

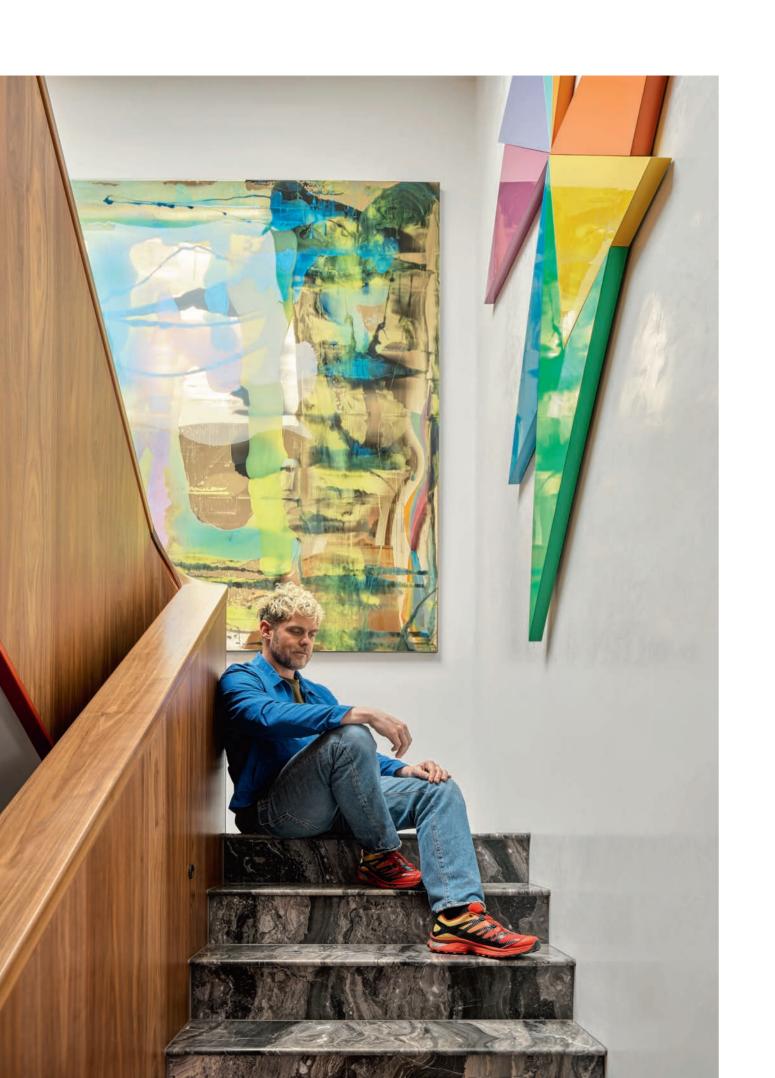


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A former New Yorker's BOLD MOVE to a beachside home in Sydney's Tamarama calls for *high energy design*, championing art and furnishings with soul and feeling, an assignment perfectly in line with Flack Studio.

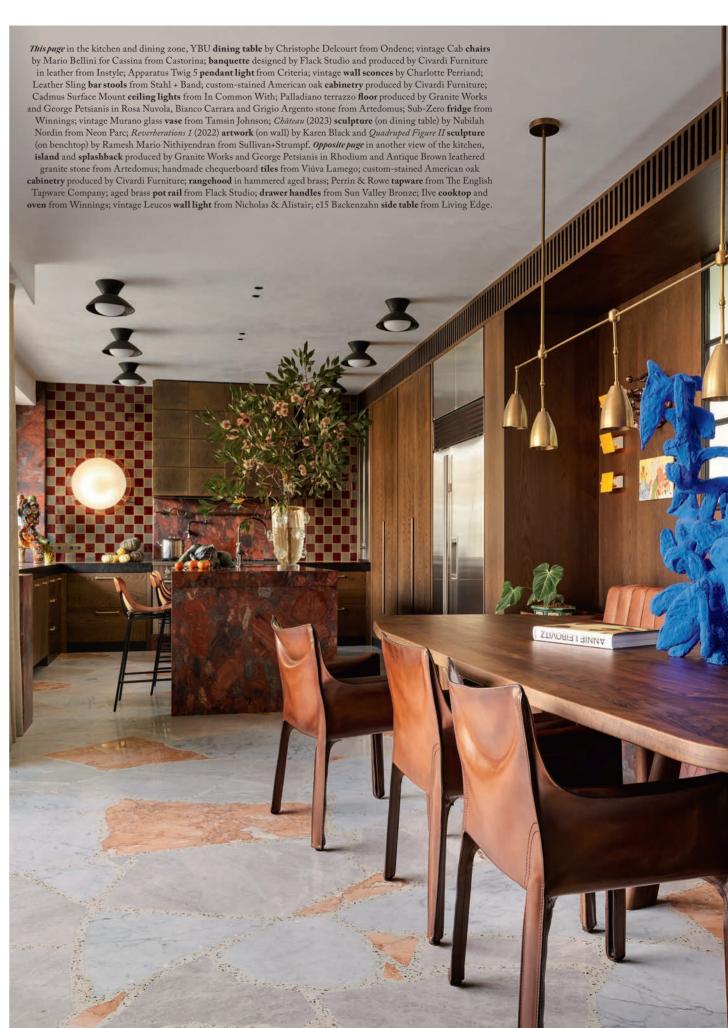
By ANNEMARIE KIELY Photographed by ANSON SMART Styled by JOSEPH GARDNER











s any Italian entrepreneur who has been brick-walled by bureaucracy will say: *ogni muro è una porta* (every wall is a door), meaning opportunity lies beyond controlling structure when curiosity pushes through.

Such wisdom captures in the ways of this client, says Melbourne designer David Flack of a "ballsy" New York businessman with a broad-spectrum portfolio who, now living in Australia, recently purchased a three-level homage to the Hamptons on Sydney's Tamarama Beach.

"He and his two daughters had been eyeing the house for five years, until one day he just knocked on the door and made an offer," recalls Flack with the wide-eyed reveal that it was the first house his client had ever owned. "He is a busy man with a busy life, exposed to endless stimuli and, like most successful people, he just wanted a refuge within easy reach of the beach."

Tamarama's bronzed surfers are the less-stressed analogue to the client's speculative life: always assessing conditions, timing the perfect entry and

exit points and paddling in wait for the one big wave that will ride into shore. But the house, which Flack nutshells as "a big-small building over three levels with great views and a gorgeous garden", communicated none of the qualities that cultivated his success. No innovation, no experimentation, no risk tolerance — just a symmetrical regulation of white walls, in the manner of a million others, without a single doorway to self-discovery.

"He is happy to be challenged and will trust in your advice if it brings a vision to fruition," says Flack with disclosure that the commission came via a mutual friend who declared only one designer capable of realising his risk-readiness in aesthetics. "None of that wishy-washy, wabi-sabi beige that so often styles at the beach. He and his partner came to the studio and fell in love with its textures, art, feeling, fun, and knew we were a good fit; a firm who could inscribe a story that begins in the non-stop hustle of New York, where a "f*** you, no, f*** you" fearlessness rules melting-pot streets."

Such markers fed into a mood board that flavour-bombed with the Big Apple, basked in Sydney's golden glow, and gave vent to the designer's love for marble-lined Milanese thresholds. But before the 'Flacking' could begin, a general "flimsiness" had to redress.

"My objective was to instate strength — hard render, Venetian plaster, solid timber doors and jambs, parquetry, Palladiana terrazzo floors, a new hand-turned solid walnut stair," says the designer. "Everything had to have a weight and substance, only then could each room assume a personality based on the curation of the bits bought to embody him."

"I wanted the tone of WTF provocation to emphatically state from the entry," he continues with point to an installation "created on-site" by artist Rod McLeish. "It's a leather jacket hanging in a cloakroom space looking like Mickey Mouse's big hands holding up a rainbow, announcing the fun begins here."

"But we weren't just putting things on walls and floors," qualifies Flack of the commissioning of craft and art that incurred endless conversations and grew the house into a *gesamtkunstwerk* (a total work of art). The chatter volubly expresses in a first-level sitting room made moody by the surround of diagonally set walnut panels shadow-lined with a laser-like line of fine red beading. The room eschews the blinding white of most Australian beach boxes, preferring to bathe in the neon glow of a sunray sculpture by Sydney artist Nell. Her loaded symbology lights the veins in a multimedia coffee table by Melbourne artist Sanné Mestrom, whose interlocking forms have fed from an iterative process of arranging paper cut-outs of her own traced body parts.

"They are Mestrom's breasts, hips and bum," informs Flack of the onyx and bronze parts that make an archly feminist statement when placed on a vintage Middle Eastern rug that in turn protests the American intervention of baseball ottomans by Stahl + Band. The polemics fizz in the pairings of global polarities. "But the room is bloody nice to be in because all the timber tunnels views straight out to sea."

The kitchen — "a super important space for the client couple who love their food" — repeats the conceptual mash of meanings and materials in a vibe that is American diner, dropped into the middle of Milan. Pink Italian marbles, chequerboard chilli-red custom tiles and a hammered-brass rangehood dish up to a leather banquette dining under the light of Charlotte Perriand wall sconces and mushroom ceiling buttons from Brooklyn-based makers In Common With.

The client, Flack reveals, is colourblind, but can register blues and greens, which hasn't stopped the wholesale grab for spicy reds and a flagrant display of colour-wheel abstraction in a stairwell hang of the late Sydney Ball's last painting. The science says to tone it down for sufferers of achromatopsia, but both client and creative trade in contrariness and prefer a punch in the solar plexus to prudence. Still, Flack has made some concession to 'seen colour' in a gloopy dribble of toxic-hued greens by artist Dale Frank and a punk-arse 200-kilogram steel panel painted Klein Blue by German artist Gerold Miller.

"No, it's not your traditional minestrone," says Flack of his contra-indicated build of palate and palette into a hearty brodo with a south-of-the-border kick. "But to my mind, great taste is a bundle of sensations bound by a secret umami that just leaves you wanting more."

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