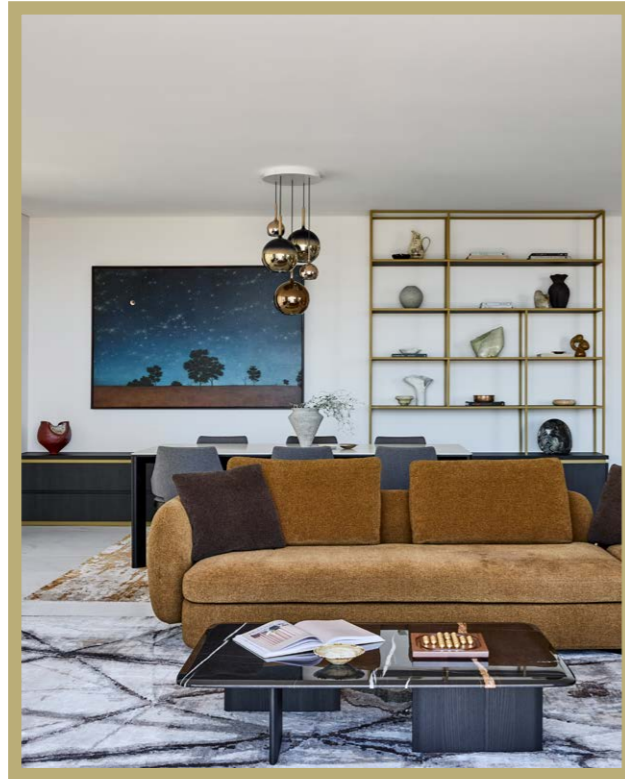


**Bridge of highs** “It was the overwhelming Sydney Harbour view and its fabulous position that captured my imagination and interest,” says homeowner Dianne of her sky-high apartment overlooking Lavender Bay (this page). A striking landscape by the late artist Jason Benjamin in the living area (opposite) nods to hues in the harbour setting. >



# THE HIGH LIFE

The breathtaking outlook of this apartment is as celebrated as its striking interior design in this state-of-the-art cosmetic renovation

WORDS JULIA FAIRLEY | STYLING KERRIE-ANN JONES | PHOTOGRAPHY PABLO VEIGA

It's not only what's on the inside that counts, even in non-structural, cosmetic renovations and especially when iconic views wait just beyond the window. This was the case when Dianne decided to renovate her penthouse apartment on the shimmering shores of Sydney Harbour, to create a warm, art-filled sanctuary to enjoy with her adult children and grandchildren.

Purchased in 2022, she was entranced by the outlook, though the interior was no match for its illustrious location. “While the view was absolutely incredible, the apartment lacked depth and personality, and from a functional perspective, it lacked storage and space for Dianne’s personal way of living,” says interior designer Lisa Santamaria, who led a 12-month renovation, finishing in 2025.

Function aside, a missing ingredient was flair. Dianne, who recently graduated from university after studying art history, and volunteers as an art guide at a Sydney museum, craved an interior that reflected her passion. What followed was a renovation and redecoration curated with the care of a gallery.

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*SQM 256 Bedrooms 3 Bathrooms 3*

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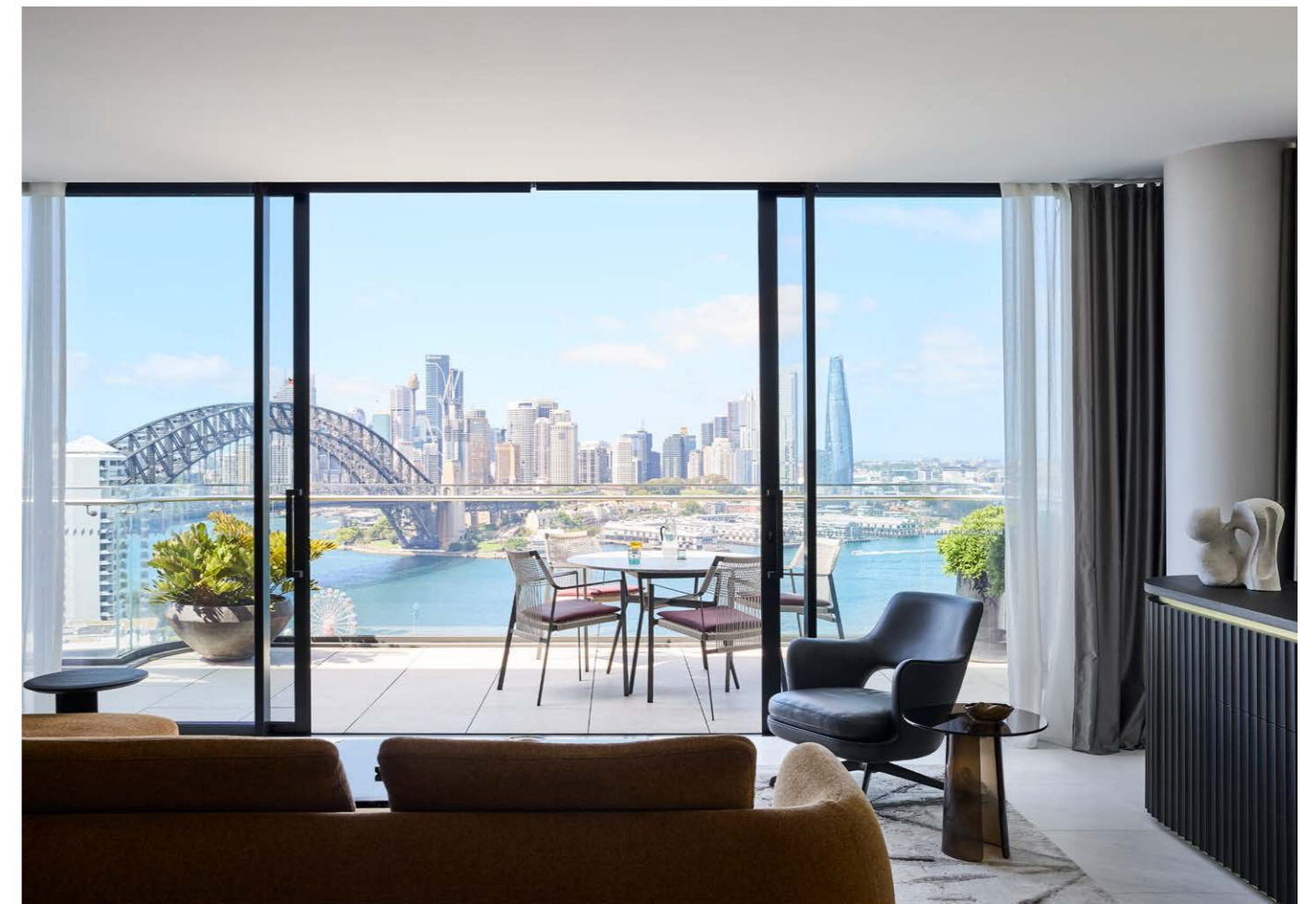
***Kitchen** The kitchen dishes up a feast of finishes, from a fluted Polytec 'Cove 25' profile on the island to glimmering gold joinery accents by Astor Metals in Brushed Brass. "We were inspired by the existing Calacatta Viola marble benchtops and splashback, and the Calacatta stone flooring," says Lisa of the palette. She added a streamlined Maset 'Ambrosia 210' pendant for ambience in the open-plan space.*

## HEAVY LIFTING

***Access can make or break** any renovation and in Dianne's case, all furniture, fittings and fixtures needed to fit inside the building's lift. "We had a lot of bespoke carpentry made, which was quite challenging at times, as building for an apartment is very different from a house and requires a lot of planning regarding access and sizing," says Dianne. "We had to ensure we could split furniture and assemble it all inside," adds Lisa. >*

“WE WERE ENGAGED TO REIMAGINE THE HOME  
TO THE POTENTIAL OF WHAT IT COULD BECOME”

LISA SANTAMARIA, INTERIOR DESIGNER



### *Change of plan*

Lisa transformed the floor plan and finishes, all without moving any walls or altering structural elements. Dianne’s original entrance had a laundry cupboard by the front door, which Lisa removed to create a striking first impression, and converted the powder room into a larger laundry.

“To enhance the kitchen, we refitted the existing cabinetry internally for better storage, and modified it externally to create a designer look,” says Lisa. “We also added fluted joinery panels and fluted glass on the island, and installed custom brass shelving with LED lighting.” Each space was treated to bespoke joinery, new furniture and fresh window treatments. “The ambience is one of luxury and comfort in a contemporary environment – exactly what I was trying to achieve,” says Dianne.

*Living* Dianne’s ‘Saint-Germain’ sofa in Agadir 06 Ocre fabric from Poliform in her living area (this page & opposite) is joined by a Flexform ‘Eliseo’ armchair from Fanuli, an ‘Orbit’ glass side table and a ‘Mush’ coffee and side tables, all Poliform. A Designer Rugs ‘Atlas’ rug grounds the space. The TV unit features a Screenwood ‘Modulo Flute 2’ profile with a Navurban Diamond finish in Black Mountain. A Chapman & Myers ‘Cordoba’ lamp from Bloomingdales Lighting and an Emma Lindegaard sculpture sit atop. >

### *More with less*

“This apartment is all about the location, and the balcony being so large creates an extension of the living space,” says Lisa. Flowing circulation zones between indoors and out help the main living area absorb the exterior space, while low-lying furniture directs sightlines out towards the Sydney Harbour Bridge and soaring Opera House sails. “Clever space planning and joinery design can make all the difference – we had to ensure the furniture placement was functional and did not block or detract from the incredible views,” adds Lisa, who used multi-purpose, custom joinery as her secret weapon. “For example, we didn’t want the TV to spoil the living room or view, so we designed a beautiful buffet that conceals the TV – it comes up and down with a remote to disappear completely when not in use.”



ARTWORKS (BOTTOM LEFT) 'ATMOSPHERIC NO.17' BY ANNA CURNUCK, KERRIE-ANN JONES (OPPOSITE) 'ATMOSPHERIC 22' BY ANNA CURNUCK, KERRIE-ANN JONES

**Entry** "Top of the brief was to create a luxury penthouse with a stunning entrance - we wanted a sense of what's to come," says Lisa, who clad the entry (top left) in Verde Alpi marble. **Walk-in robe** Floor-to-ceiling joinery maximises storage in Dianne's robe (top right), while bevel-edge mirrors visually enlarge the space. **Laundry** Lisa utilised leftover Carrara marble wall tiles to add texture in the laundry (bottom left & right) and tone with Talostone benchtops in Carrara Classic. Gold accents gleam in the slim yet smartly designed space, with Passio handles in Gold, a Wilson & Bradley hanging rail in Brushed Brass and an ABI Interiors 'Elysian' tap in Brushed Brass. **Main bedroom** Dianne's bedroom (opposite) is dressed with a Zuster 'Cloud' bedhead, a Rachel Donath lamp and In The Sac bedlinen. >

## SOURCE BOOK

*Interior design* Santamaria Design, [santamariadesign.com.au](http://santamariadesign.com.au). *Joinery* Livin Joinery, [livinjoinery.com.au](http://livinjoinery.com.au).  
*Landscaping* Adam Robinson Design, [adamrobinsondesign.com](http://adamrobinsondesign.com).

*Alfresco* Lisa arranged the balcony as she would an interior living space, furnishing it with Tribù pieces from Cosh Living, including 'Branch' nesting tables, 'Nodi' chairs, a 'Natal Alu' outdoor sofa and a 'Loft' alfresco rug. Clusters of potted plants punctuate the tranquil setting with pops of greenery. "Getting the olive tree in the lift was interesting!" recalls Lisa of the mature specimen. In time, it will fill out and introduce height to Dianne's modern, low-maintenance balcony garden.

## INSIDE OUT

"There is so much I enjoy about my apartment - the open outside space, which flows so easily from the inside, the colours that work so beautifully, and all the bespoke cabinetry with its fluted edges," says Dianne. Designed as a second living area, the space is truly fit for purpose. "The balcony is highly used for entertaining, especially on New Year's Eve for front-row tickets to the fireworks!" shares Lisa. **HB**

