

THIS IS THE LIFE

Homeowner Jordan describes his pocket of Sydney's inner west as a "hidden gem". "With the sprawling greenery of Sydney Park across the road you feel like you're out of the hustle and bustle of the city, while you're only a short drive to amazing cafes and restaurants as well as boutique breweries and distilleries," he says. Jordan has a private rooftop terrace with a pool and views out to Botany Bay. "It's the ultimate sanctuary."

High STYLE

A sophisticated yet characterful interior – and an eye on the future – were key to the owner's brief for his penthouse home.

STORY *Georgia Madden* | STYLING *Samantha Torrissi*
PHOTOGRAPHY *Sue Stubbs*

LIVING/DINING Prestige Oak engineered-timber flooring in Straw, Flooring Xtra. Island benchtop in Caesarstone Piatto Black. Langdon stools, Ownworld. Dining table, Interior Secrets. Bow vase and Earth bowl (on table), Dinosaur Designs. Cire Trudon candle, Becker Minty. Dining chairs, Zaffero. *You Break My Heart* artwork by Eva Frengstad, from Sibiu Gallery. Julian planters, Coco Republic.



A

rooftop pool and entertainer's terrace, views across Sydney Park and all the mod cons imaginable: this 553-square-metre penthouse in Sydney's inner west had it all. Except, possibly, character. "The interior was rather grand and came across as sterile and dated," says its owner, Jordan. The other issue was the scale of some rooms. "For such a huge place, the kitchen and main bedroom were seriously undersized," he says.

But as an experienced renovator, Jordan could see beyond the negatives. "I'd been exploring real estate for a while and this penthouse was like nothing I had seen before - let alone on the fringe of one of the inner west's coolest areas. While the style was definitely not mine, I could see the potential and within a week I had made an offer and bought it."

Jordan wasted no time finding the right design team to bring his vision to life; two months after moving in, he brought on board building and interior designer Harmony Varley of Progressive Plans and her co-director, Leon Varley, who has 19 years' experience in trades, new builds and home renovations.

High on Jordan's wish list were an improved layout, a bigger master suite and a timeless and sophisticated feel. "I wanted

to create a sense of originality you wouldn't normally find in an apartment," he says. "I entertain a lot and wanted to enhance that lifestyle with open-plan living spaces that morph into garden balconies. And although I don't have kids at this stage, the brief was also to ensure the penthouse offered good functionality for a family."

"We asked Jordan to collate images that he liked and the look was fairly consistent - dark, moody and masculine. But, surprisingly, there were a few Scandi references thrown in too," says Harmony. "Our goal was to soften that dark and moody look while giving it something of a Scandi touch without losing that luxurious penthouse vibe."

The design team started sketching some initial ideas for the two-level, three-bedroom, four-bathroom home in March 2020. Work started in September that year and it was completed in December - just in time for summer.

To improve the home's sense of flow and make space for a proper main-bedroom suite, Harmony and Leon revised the layout to create an open-plan kitchen, living and dining area to the southeast of the apartment that flows onto two expansive balconies. They also opened up the entry by removing a nib wall and a bank of built-in cupboards. ▶



KITCHEN Dogal marble splashback and rear benchtop, Surface Gallery. Barazza cooktop, Winning Appliances. Oven, Bosch. Faucet Strommen 'Zeos' mixer tap, Bathroom Collective. Large vase (on island), Trit House. Eva white vase by Katarina Wells, Curatorial+Co. **LIVING/DINING** Sofa, King. Alec and Ode cushions, L&M Home. Throw, Adairs. Zest side table, Trit House. Rug, Unitex. The Frame TV from Samsung looks like an artwork when not in use.

A simple palette of oak, marble and dark-painted VJ panelling in tones of black, white and grey throughout creates a warm and inviting feel while delivering the modern Scandinavian vibe Jordan was looking for.

But it's the dramatic curved wall that greets guests at the entry and runs right around to the sofa that is the star of the show. Crafted from plywood with timber beading and a black japan stain, it manages to add texture and impact without overwhelming the interior. "The apartment was originally quite boxy, with lots of sharp edges, and the curve allowed us to add a lot of movement to the space," says Harmony. It also cleverly conceals a door (next to the fireplace) that opens into a generously sized main bedroom, walk-in wardrobe and luxurious ensuite.

"We had a fairly tight budget to work with and the curved wall took up a large portion of it," says Leon. "Jordan was on board with the concept straight away, but it meant we had to make some smart budget choices elsewhere to accommodate it."

To keep costs in check, the team chose to upcycle the wardrobe doors and to update the bathroom vanities with a fresh coat of paint and new handles. In the kitchen, they opted for simple painted-polyurethane cabinetry. They had planned to refinish the travertine tiles to keep costs down, but, happily, discovered that replacing them with engineered-oak floorboards was only slightly more expensive.

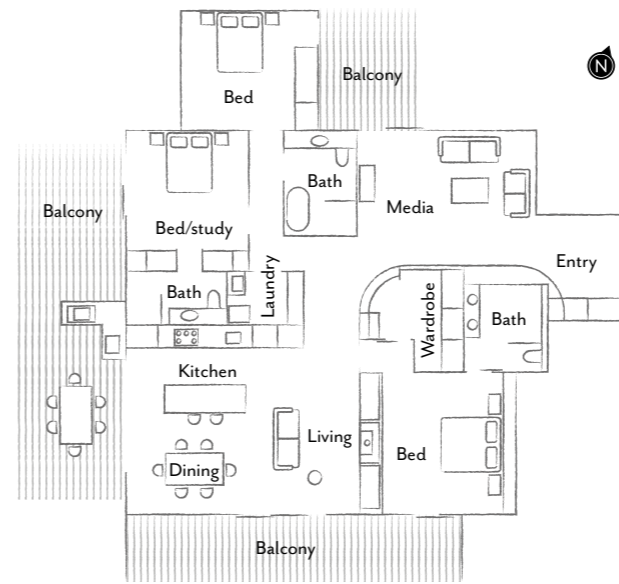
Some things, however, the team wasn't willing to compromise on. "Real stone in the kitchen and bathrooms, and quality tapware and fittings were must-haves," says Harmony. "It's a luxury penthouse, so it needed to have a high-end feel - not just in terms of looks, but how things feel to the touch."

And their satisfied client clearly agrees. "I absolutely love what we've achieved," says Jordan. "I have renovated previously, but this has by far been my biggest and best project. The curved wall that separates the apartment into distinct yet flowing living areas is my favourite feature; I haven't seen anything like that before. Plus it has created a hidden and private main bedroom retreat with both size and sophistication."

► *Progressive Plans, Mona Vale, NSW; 0400 699 850 or progressiveplans.com.au. DMR Carpentry & Building, Northern Beaches, NSW; 0401 757 031 or dmrbuilding.com.au.*



THE LAYOUT



THE PALETTE

- Dulux Domino (island cabinetry)
- Dulux Natural White Quarter (walls, ceiling, wardrobes)
- Dulux Black Caviar (VJ panelling, vanities, feature walls)



Paint colours are reproduced as accurately as printing processes allow.

"IT'S A LUXURY PENTHOUSE, SO IT NEEDED TO HAVE A HIGH-END LOOK AND FEEL."
HARMONY VARLEY, PROGRESSIVE PLANS

MEDIA ROOM *Above* Sofa, King. Loft striped cushion and Etro round cushion, L&M Home. Coffee table, Zaffero. Floor lamp, Aldi. Mr Pinchy & Co brass crab, Becker Minty. Vase, Dinosaur Designs. Olek sculpture by Kristiina Engelin, Curatorial+Co. **PORTRAIT** Homeowner Jordan in his fabulous new kitchen. **LIVING AREA** *Opposite* The curved wall is made from plywood and screens off the main bedroom. It's finished in Feast Watson Black Japan. Console table, Interior Secrets. Large glass vase, Country Road. Temple vases in Abalone, Dinosaur Designs. Julian planter, Coco Republic. *Lovers* artwork (above console) by Anna Curnuck from Siby Gallery.

MAIN BEDROOM *Extract I* artwork by Anna Curnuck at Siby Gallery. Existing pendant lights. Bedlinen, In Bed. Throw, Freedom. **WARDROBE** *Below left* Mirror, MCM House. Joinery by DMR Carpentry & Building. **MAIN ENSUITE** *Below right* Bjorn mirrors, Print Decor. Basins, Just in Place. Caesarstone Intense White benchtop. Faucet Strommen 'Pegasi' showers and 'Zeos' basin sets, Bathroom Collective. Grey terrazzo wall tiles, Evo Tile+Stone.



1 *Love Story* artwork by Diana Miller (130x150cm), \$5500 (framed), Modern Times. 2 Cora cushion in Amber, \$200, Jordan. 3 Himolla 'Aura' recliner, from \$3200, Luduco Living. 4 Chiles floor lamp, \$295, Domo. 5 Flexform 'Magnum' 3-seater sofa, POA, Fanuli. 6 Lanerossi 'Ulisse Bruciato' wool throw (130x180cm), \$699, Polite Society. 7 Altone 'Roy' coffee table, from \$3950, Fanuli. 8 Julian ribbed-concrete planter, \$435, Coco Republic. 9 Earth bowl in Snow Swirl, \$90, Dinosaur Designs. 10 Flexform 'Joyce' dining chair, \$4060, Fanuli. 11 Arnold terracotta vessel, \$79, McMullin & Co. 12 Offering vessel in Dark Horn, \$280, Dinosaur Designs. 13 Nebula 'Capsule' smart projector, \$699, Harvey Norman. *For Where to Buy, see page 192. H&G*



THE SOURCE

Spice up a neutral interior with warming bursts of turmeric and terracotta.



Produced by Saffron Sylvester.