

This handsome home in the NSW Southern Highlands

OPEN INVITE

views and a steady flow of guests.

These pages The barn-like upper storey of the building, with walls of glass and Colorbond standing-seam cladding in Dulux 'Monument', recedes into the landscape, while the lower storey is like a bunker excavated into the hillside.

welcomes within its walls both generous rural

Words **CHRIS PEARSON** Photography **TOM FERGUSON**



These pages A 'Bohemia' Afghan rug from Cadrys on polished concrete flooring defines the dining area with 'Davos' table and 'Jakob' leather chairs in Dark Oak from Restoration Hardware. Rina Menardi 'Lagoon' platter in Linen from Ondene. Parachilna 'Bai' chandeliers II and III in Bronze from Ke-Zu. Escea DS1400 frameless gas fireplace from Abbey Fireplaces with custom travertine and concrete surround. Over the kitchen island in Forest Brown brushed marble from Signorino and Dulux 'Terracotta', '1950s Paris' street lamp pendant lights in Bronze and Polished Brass from Restoration Hardware. Rear benchtop in honed Rhyolite Atlantic stone from SNB Stone and splashback in brass from Rimex Metals. 'Novi' fine fireclay ribbed butler's sink in Matte Black from Turner Hastings. 'Icon' hob set with swivel spout in Eco Brass from Astra Walker. Joinery in solid spotted gum and 'Spotted Gum' veneer from Briggs Veneers by TTK Kitchens + Joinery. Walls and ceiling in Dulux 'Lexicon'. Terracotta tiles in breezeway imported from Tuscany.



The owner and the designers of this home in the NSW Southern Highlands share a background in hospitality. It certainly shows in these warm and welcoming hotel-inspired spaces, which deftly mix the communal and the private, the grand and the intimate, the chic and the earthy, all fully savoured in a fine cocktail.

Having bought this prime piece of land in 2019, the owner asked architect Phillip Rossington of BVN and interior designer Rachel Luchetti of Luchetti Krelle for a handsome homestead overlooking a valley and a planned olive orchard – now 42 plants at last count. “On the crest of a hill, its main attraction was the views right out to Mt Gibraltar,” says the owner.

All three had worked together previously on commercial projects, including hotels. But, this time, the client wanted something closer to home, a sprawling weekender, not just for him, his wife and their two teenagers, but also primed for entertaining – and on a generous scale, often with more than 30 guests. And, after those guests had gone, it also had to bunker down as a rural retreat, geared to the entire family, but also where the owner can indulge his epicurean passions (a salami-drying room was a must) and accommodate his vintage car collection. “He wanted a rural boutique hotel-like ambience within a structure that could cosily accommodate immediate family or expand to facilitate larger gatherings,” says Rachel, who worked closely with Phillip to determine the overall look.

The dramatic site heavily dictated the design. Located just below the ridge line, the main building consists of three pavilions, separated by two glassed-in breezeways offering expansive northern rural views while also being sheltered from some searing winds. While the upper storey with a pitched roof and generous glazing resembles a barn, the bottom level burrows into the hillside. “It’s a concrete bunker with a lightweight barn on top, sliced in two places,” says Rachel. “The simple extruded form reflects the rural setting,” adds Phillip. “The elongated structure ensures everyone gets a view to the north and, because of its dark standing-seam metal cladding, borrowing from the rural vernacular, it recedes into the landscape.”

One pavilion houses the family’s sleeping quarters with three bedrooms. In the central pavilion sit communal open-plan living spaces with pitched cathedral ceilings, a humungous seven-metre island and a 2.5-metre-long island with bar ready for entertaining large numbers. A guest wing occupies the far end, with two bedrooms and a sitting room. All these rooms are blessed with pastoral views via floor-to-ceiling glazing and soak the rooms in natural light. “The windows are picture frames,” says Phillip. Giving them further hotel-style cred, all five bedrooms boast an ensuite.

On the lower ground level sits another entertaining area, complete with wine bar, sunken lounge, study and cinema. Behind the three pavilions is a separate building burrowed into the hillside, disguised by a green roof, with skylights the only clue to what lies below. It consists of a pool, steam room, gymnasium and an eight-car garage for the owners’ treasured vintage car collection.

For the interiors, under pitched ceilings directing the eye to the vistas beyond, Rachel has kept a simple palette of concrete, timber and assorted stones that play up to the scale of the spaces yet are grounding at the same time. “Crisp white and Perlite concrete walls contrast with sandstone slab floors, in large formats so they look seamless,” she says. “There’s a robust hardiness, warmth and honesty in the materiality.” Meanwhile, the hue of the terracotta tiles in a breezeway >



« is echoed on the kitchen island, while V-groove, another rustic touch, graces the butler's pantry.

A sandstone fireplace not only heats up the vast open plan, but it also visually warms up the lofty space by dividing it into more intimate areas. Other sitting areas in the guest wing and beside a breezeway – the latter complete with a hanging fireplace – serve a similar purpose.

Perhaps the most striking piece of 'furniture' is the sunken three-sided conversation pit in the downstairs entertainment zone which, with its mid-century undertones, is sure to be its own conversation starter. A massive wall of joinery – with a large integrated wine rack – runs along one wall of the same space. Loose furniture is simple and unpretentious, in keeping with the rural setting, including chunky chairs and sofas, and a huge trestle-style dining table in the upstairs open plan. "We chose the trestle look to fit in with the barn aesthetic," says Rachel. BassamFellows 'Tractor' stools more literally express the rural theme.

Lighting has a brilliant role to play – pendant lights and sconces on a grand scale befit these spaces. The kitchen has an amazing five industrial-style pendants poised over the main island. "I used over-scaled light fittings to create intimacy and offset the volume of the pitched roof," says Rachel.

Her favourite features? "I love the kitchen with its bar and the island counter which sits so many you don't need to use the dining table. And the steam room, with mosaics on every surface, is like a hammam. Not to mention the indoor pool, which can be opened up to let in the sun..."

The owner enthuses over the result. "There's so much light and sheer volume," he says. "We live in the inner city, so this is a calm and peaceful reset for us." An unforeseen benefit? "Although the trees are still young, I have already pickled six jars of olives, which I have shared with family and friends." Rather like the house itself. Or perhaps they could be served with a martini, with views included? ■

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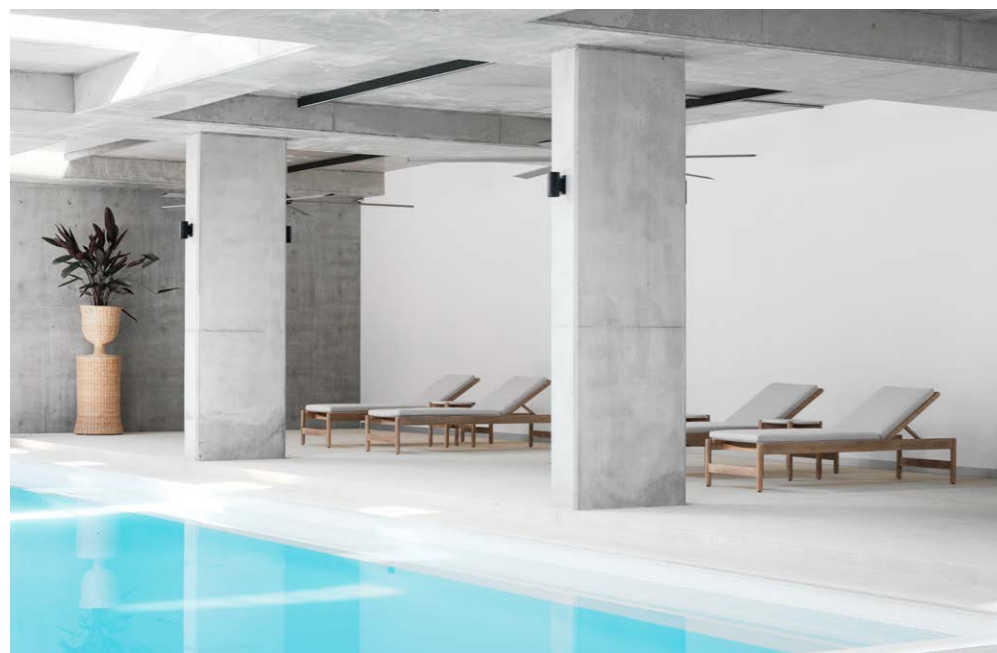


These pages, clockwise from left In the living room by the breezeway, Afghan 'Amara' rug from Cadrys. Flos 'Superloon' floor lamp and Design Within Reach 'Hew B' and 'D' side tables from Living Edge. 'Togetherness' sculpture and Ethiopian tray table from Orient House. 'Huxley' modular sofa in Indigo inen from Coco Republic. 'Sphere' round coffee table from Restoration Hardware. In the powder room, FMG 'Walk On' wall tiles from Bettertiles. 'Tropez' freestanding concrete basin in Red Iron from Nood. 'Icon' tapware in Eco Brass from Astra Walker. Christopher Boots 'Petra' sconces from Est Lighting. Vase by Stephanie Phillips. In the cellar bar, island bar top in honed Viola marble from Worldstone. Back bar top in Jacaranda Red granite from Euro Marble. Joinery fronts in Dulux 'Sultry Spell'. Humble Matter 'Simple Geometry' chalice from Curatorial+Co. In the basement living area, sunken lounge in 'Ascona' leather in Tobacco from Pelle Leathers. Cushions from Tigger Hall Design. Sandstone slabs on fireplace wall imported from Spain. Artwork on shelf by Jasper Knight. Timber ledge in blackbutt. Green vase on credenza and vases on shelf all by Stephanie Phillips. Painting by Oliver Watts. *Biograph* sculpture, dough bowl, terracotta urns and brass pot on shelf from Orient House.



SPEED READ

» In 2019, the owner of this piece of land in the NSW Southern Highlands asked interior designer Rachel Luchetti of Luchetti Krelle and architect Phillip Rossington of BVN to design a getaway for a green-fields site with sweeping views for himself and his family. » As the owner, architect and designer all have a background in hospitality, the property had to make grand gestures while also being warm and welcoming. And each of the five bedrooms had to have its own ensuite. » Phillip's design features a two-level elongated barn-like structure over a concrete bunker. The top level comprises three pavilions, a family wing, an entertaining space in the central space, with lofty, cathedral-like ceilings, and a guest wing. » A separate underground bunker at the rear houses an eight-car garage and swimming pool. » Drawing from the rural vernacular, the exterior is clad in standing-seam metal. Inside, Rachel has specified earthy materials including concrete, timber and various stone surfaces. » Furniture, too, borrows from the rural setting, with a trestle-like dining table and 'Tractor' stools.



This page, from top In the main bedroom, Afghan 'Nomadic Terrazzo' rug from Cadrys. Herman Miller 'Crosshatch' chair in Walnut from Living Edge. Chinese screen and vintage pot from Orient House. 'Nite' quilt in Iceberg and 'Nid' blanket in Pacifico from Society Limonta. Coat rack from Coco Republic. 'Coast' semi-transparent glass mosaic pool tiles from Bettertiles. 'Palais Urn Grande' pedestal urn from Alba Atelier. 'Essence' ceiling fan from Big Ass Fans. 'Talara' sunloungers from Domayne. Sandstone slabs imported from Spain. **Opposite page** In the main ensuite, FMG 'Walk On' wall tiles from Bettertiles. The polished slab serves as flooring. 'Evolve' bath from Rogerseller. 'Icon' tapware set in Eco Brass from Astra Walker. Vanity in honed Belvedere marble from Worldstone. 'Onishi' vase by Kerry Levy from Curatorial+Co. German vintage vase from Rudi Rocket. Vintage pot from Orient House.



**SIGNATURE STYLE
KEY PIECES**

1 Tall three-handled glazed Chinese pot, \$700, from Watertiger. 2 'Circles' carved soapstone sculpture from Zimbabwe, \$595, from Orient House. 3 'Shell Bowl Predetermined' white stoneware clay platter by Kristiina Engelin, \$800, from Curatorial+Co. 4 'Petra I' rose quartz 'Triple' scone, POA, from Christopher Boots. 5 Flexform 'Atlante' daybed by Antonio Citterio, from \$15,250, from Fanuli.