

Terra firma hues and a muted palette bring this house back down to earth.



**This page** In the formal dining room, a Nemo 'Crown Major' pendant light from Cult hangs above an 'Altura' dining table from Casa Blanco with Tacchini 'Pigreco' chairs by Tobia Scarpa from Stylecraft. On table, from left, 'Hasami' porcelain plate from Simple Beautiful Things, and 'Gucci Earth' pot and Turkish pot both from Kate Nixon Store. New Works 'Bukowski' chair from District. 'Mojave' rug from Armadillo. On mantle, from left, urn by Tetsuya Ozawa from The DEA Store, wooden bottle from Space, Terri Brooks artwork from Studio Gallery, and 'Dazzle' vase by Jenni Oh. **Opposite page** The basement ceiling is lined in recycled spotted-gum beams from Recycled Timber. Coffee table from Montmartre Store. Bowl by Kazuya Ishida from The DEA Store. Hand-carved wooden bowl from @kvwoodcrafts1. Stool from Spence & Lyda. Artwork from Montmartre Store. On floor, large vessel by Michael Pugh from Ondene and 'Earth' pot by Laura Jankelson from HK Edit. 'Mojave' rug in Laurel from Armadillo. Large artwork by Morgan Stokes from Curatorial+Co. On mantle, from left, 'Bohan' lamp from Racheil Donath, ceramic vessel from Great Dane, 'Tarraco' pot and 'Sinclair' velvet box from Kate Nixon Store, and sculpture from Maison et Jardin. Rinnai gas fireplace from The Heater Man.



# ON *solid* GROUND

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**These pages, clockwise from top left** On the lower level, doors open to the rear pool and deck. Artwork above fireplace by Morgan Stokes from Curatorial+Co. Brdr.Krüger 'Arv' armchair from Fred International. Left of fireplace, Laura Jankelson vessel from HK Edit, bowl by Michael Pugh from Ondene, Trizo21 'Aude-Table' lamp from Great Dane. Coffee table from Montmartre Store. In the entryway, tessellated tiles in custom pattern from Renditions Tiles. Stairs carpeted in Cashmere Touch from Signature Floors. Walls in Spanish gypsum whiteset finish. On the plinth is a Caroline Blackburn ceramic from Spence & Lyda. Herman Miller 'Nelson Apple Bubble' pendant light from Living Edge. Tacchini 'Dolmen' coffee table with ceramics from both Provider Store and Planet. Stool from Spence & Lyda next to a Maxalto 'Kalos' armchair from Space. Graziela Guardino artwork above fireplace. 'Altura' dining table from Casa Blanco and 'Bukowski' chairs by New Works from District. 'Ripple' jar on mantle by Kazuya Ishida from The DEA Store.

A generational family home inherited by the current owners, this 1870s terrace in Paddington required an approach that was both sensitive and sensible. The initial brief was for two new bathrooms, but architect and interior designer Alena Smith's sound advice to the owners was to hit pause on the ad-hoc patch-up jobs and instead look to a master plan that may cost more in the short term, but would undoubtedly make for a more gratifying future and eliminate the need for endless repairs.

"My client lived in the house as a child and is now raising her own family there. It's something of a full-circle heirloom," says Alena. "We wanted to give it an upgrade and breathe new life into it, but it was important to respect its heritage too. We refer to this project as having 'contemporary legacy'."

In the early stages, Alena says her client's verbal brief and their mood boards weren't in sync. "They were originally looking towards something more Hamptons style, but that's not what they were telling me. We spoke about bringing the landscape in which wasn't something possible through that vehicle." As Alena had already worked with them some years ago, there was a relationship built on trust that enabled a shift in thinking.

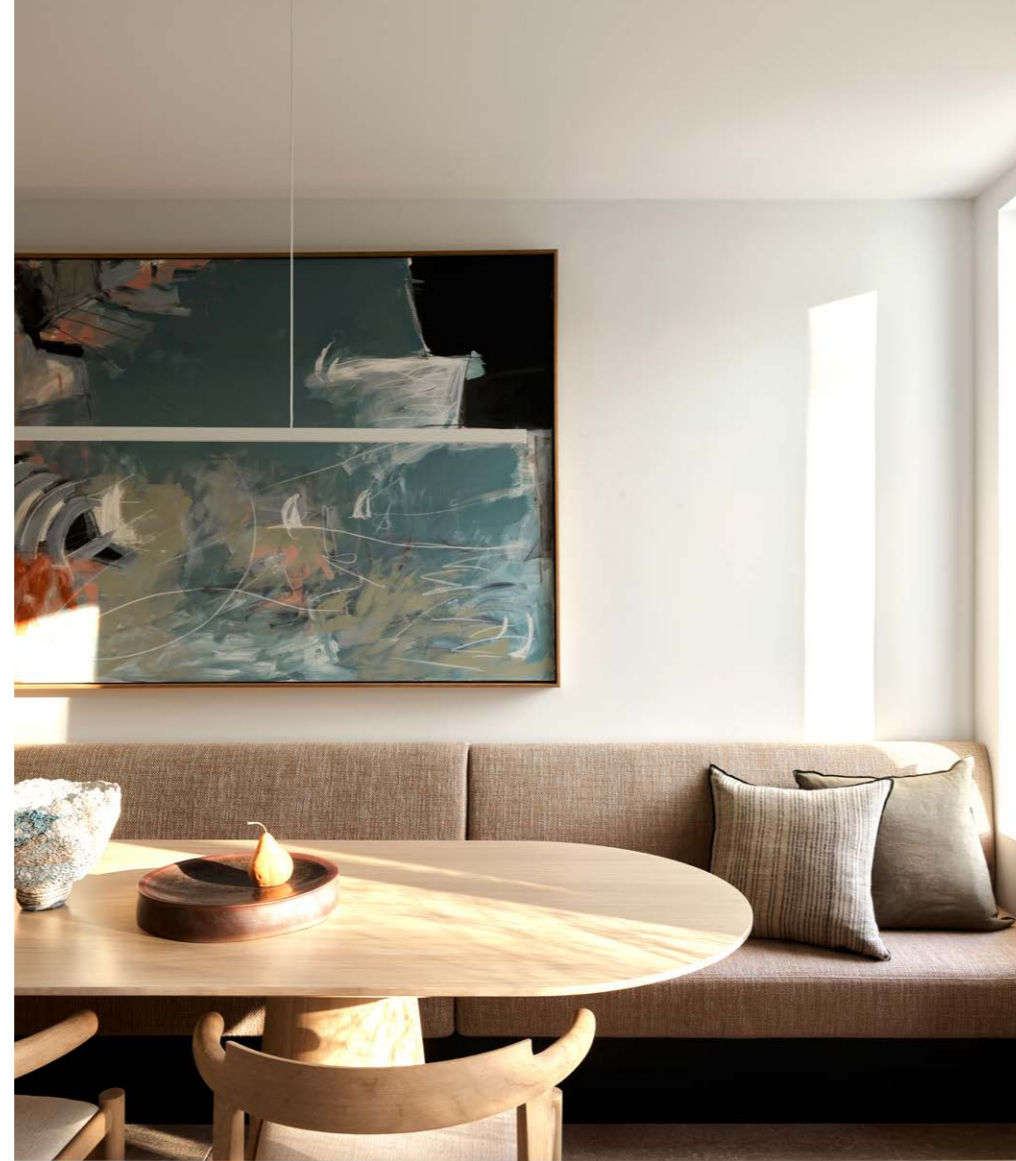
The home's major ailments were structural issues, dampness and faux heritage accents from a poor 1980s renovation that

needed to be remedied. Functionally, the internal circulation was impractical. "The floor plan was confusing and it felt like moving through a loop," explains Alena. For the revised footprint, the existing staircase leading to the ground floor was blocked off and relocated to the rear of the house. The stairs leading to the first floor were left in position however, with the introduction of a compact bar tucked underneath.

Off the ground-floor hallway, the living room connects to the dining room through grand, cedar double doors that were removed for protection during the construction process. Of the dark dining room, Alena says it had a floor so sloped it "felt as if you'd had a few drinks". To brighten up the space, the existing jarrah was replaced with light oak underfoot and operable windows redesigned to open into a previously disused internal courtyard. "It's like a lung that allows more natural ventilation, more sunlight and views out to greenery," she says.

Running along the airy and open passage is a long, low joinery unit that in its linear gesture stretches towards the kitchen. Given that there's no back-of-house storage, the cabinetry serves as a "pantry zone where the children can get messy without interfering in the main kitchen", says Alena. "It was conceived as a piece of furniture floating above the floor rather than a heavy piece that looked like a kitchen. It's a real workhorse disguised in a nice costume." »



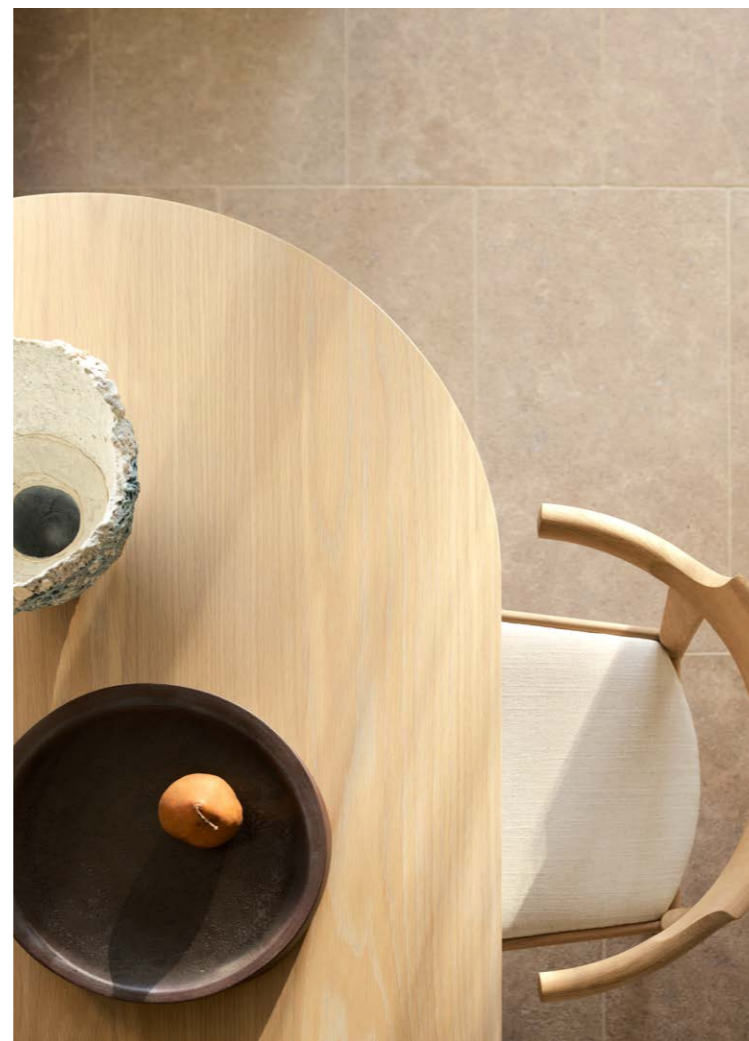


« At the rear, the meals area features a custom Ross Didier American oak table framed by an informal honeycomb-hued banquette. Adjacent, the kitchen island in a Stone Italiana surface is subdued yet still robust. “It was important that nothing be jarring so we specified natural tones. It’s almost monochromatic, but still light and friendly,” explains Alena of the palette.

The lower ground floor, a space previously rendered unusable given the onslaught of moisture, has been transformed into what Alena calls the “classic Sydney indoor-outdoor room” with the addition of a bedroom, laundry, sauna-spa and bathroom. Channelling a resort-like atmosphere, the scheme is flush with desert colours in ochre, bone, clay and roasted almond. Floor tiles creep up the stucco-finished fireplace wall to form a version of contemporary skirting boards and recycled timber beams have been installed across the ceiling.

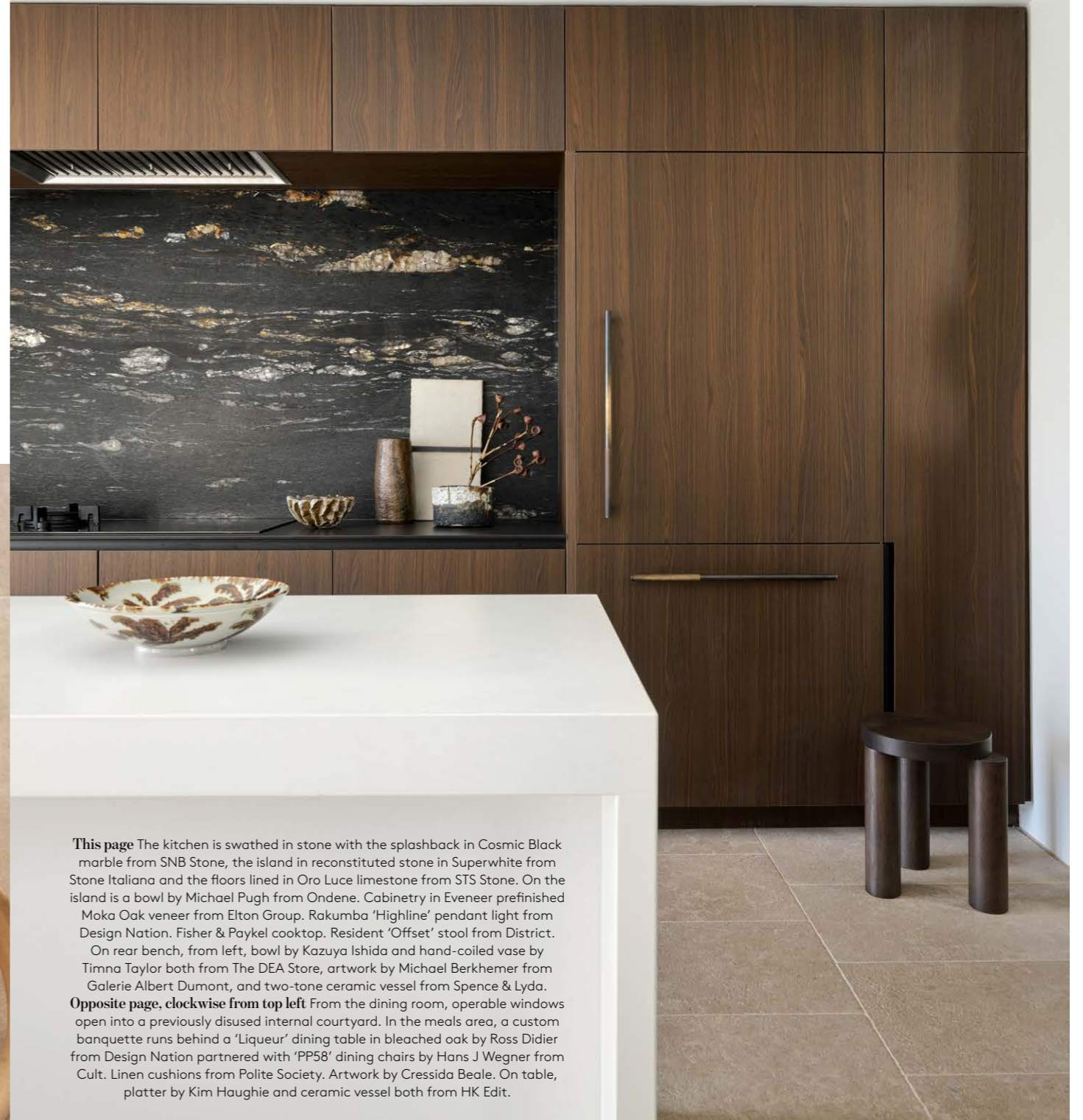
On the first floor overlooking the pool, the parents retreat is lined in top-to-toe timber-style wallpaper that forms the ensuite envelope. With its cylindrical form, the shape of the shower was inspired by an African rondavel hut. During construction, a wall of sandstone was unexpectedly uncovered, a happy accident that was ultimately left as an exposed feature wall. Elsewhere, a pared-back and expanded dove-grey bathroom services two bedrooms.

“We wanted the house to have earthy hues but were conscious of not letting things look muddy,” says Alena. “There needed to be strength in the period bones and a modern sophistication, but the client also wanted to evoke the African landscape of her heritage in texture and tone.” [alenasmith.com.au](http://alenasmith.com.au)



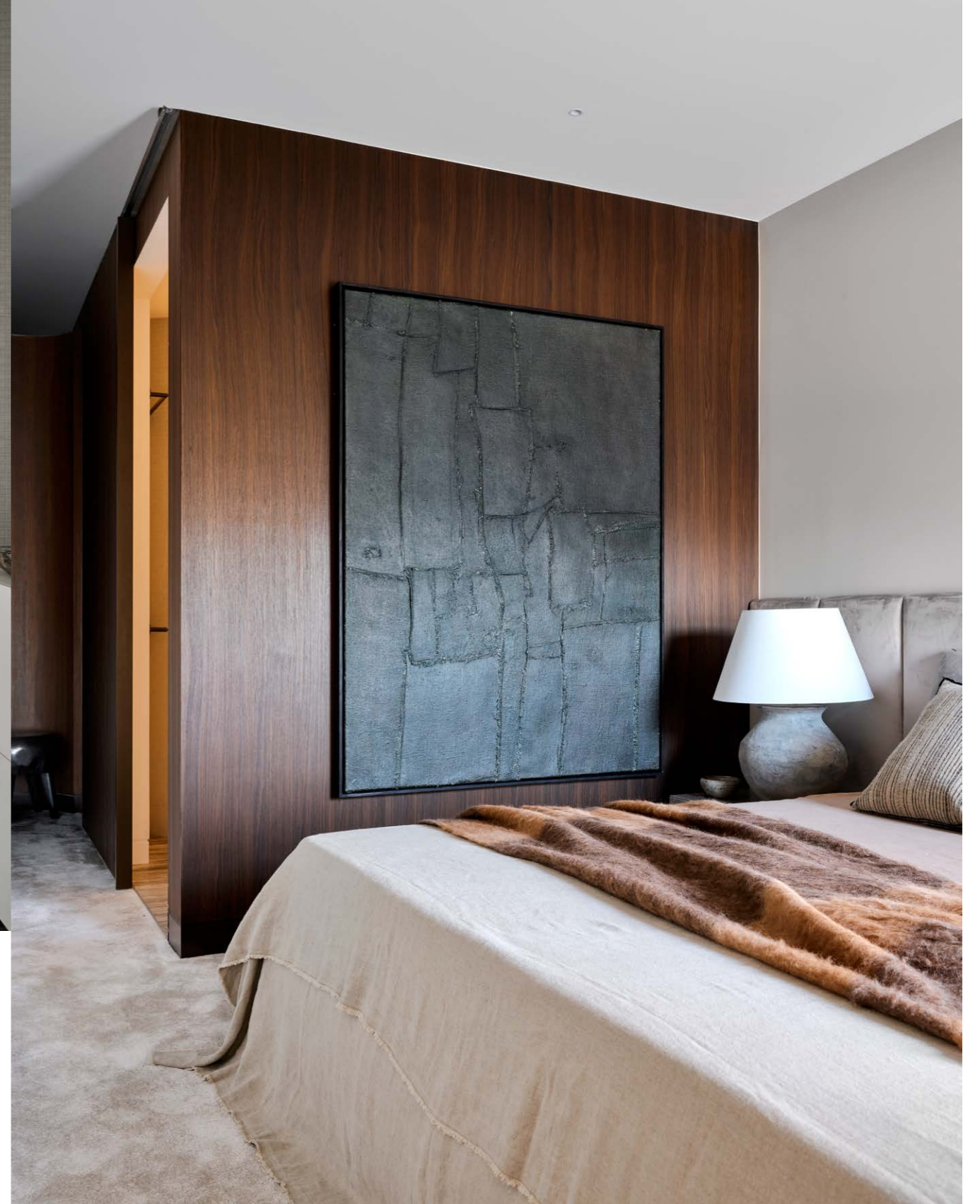
**SPEED READ**

» The owners of this 19th-century Sydney terrace originally engaged architect and interior designer Alena Smith to renovate two bathrooms, but the scope quickly expanded to encompass most of the house. » It became apparent that more extensive works now would minimise the need for constant, ad-hoc patch-up jobs later down the track. » The client had grown up in the house and it was somewhat of a “family heirloom” that needed to be dealt with sensitively. » Alena stripped the house of its “faux heritage” 1980s addition and re-routed the cumbersome circulation by repositioning the downstairs staircase from the front of the house to the rear. » Disused because of dampness, the lower ground floor was given a complete gut and re-fit with recycled timber-lined ceilings. » Opening onto the terrace and pool, there’s a holiday-retreat atmosphere. » On the first floor, a long, low joinery unit was designed as a “pantry zone where the children can get messy without interfering in the main kitchen”. » The owners were interested in a palette that would evoke a sophisticated “African landscape” in desert colours such as ochre, bone and clay. » Windows opening into a previously disused courtyard have created a “lung” that imbues the interiors with light.



**This page** The kitchen is swathed in stone with the splashback in Cosmic Black marble from SNB Stone, the island in reconstituted stone in Superwhite from Stone Italiana and the floors lined in Oro Luce limestone from STS Stone. On the island is a bowl by Michael Pugh from Ondene. Cabinetry in Evener prefinished Moka Oak veneer from Elton Group. Rakumba ‘Highline’ pendant light from Design Nation. Fisher & Paykel cooktop. Resident ‘Offset’ stool from District. On rear bench, from left, bowl by Kazuya Ishida and hand-coiled vase by Timna Taylor both from The DEA Store, artwork by Michael Berkhemer from Galerie Albert Dumont, and two-tone ceramic vessel from Spence & Lyda. **Opposite page, clockwise from top left** From the dining room, operable windows open into a previously disused internal courtyard. In the meals area, a custom banquette runs behind a ‘Liqueur’ dining table in bleached oak by Ross Didier from Design Nation partnered with ‘PP58’ dining chairs by Hans J Wegner from Cult. Linen cushions from Polite Society. Artwork by Cressida Beale. On table, platter by Kim Haughe and ceramic vessel both from HK Edit.

**This page, clockwise from top** In the main ensuite, linen towels from Polite Society complement the silver travertine stone flooring from SNB Stone and glossy glass mosaic wall tiles from Bisazza. Astra Walker bronze hooks. In the lower level spa, artwork from Montmartre Store. 'Bottle Rocket' ceramic tray by Issy Parker from The DEA Store. Vessel by Laura Jankelson from HK Edit. A pool features at the rear of the house. **Opposite page** In the main bedroom, artwork by Morgan Stokes from Curatorial+Co. 'WoodWall' timber wallpaper in Havana from Elton Group. Custom bedhead in Camengo 'Coulisse' velvet upholstered by Atelier. Lamp from Orient House next to a bowl by Toru Hatta from The DEA Store. Linen cushion from Polite Society. Bedding from In Bed Store. Cashmere Touch carpet from Signature Floors.



SIGNATURE STYLE  
**KEY PIECES**

- 1 'Baiana' oak and leather dining chair, \$700, from Camerich.
- 2 European tortoiseshell sisal, \$199/sqm, from International Floorcoverings.
- 3 Long stemmed 'Terra Cotta' bowl, \$320, from Katarina Wells Ceramics.
- 4 Smeg 'Victorian' freestanding cooker, \$6490, from Harvey Norman.
- 5 'Tri' stool, \$390, from Worn Store.