

This page Sunlight and shadows accentuate the exterior walls and recesses and purposely delineate the angular form of the K House. The home's low-maintenance garden includes gravel paths, and is planted with olive trees and hardy plants that can thrive in the face of strong coastal winds and salty air. Large picture windows and sliding doors create a sense of transparency as does the perforated-steel garage door. **Opposite page** A chiselled built-in daybed on the first-floor terrace of the two-storey house provides protection from the harsh climate conditions. 'Hee' wire lounge chair from Hay.



# SHELTER *from* the STORM



Perched on a cliff at Kiama, this new house by architect Renato D’Ettorre embraces the Pacific Ocean, framing spectacular views while creating sheltered nooks for inclement weather.



Like many in his repertoire, Renato D’Ettorre’s most recent project is both simple and yet complex – and highly orchestrated. Situated on a cliff face, it’s not the typical coastal offering of a large house with picture windows at every opportunity. “You could say that I’m not really into building a series of straight walls, working like a robot in a more mechanical way. I much prefer working with angles and chamfered walls that create a sense of lightness and the opportunity to play with light and shade,” says Renato, who liaised with senior interior designer Belinda Brown and the team from his practice.

While a sense of lightness was on Renato’s mind, he was conscious from the outset of also creating a robust house, in contrast to the previous timber cottage on the site built in the 60s, which shook at the foundations every time a storm set in – giving it the title of “the nervous house”. Renato designed the property for Marroun and her mother, Saada, who were previously living in an apartment in Sydney. Marroun says she wasn’t exactly sure which architect to employ or what she was hoping to achieve with the new build on the unusual triangular-shaped site which overlooks Kiama’s fabled Little Blowhole.

“Marroun was looking for a permanent house that was quite simple, fairly modest in detailing and one that captured her Mediterranean heritage,” says Renato, who wanted to include protected courtyards to allow for outdoor entertaining. Saada, who loves cooking, was also keen for the design to incorporate a kitchen garden. “Now, I have to force myself to leave the house. I certainly don’t feel as though I’m living in a traditional home,” says Marroun, who recalls the sold brick dwelling where she was raised. “That house was really designed for guests rather than for the family. There were certain rooms that were rarely used,” she adds. »

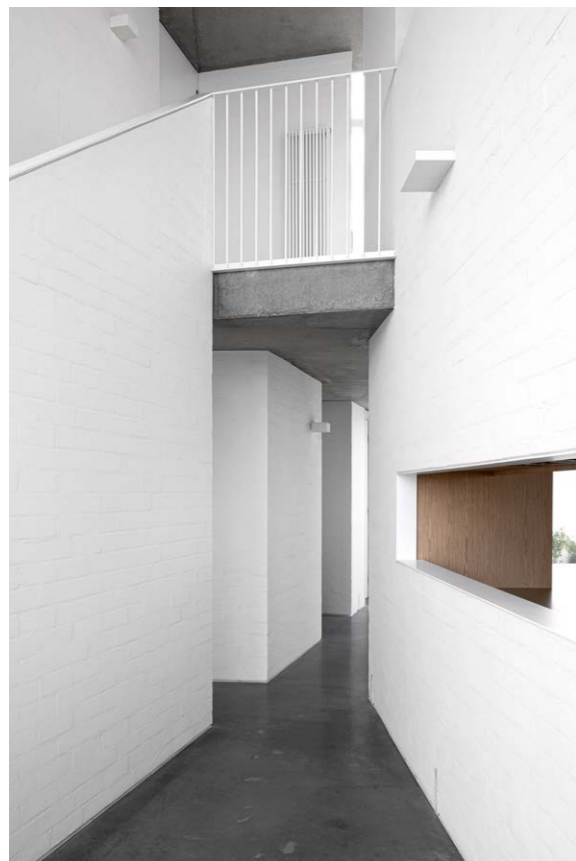


These pages Rerendered white, with a curated materiality of brick, concrete, stone and glass, there is clean form to the interior. Concrete balustrades on the first floor extend to form the ceiling in the living area. One of the best places to embrace the oceanic views from within is on the daybed in the living area which is nestled into the deep portal window. The ‘Spanish’ chair by Børge Mogensen from Great Dane faces off to a pair of Artek ‘402’ armchairs with a ‘60’ three-legged stool by Aino and Alvar Aalto, all purchased at auction. ‘Cleveland’ coffee table from Project 82. TWO02 ceiling fan from Living Edge. ‘Akari’ table lamp from Living Edge. Sisal rug in Tiger Grey from the Natural Floorcovering Centres.



As there's a 10-metre slope from the street, the two-storey house presents as single storey in the streetscape within its cul-de-sac. So, it's not until you pass the expanded mesh-fronted garage and enter the property that this magical site, as well as the house, unfolds. The top level (or at grade level to the street) is predominantly used by Marroun, and is complete with a generous-sized bedroom and ensuite, a home office that leads to a terrace with ocean views, and a small snug for watching television. On the level below are the kitchen, dining and living areas, with a sunken lounge that loosely delineates the living space but also responds to the terrain. The lower level also comprises Saada's bedroom and ensuite together with a guest bedroom suite. Pivotal to the design is the double-height volume in the dining area that leads to a protected north-facing courtyard garden. "One of the challenges was getting northern light into these living areas, particularly as the views to the ocean are to the south," says Renato.

Given the brief was for simplicity with nothing that was overly fussy, the materials are appropriate – bagged brick walls painted white and burnished concrete floors. European oak joinery complements this restrained palette. "We wanted the spaces to be the heroes in this composition, not superfluous details that don't really add to the pleasures of living here," >



**This page** From the passage looking through to the kitchen and breakfast bar where the change in level from the living area loosely delineates the open-plan arrangement. The concrete ceiling in the kitchen and living area is also expressed in one of the walls in the main passage. The limestone sculpture on the plinth is by Renato D'Ettore. At left, hangs a large framed photograph by Ellen Dahl while behind is a print by Amy Nuggett. Behind, in the living room, is a work by Herman Pikel. At the breakfast bar, Artek bar stools by Aino and Alvar Aalto from Anibou. **Opposite page** The 'Spanish' chair by Børge Mogensen from Great Dane offers the perfect fireside perch. Artek three-legged stool by Aino and Alvar Aalto sourced at auction. The double-height space above the dining area adds a sense of drama in the home. 'Johansen' dining table and 'DC09' chairs from Great Dane. Louis Poulsen 'PH5' pendant light by Poul Henningsen from Cult. The corridor acts as the spine of the house and fans out to take advantage of the panoramic views.





This page, clockwise from top left The home's rear elevation features a glass curtain wall of fixed glass windows and large sliding doors which lead out to the upstairs terrace. The home office on the first floor features a built-in desk attended by a Thonet 'Le Corbusier' armchair. The house's various angles capture spectacular views from nearly every room. "I'm not really into building a series of straight walls working like a robot," says Renato, who says he likes to work with angles and chamfered walls that create a sense of lightness and play with light and shade. **Opposite page** Looking from the stairwell towards the ocean. The simple materials palette includes the expressed concrete ceiling and floors, and rendered white walls.



« says Belinda, who was drawn to using a number of Scandinavian designers from the post-war period, including furniture designed by Aino and Alvar Aalto. Other items, such as Poul Henningsen's 'PH5' pendant light over the dining table, add to the lightness of the interior.

While simplicity was in the mind of the architect and his client, any scheme delivered by this award-winning practice needs to be exceptional. So, even simple gestures are brilliantly executed, such as the in-situ concrete balustrades on the top level that extend to form the exposed concrete ceiling above the sunken living room below or expressed concrete lintels in the bagged brick walls. Walls are tapered and often curved to carefully articulate spaces, such as the ensuite off Marroun's bedroom. Spaces are conceived with great finesse – such as the informal breakfast bar perched above the living area that allows for breakfast to be taken while enjoying the breathtaking views.

"The design was obviously driven by the site, both its shape and its slope. But the house had to respond to the way Marroun and Saada want to live," says Renato, who extended some of the external walls with daybeds framed by large bay windows (over one metre in depth) that offered a strong connection to place and the outdoors, while still providing intimate nooks to enjoy and inhabit. Other areas, such as an angled nook on the first-floor terrace, with its masonry walls and concrete eave, offers a similar level of protection, whether retreating from the heat of the sun or the strong coastal winds endemic to the area. "The house is full of light and there's an immediacy to the outdoors," says Marroun.

In other hands the K house, as Renato and his team call it, could have simply been brick walls dotted with large picture windows straining to gain every part of the Kiama coastline. "The site, as well as our clients, had higher expectations from the outset – and so did we," adds Renato. ■

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**SPEED READ**

» A newly built house perched on a cliff has been masterfully conceived by award-winning architect Renato D’Ettorre. » Given its stunning location perched on a cliff, it features deep reveals for the first-floor terrace and the living area below. » Designed for a mother and her adult daughter, this sculptural house has been thoughtfully designed to offer surprises at every turn as much as capturing the heroic presence of the Pacific Ocean. » A protected terrace off the first floor ensures the outdoors can still be enjoyed when the weather gets rough. » A simple palette of materials such as the expressed concrete ceiling and floors and rendered white walls are seen throughout. » The low-maintenance garden includes hardy coastal plants, olive trees and gravel paths.



**This page** A pebble-tiled floor in the bathroom adds to the coastal experience. Blanco Cararra marble penny-round floor tiles from Earp Bros and Inax wall tiles from Artedomus. In the bedroom, Artek three-legged stool by Aino and Alvar Aalto sourced at auction. Large portal-framed windows double as window seats as well as framing views of the Pacific Ocean.