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NEW WAVE

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

This page in the entry and sitting room of this Tamarama home, American walnut **credenza** designed by Flack Studio; Banded **ottoman** from Stahl + Band; Camaleonda **sofa** by Mario Bellini for B&B Italia from Space Furniture; Jindrich Halabala **armchairs** from Nicholas & Alistair; vintage Fantasma **floor lamp** by Tobia Scarpa for Flos, enquiries for reissue to Living Edge; Shogun **lamp** by Mario Botta for Artemide from Stylecraft; **curtain** produced by Bayliss Blinds in Designs of the Time Arima linen from James Dunlop Textiles; Moroccan Kilim **rug** from Halcyon Lake; herringbone **floor** in European oak from Mafi; **ceiling** in solid American walnut; *Proplift Fern sculpture* (on credenza) by Caroline Rothwell from Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery. *Details, last pages.*





This page in another view of the sitting room, American walnut **cabinetry** produced by Civardi Furniture; Xenolith **coffee table** by Sanné Mestrom; Jade **side table** from Stahl + Band; Utrecht **armchair** by Gerrit Thomas Rietveld for Cassina from Mobilia; Boalum **lamp** by Livio Castiglioni and Gianfranco Frattini for Artemide from Stylecraft; *Spinning Top* (2019) **artwork** by Stephen Ormandy from Olsen Gallery; *Head with Braids II* (2023) **sculpture** by Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran from Sullivan+Strumpf; *Soda Rub* (2022) **sculpture** (on bottom shelf) by Nabilah Nordin from Neon Parc; *Black and White Nugget vase* by Gaetano Pesce from 506070; *Who Are You sculpture* (on top shelf) by Nell from Station Gallery; *Blue & White II vase* (2022) by Lynda Draper and *Untitled (Heartbeats)* **sculpture** (on coffee table) by Tim Silver from Sullivan+Strumpf. *Opposite page* designer David Flack in the stairwell; **stairs** produced by Granite Works and George Petsianis in Opus stone from Artedomus; **staircase** in American walnut with hand-carved balustrade rail; commissioned **artwork** (on facing wall) by Dale Frank from Neon Parc; *Chromix Lumina #15 artwork* by Sydney Ball from Sullivan+Strumpf.



This page in the kitchen and dining zone, YBU **dining table** by Christophe Delcourt from Ondene; vintage Cab **chairs** by Mario Bellini for Cassina from Castorina; **banquette** designed by Flack Studio and produced by Civardi Furniture in leather from Instyle; Apparatus Twig 5 **pendant light** from Criteria; vintage **wall sconces** by Charlotte Perriand; Leather Sling **bar stools** from Stahl + Band; custom-stained American oak **cabinetry** produced by Civardi Furniture; Cadmus Surface Mount **ceiling lights** from In Common With; Palladiano terrazzo **floor** produced by Granite Works and George Petsianis in Rosa Nuvola, Bianco Carrara and Grigio Argento stone from Artedomus; Sub-Zero **fridge** from Winnings; vintage Murano glass **vase** from Tamsin Johnson; *Château* (2023) **sculpture** (on dining table) by Nabilah Nordin from Neon Parc; *Reverberations 1* (2022) **artwork** (on wall) by Karen Black and *Quadruped Figure II* **sculpture** (on benchtop) by Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran from Sullivan+Strumpf. *Opposite page* in another view of the kitchen, **island** and **splashback** produced by Granite Works and George Petsianis in Rhodium and Antique Brown leathered granite stone from Artedomus; handmade chequerboard **tiles** from Viúva Lamego; custom-stained American oak **cabinetry** produced by Civardi Furniture; **rangehood** in hammered aged brass; Perrin & Rowe **tapware** from The English Tapware Company; aged brass **pot rail** from Flack Studio; **drawer handles** from Sun Valley Bronze; Ilve **cooktop** and **oven** from Winnings; vintage Leucos **wall light** from Nicholas & Alistair; e15 Backenzahn **side table** from Living Edge.



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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-ar-se 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.” ■ flackstudio.com.au

This page in a hallway, Ultrafragola **mirror/light** by Ettore Sottsass for Poltronova; *Multi Legged Figure with Red Mask* (2020) **artwork** by Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran from Sullivan+Strumpf; Floris Wubben **stool** from Studio Alm; steel frame **doors** produced by Ganci in Speckled Granite textured glass and Dulux Colorbond Jasper.



This page in the main bedroom, & Tradition Little Petra **armchair** from Cult; vintage Leucos **floor lamp** from Nicholas & Alistair; **bed base** designed by Flack Studio and produced by Civardi Furniture; antique Persian Mahal **rug** from Cadrys; **curtain** produced by Bayliss Blinds in Designs of the Time Olarte linen from James Dunlop Textiles; **walls** and **ceiling** in Waterstone Venetian Plaster produced by Bishops Master Finishes; *FFVII Original Soundtrack* (2021) **artwork** by Dane Lovett; custom-stained American oak **built-in storage** designed by Flack Studio and produced by Civardi Furniture with drawer fronts in leather from Instyle; **carpet** produced by Halcyon Lake and Flack Studio. *Opposite page* in the second-floor bathroom, **wall**, **vanity** and **shower floor** produced by Granite Works and George Petsianis in Opus Rosso marble from Artedomus; handmade wall **tiles** from Viúva Lamego; Cotto Manetti Anticato floor **tiles** from Artedomus; custom-stained American oak **cabinetry** designed by Flack Studio and produced by Civardi Furniture; **tapware** from Astra Walker; **towel rails** from Flack Studio; vintage **stool** from 506070.



This page on the second-floor landing, Super **table lamp** by Martine Bedin for Memphis Milano from Mobilia; Ground European oak **floor** from Made By Storey; *i miss you with an immeasurable sadness as vast as the vastest ocean that is probable the pacific or indian maybe i dont know i am not great with geography* (2022) **artwork** (on left) by Jason Phu. *Opposite page* on the outdoor terrace, Tobii-Ishi outdoor **coffee table** by Edward Barber and Jay Osgerby for B&B Italia from Space Furniture; Carlotta **chairs** by Afra and Tobia Scarpa for Cassina and Sail Out **ottoman** by Rodolfo Dordoni for Cassina from Mobilia; Inout **side tables** by Paola Navone for Gervasoni from Anibou; **landscape design**, **planters** and **pots** from Florian Wild; Endicott Crazy Paving stone **floor** from Eco Outdoor; **ceiling** in solid timber Blackbutt and vermiculite; *To Live 02* (2016) **sculptures** (on coffee table) by Darren Sylvester from Sullivan + Strumpf. *Details, last pages.*

