other problems needing attention.

Completely re-working a floor plan placed the couple’s life under a microscope with questions about how they ‘wanted’ to live. Did they want open plan or separate spaces? Bright or dark living areas and bedrooms? “Getting the new spaces right took some time. We had to imagine ourselves living here and so we’d walk around the rooms with chalk, marking out where rooms could be,” says Kym.

The new floor plan developed by Tonka favours flexible spaces that can be opened up or closed off by partition doors depending on the mood. Now the kitchen, study and terrace can be closed off from the lounge and dining room. “We decided not to go completely open plan because we didn’t want to remove all the walls. Part of the brief was to keep what we could,” says Tonka. “It’s also nice to be able to close off the spaces, to cook away from guests or work in



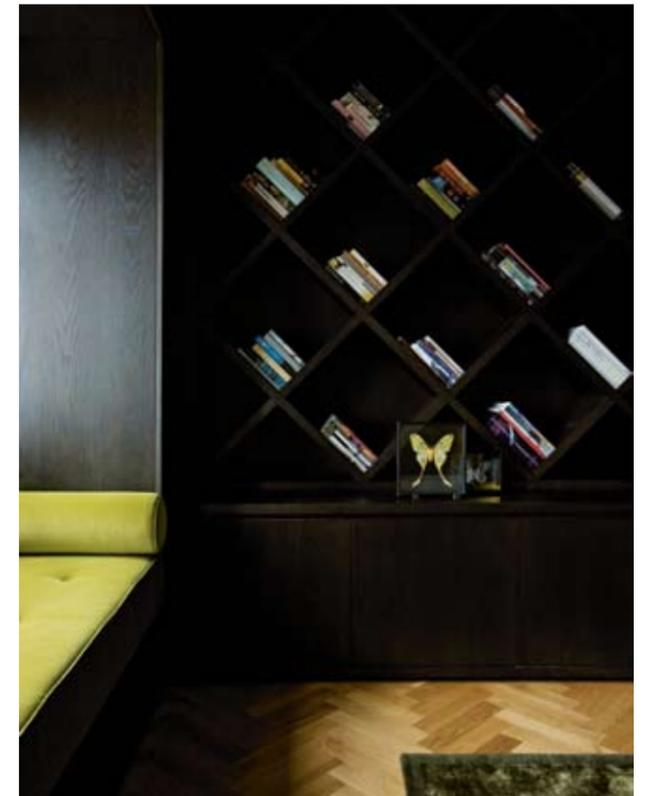
04

a quiet space,” adds Kym. A dining and living area now sit where the ballroom once was, with doors that slide away to reveal a glorious view from beyond the terrace.

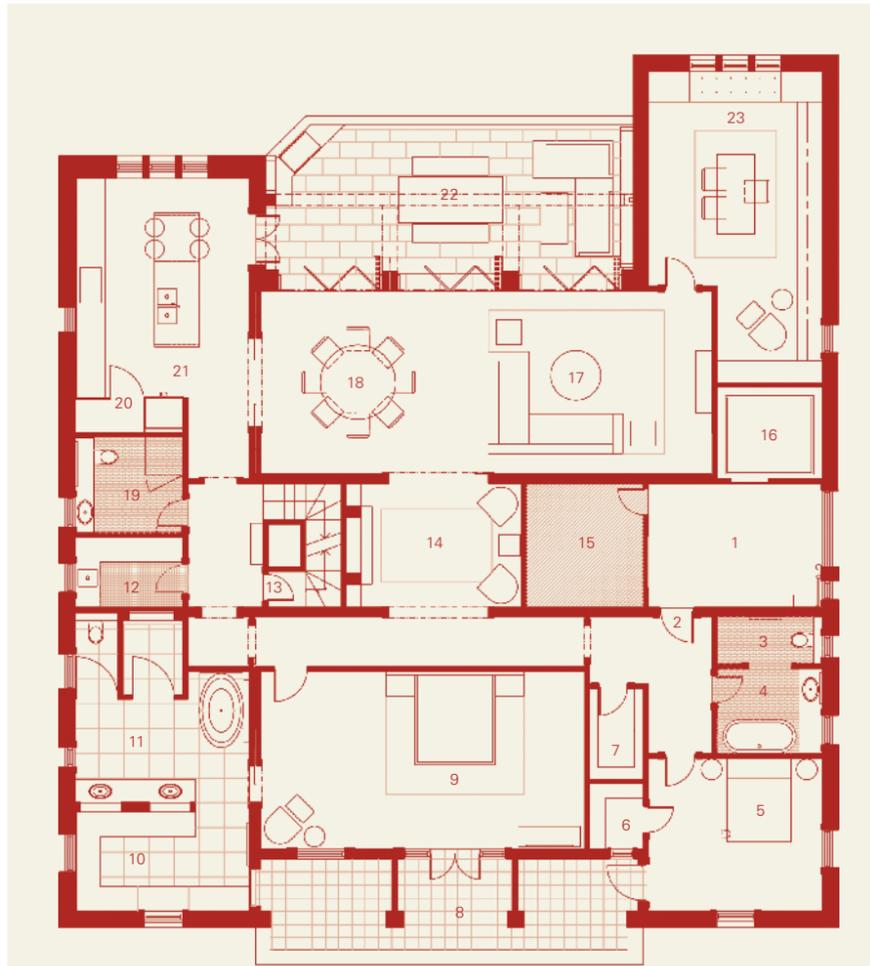
A former bedroom has been converted into a state-of-the-art kitchen that also opens up to the terrace through original French doors and flows into the dining room through the new partition doors. The industrial stainless steel and marble finishes are reminiscent of a favourite restaurant of the couple. The design harps back to Italian functionality. “I really like Boffi kitchens,” says Tonka who reveals that the Italian kitchen design powerhouse inspired the no-fuss design. It’s a contrast to the classic ‘Parisian apartment’ look that dominates in the living and dining rooms with its panelled walls and parquet flooring. “We chose finishes that lent themselves to that Parisian look in the living areas because of the grand scale of it, but we didn’t want that for the kitchen. It had to be the latest in design.”

The master bedroom, now re-located to the back of the apartment, opens up to the second balcony and marks the ‘softer’ side of the apartment. Here the darker, quieter spaces, including the over-sized ensuite, are in contrast to the light and bright spaces facing the harbour.

These moods are reflected in the choice of materials. The living areas in their plaster moulded panel detailing are painted a crisp Dulux Natural White while the bedroom



05



- |                  |                       |            |
|------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| 1 Lobby          | 11 Ensuite            | 19 Bath 2  |
| 2 Entry          | 12 Laundry            | 20 Pantry  |
| 3 WC             | 13 Exit               | 21 Kitchen |
| 4 Bath 1         | 14 Atrium             | 22 Terrace |
| 5 Bedroom 1      | 15 Fire stair         | 23 Study   |
| 6 Robe 1         | 16 Lift               |            |
| 7 Cellar         | 17 Formal lounge room |            |
| 8 Balcony        | 18 Formal dining room |            |
| 9 Master bedroom |                       |            |
| 10 Robe          |                       |            |

03

01 The preserved atrium features an original leadlight ceiling.

02 View from the atrium through the new living area to Sydney Harbour.

03 Ground floor plan.

04 The lounge room features a Dale Frank painting.

05 Stained Oak bookshelves in the study.

# scenario

elizabeth bay house — NSW, australia

TONKA ANDJELKOVIC



06

06 In the kitchen, a photograph by Petrina Hicks provides contrast to the decorative period wall panelling.

07 The kitchen features a monolithic slab of Calacatta marble.

08 The dining room.

features a solemn grey and green coloured wallpaper that was inspired by a picture of a NYC apartment. A very communicative client, Kym had produced a scrapbook of pictures and creative ideas for the apartment that was handed to Tonka upon commencement of the project. The bold ensuite design incorporates a combination of design influences, from mosaics that create an age-old back drop of tiled tapestry to the latest bath tub, free-standing and organically shaped making the room a successful marriage of contrasts.

Another notable interior design solution that borrows from international influences is the study. "It's like an old English den, modernised by the contemporary joinery design," says Tonka. Here, an artwork by artist Alexander McKenzie provides the muse for the room's rich colour scheme. Dark and moody, the work's feel is reflected with antique furniture and a wrap-around dark timber diamond-shaped bookcase. A testament to good detail, this diamond pattern is repeated in the wallpaper.

In each of the re-worked spaces, furniture, art and objects from different periods and styles



07



08

collide to create a result that is hard to pin down as being from one particular place. This could be Sydney, Paris, London, San Francisco or Hong Kong, and is the result of influences drawn globally. Kym says, "We travel a lot, and I guess we've pulled together what we like from different places as sympathetically to our own environment as possible."

No other design element offers as much evidence of this than the sumptuous vertical garden on the terrace. The terrace itself was also re-worked to remove two prevalent columns that prevented any kind of dining table fitting into the space.

Inspired by French-born botanist Patrick Blanc's much-published vertical garden walls on buildings throughout the world, the couple and Tonka decided on this design solution to get as much greenery as possible on the terrace. With local collaborators, the vertical garden took trial and error to find plants that would withstand the conditions and technique. The result requires no soil, is self-watering, self-fertilising, and is an eye-catching, contemporary marvel. It's something the old penthouse could never have had imagined, but that fits in unquestioned among all the other new – and old – ideas in play.

**INTERIOR DESIGNER**

Tonka Andjelkovic Design

**PROJECT TEAM**

Tonka Andjelkovic

**BUILDER**

Platinum Constructions & Consulting

**JOINERY**

Van & Son Detail Joinery

**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER**

MPN Group

**LANDSCAPER**

Plantdeco

**LIGHTING CONSULTANT**

Filament Lighting

**ARCHITECTURAL**

CONSULTANT

Studio R

**AUDIO VISUAL CONSULTANT**

Access Electronics Australia

**ARTWORK**

Living room painting by Dale Frank, 2006. Kitchen 'Lauren' by Petrina Hicks, 2003.

**FINISHES**

Floor re-milled antique French Oak parquetry from Salvage, salvage.com.au. Joinery timber veneer from Van & Son Joinery, solid Teak from Bruynzeel Australia, (61 2) 9939 1175 and Hermes

**FURNITURE**

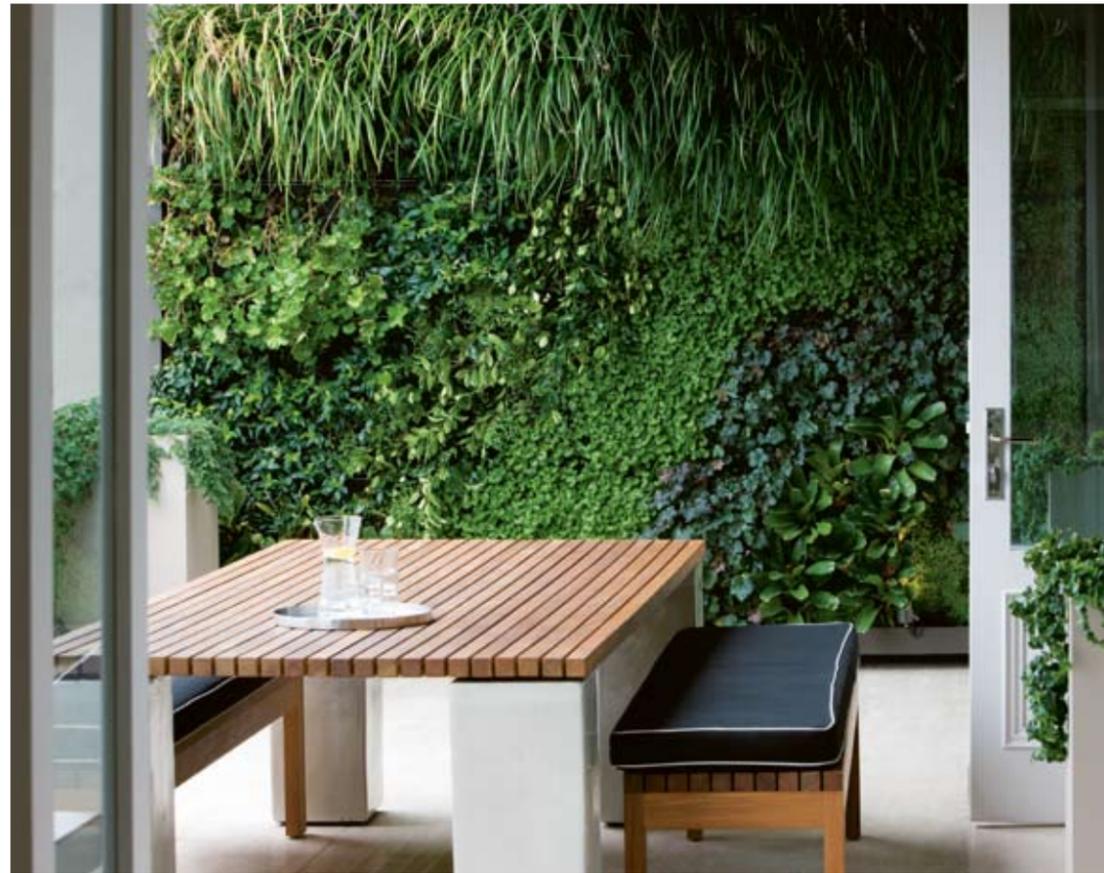
Sofa Sabi Black Pepper sofa from Poliform, poliform.com.

au, Minotti coffee table from Dedede, dedede.com, Bravoure hand tufted rug from Hub Furniture, hubfurniture.com.au, nested side tables from Laura Kincade, laurakincade.com. French 1940 club chairs from The Country Trader, thecountrytrader.com.au. Rug in Artrium from Whitecliffe Imports, whitecliffe.com.au, and deer's head from Becker & Minty, beckerminty.com. Dark Oak dining table from Mortice & Tenon, morticeandtenon.com, Louis XV-style dining chairs from Desks of Distinction, desksofdistinction.com.au. Beech bar stools in kitchen from Hub Furniture. Terrace outdoor table from Anibou, anibou.com.au. BBQ and bench seat from Van & Son Joinery, vanandson.com.au.

# scenario

elizabeth bay house — NSW, australia

TONKA ANDJELKOVIC



09 The vertical garden wall on the patio is inspired by French-born botanist Patrick Blanc.

09

Statuarietto honed stone from Euromarble, euomarble.com.au. Stone slabs from Gitani Stone, (61 2) 9838 8880. Bathroom stone tiles from Euromarble, glass mosaic tiles from Pazotti, pazotti.com.au. Terrace tiles also from

Pazotti. Glass from Pilkington, pilkington.com. Wallpaper in master bedroom from Unique Fabrics, uniquefabrics.com. Paint and polyurethane from Dulux, dulux.com.au. LIGHTING Entry chandelier from Vintage

Glamour, vintageglamour.com.au. Dining room chandelier from Sally Beresford Antiques, sallyberesford.com.au. Wall lights from Custom Lighting, customlighting.com.au. Table lamps from Becker & Minty. Kitchen pendant from

Optique Lighting, optique.com.au. Downlights from Erco Lighting, erco.com. FIXTURES/EQUIPMENT Kitchen Vola mixer from Cass Brothers, cassbrothers.com.au, and Franke undermount sink from Winning Appliances,

winningappliances.com.au. Bathroom NuCast bath from Malcolm St James, malcolmstjames.com.au, and Villeroy & Boch basin from Cass Brothers.

AD

**blinds by bayliss**

p: +61 2 9360 7244  
w: www.bayliss.com.au  
a: 83 - 97 Flinders St, Darlinghurst N.S.W 2010

