

JANUARY 2021 HELLO 2021. WE'RE GLAD YOU'RE HERE

AUSTRALIAN

FASHIONISTA: At home with editor Eugenie Kelly

HOUSE & GARDEN

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THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

A new perspective on apartments led a pair of Brisbane empty-nesters to realise that when it comes to downsizing, the only way is up.

STORY *Chris Pearson* | PHOTOGRAPHY *Andy MacPherson*

KITCHEN Even Urbino joinery, Evener, Vixen tap from Dorf, HydroTap from Zip, Arabescato marble splashback and island, CDK Stone, Corian Sparkling White island benchtop, Julius tub chair, Becker Minty, Rakumba 'Highline' suspension light, Design Nation.



“THIS APARTMENT IS UNIQUE IN THAT IT HAS MORE THAN 200 SQUARE METRES OF OUTDOOR SPACE.”

Alison Ross, owner

LIVING/DINING Moroso 'Redondo' sofa, Hub Furniture. Ligne Roset 'Clyde' low table, Domo. Moooi 'Container' dining table and Mado chandelier, both Space. Aver S dining chairs from Casa Mia with Brugge Old Gold upholstery. Artwork by Terri Brooks. Pietra Grigio marble (on nib wall), CDK Stone. Rug by D'Cruz from Designer Rugs. Custom door with Big Moo door pull from In-Teria. Horse sculpture by Jane Dawson. Manly Rustic Herringbone oak flooring, Havwoods (throughout).



Back in 2017, empty-nesters Alison and Keith Ross wanted to downsize. But having lived in family homes for so many years, they were wary of the space limitations of apartment living. Any doubts, however, have since evaporated with this sanctuary in the sky, an airy hideaway that embraces views on three sides – and that’s just one of its seemingly limitless attractions.

“This apartment was unique in that it had more than 200 square metres of terrace, with a canopy of beautiful old fig trees on one side and unobstructed views up the Brisbane River on the other,” says Alison. “It felt very private and peaceful.” Those expansive outdoor spaces, even larger than the open-plan living area, would make indoor-outdoor living and entertaining a breeze.

The interior of their seventh-floor apartment was far from heavenly, however. Part of a development completed in the early Noughties, it sported oyster lights, low ceilings, ho-hum white walls and tired, office-like beige carpets. Awkward bulkheads and nib walls compromised the prized views too. Meanwhile, a plain-Jane kitchen, tucked into a corner, lacked gravitas. “Although it’s not particularly old, the apartment already felt dated and lacked the grandeur of a luxury penthouse,” says interior designer ▶

“THE BRIEF WAS FOR A RICHLY LAYERED, TEXTURED AND DETAILED DESIGN BEFITTING THE APARTMENT’S TOP-FLOOR STATUS.” *Andrea D’Cruz, interior designer*

Andrea D’Cruz, who, together with architect Anna Gowen of Tonic Architecture+Design, began transforming it in 2018.

Andrea had worked with Alison and Keith on their two previous homes in Sydney, so they knew just who to call for this project. The brief? “A richly layered, textured and detailed design that epitomises luxury living, and a sense of formality befitting its top-floor status,” says Andrea. “Thanks to its outlook, the apartment already felt calm and peaceful. We wanted that to be reflected in the interior,” adds Alison. “Keith and I had a detailed wish list: an open kitchen with easy access to outdoor entertaining, the option to close off the family room from the open-plan living area if needed, a fireplace and large bathrooms. I was also a little obsessed with black-framed glass doors and wanted to use them throughout.” The couple wanted an element of surprise too. “The lift directly opens directly into the apartment so we wanted to visitors to be curious about what would unfold as they moved through the home,” says Andrea.

While the layout of the two-bedroom penthouse is largely unchanged, Andrea and Anna removed fussy bulkheads and some “superfluous nib walls” to smooth the flow of the floor plan. “The challenge was the low ceilings, which we couldn’t change,” says Andrea. “The solution was to open up the apartment horizontally, creating sightlines from one end to the other.” Also on the menu were an open kitchen, a walk-in wardrobe for the main bedroom and a facelift for the bathrooms. Sliding steel-framed glass doors close the family room off from the rest of the space when a bit of separation is required.

The repetition of tones and materials fosters a seamless transition from room to room. Andrea and Alison worked collaboratively on the colour scheme. “The public zones of the apartment - the living and dining areas, kitchen, family and powder room - feel very rich thanks to the contrast between colours and textures,” says Andrea. This palette, together with marble ▶

FAMILY ROOM *This page top and opposite* Alison and Keith’s old sofa was reupholstered in velvet from Zepel Fabrics. Kelly Wearstler ‘Cleo’ floor lamp, Becker Minty. Custom ottomans made by Comax Australia. Custom rug from Designer Rugs. Charles Wilson ‘Seymour’ armchair, King. Pedestal side table, West Elm. Custom fireplace in Pietra Grigio marble, constructed by Chapman Joiners. Maharam Mention jute wallpaper, Kvadrat Maharam. Surface Sconce lamp (on mantel), Studio Henry Wilson. Artwork by Todd Whisson. **FOYER** *Left* Halo cabinet, Zuster. Atollo lamp, Euroluce. Alison and Keith have owned the print for years. Edo wall lights, ISM Objects. The walls feature custom metallic panelling (left) and Kvadrat Tek-Wall.

THE PALETTE

Dulux
Natural White
(main walls)

Dulux
Glacier Blue
(main bedroom
armoire)

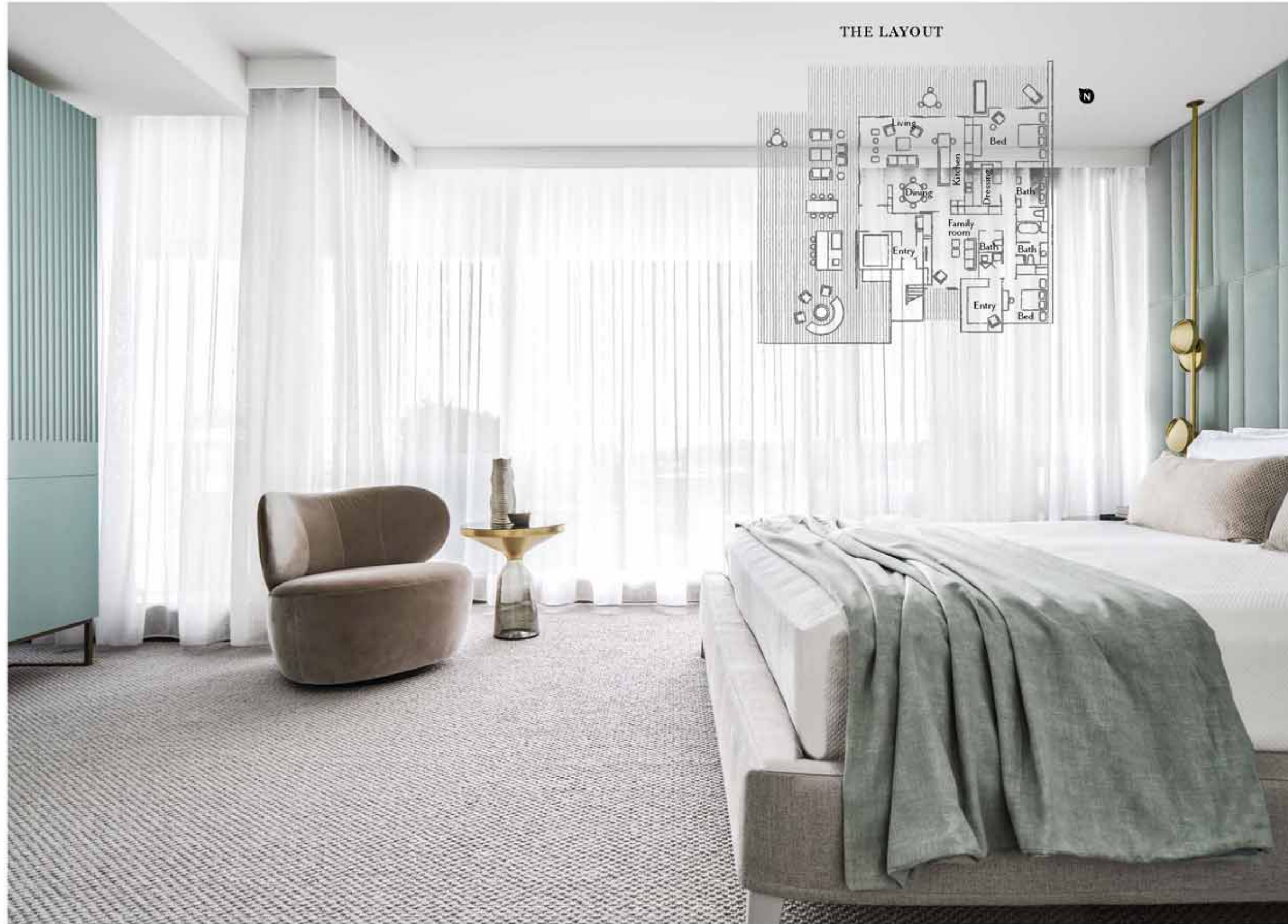
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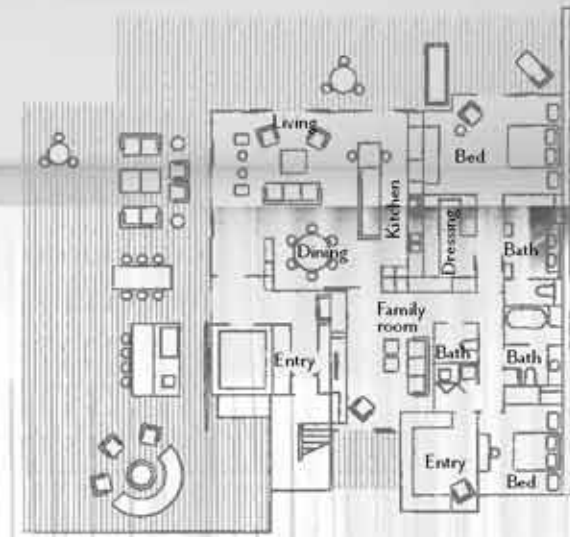


"THE PALETTE DIVIDES AND CONTRASTS THE ENERGY LEVELS OF THE TWO ZONES OF THE HOME." *Andrea D'Cruz*

MAIN BEDROOM *This page and opposite top* Elysée bed, Fanuli. Walter Knoll 'Bao' chair, Living Edge. Classicon 'Bell' side table, Anibou. Salisbury carpet in Ancient, Feltex Carpets. Armoire by D'Cruz made by Chapman Joiners. Rakumba 'Typography Cilon Disc' suspension light, Design Nation. Bedside table by D'Cruz and upholstered wall panels made by Comax Australia. **MAIN ENSUITE** Stone Arc Bianco Gioia wall tiles, Skheme. Corian basin. Vanity and mirrors designed by D'Cruz and made by Chapman Joiners. City Stik taps and towel rail, all Brodware. ▶



THE LAYOUT





*“OPENING THE APARTMENT
HORIZONTALLY CREATED
SIGHTLINES FROM ONE END
TO THE OTHER.”* *Andrea D’Cruz*

and herringbone timber flooring, lends sophistication and glamour to the spaces. The restrained palette is offset by squishy quilted armchairs and a cossetting sofa in the living area. Splashes of indigo on cushions, rug and select furnishings are a fitting reference for the ‘home in the sky’. Chevron patterns in the flooring are echoed in cushions and accessories, while brass accents bring sophistication and warmth.

Meanwhile, the private zones, including the two bedroom suites, evoke calm and serenity through soft greys and eau-de-nil hues. “This palette was introduced to divide and contrast the energy levels of the two zones of the home,” says Andrea.

Alison and Keith have now embraced apartment living. So much so that Alison struggles to pinpoint a favourite feature. “There are so many,” she says. “The views of the city skyline of a night while you are having a glass of wine or barbecuing are very special. And I love the streamlined kitchen – it has such clean lines and it’s very user-friendly. Then there are the black-framed glass doors throughout – even the bedroom doors feature rippled glass, which ensures there is privacy but also allows light to filter through. The rounded edges and pale-grey palette give the ensuite a very luxurious feel...” The list goes on.

Perhaps the biggest test presented itself in the midst of the pandemic. “Alison and Keith returned from a trip overseas while Covid-19 quarantine measures were in place so had to spend two full weeks in their apartment,” says Andrea. “Afterwards, they told me that they could not have wished for a better place to spend their time in isolation.”

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GUESTROOM Bedside cabinet and upholstered headboard, both designed by D’Cruz and made by Comax Australia. I Do wall light, ISM Objects. Even Saltwood timber-veneer joinery, Eveneer. Salisbury carpet in Ancient, Fellex Carpets. **MAIN BATHROOM** Falper D5P basin, Rogerseller. City Stik tapware, Brodware. Stone Arc Bianco Gioia tiles, Skheme. Bianco Gioia stone (on vanity), CDK Stone. Corian Sparkling White benchtop. Mirror designed by D’Cruz. **TERRACE** Addis outdoor sofas, Aireys woven armchairs, and Tosca coffee tables, all from Cosh Living. Custom rug designed by D’Cruz, made by Designer Rugs. Existing paving. Planters, Graceville Imports. *For Where to Buy, see page 192.*



THIS IS THE LIFE

This penthouse apartment is a celebration of indoor-outdoor living. “Travel restrictions forced us to spend more time at home than we usually do – which hasn’t exactly been a chore!” says homeowner Alison Ross. “The pleasant Queensland climate means we are able to have all of the doors to the terrace open for most of the year. We are looking forward to entertaining friends and family again once life returns to normal.”