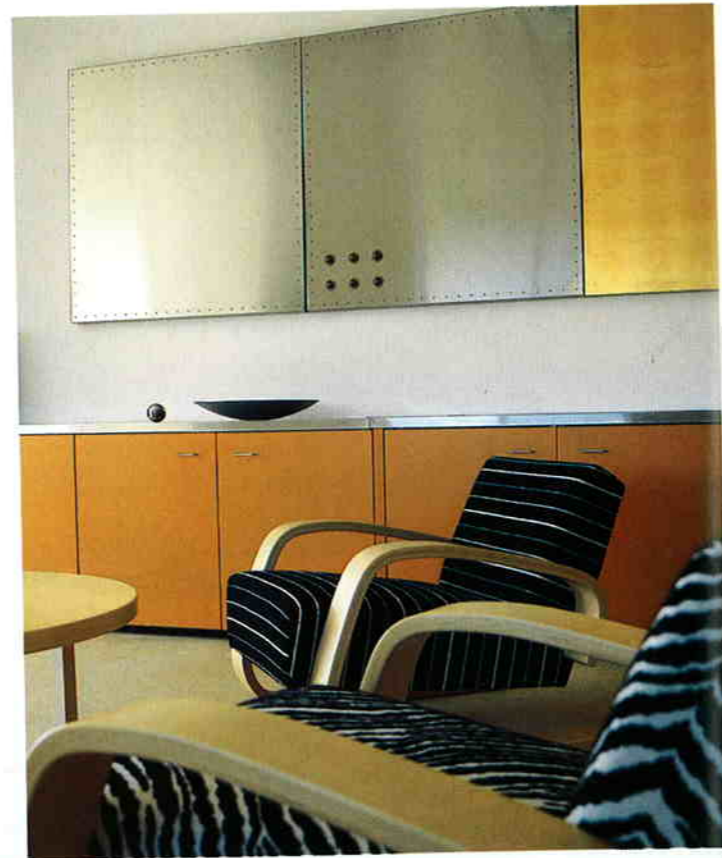


Flowers by Sarah Renshaw Designs, below, in a stainless steel vase by Misho Vasiljevich. Right and opposite: interior colours were kept to a simple palette so as not to compete with the drama of the view. The chairs and table are from Artek 400, and above the cupboards is part of Vasiljevich's stainless steel and gold leaf panel design, representing the first 24 years of his life.



Architect and interior designer Misho Vasiljevich, above. Right: the balcony offers uninterrupted views of the ocean. The slatted seat is by James Bradley and the folding teak chair is from Country Form.

A Bondi Cliff-hanger

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SIMON KENNY



The drama of a clifftop location with expansive ocean views and shifting colours finds a perfect counterpoint in an interior of simple tones and streamlined styling.



It was the wording of the newspaper advertisement that intrigued Misho Vasiljevich and convinced him to take a look at this North Bondi flat. He and his partner Linda van Niekerk had set their sights on buying into the coastal suburbs of Sydney but had discounted North Bondi as a location because most of the apartments boasting water views were orientated to the south-east. After many weeks of careful investigation, they had decided that the coastlines south of Bondi would afford better protection from the damaging southerly winds, while allowing views out to sea and catching the cooling benefit of summer nor-easterlies. So how could this apartment face north-east with water views, as well as claim to overlook the golf course and also offer some views back towards Bondi Beach? It seemed like a geographical impossibility. "It just didn't make sense," says architect and interior designer Vasiljevich, "so I was curious to see it just out of interest."

They arranged to view it one evening and were pleased to find that the exterior of the early 1900s block had recently been refurbished to counteract the effects of salt and wind. But when they entered the two-bedroom flat, they were immediately disappointed: there was no hint of the view outside. Instead they faced a warren of small rooms, with a kitchen so tiny that if you needed to open a cupboard door you almost had to do it standing outside in the hallway.

The living room was isolated in the middle of the flat, with only one window facing north-west over rooftops of neighbouring houses.



A panelled door of oxidised dutch metal, **top**, by IDC, is designed to swing back to create a "guest room".

Above: a wooden Thonet stool from Anibou beside the white marble-topped kitchen bench. **Right:** an Italian 'Alto' light from Anibou illuminates a corner of the living room beside a canvas-covered sofa, also from Anibou. The wall mask is from Papua New Guinea and the carved wooden rhinoceros is South African.



And, at the rear of the flat, the second bedroom was a cramped affair with only two apertures onto the world outside: a window that also faced north-west (towards the golf course, which is actually hidden over the top of a hill), and a solid wooden door on the north-eastern wall. There was still no view of water, but the sound of waves crashing onto the rocks below was growing louder. On opening the door the view was suddenly exposed – a rise of rocky ground covered in succulents, a dramatic and craggy cliff face, and then the rolling, shifting sea which stretched to meet a distant horizon. "It was just like 'Wow!'," says Vasiljevich, unusually lost for words.

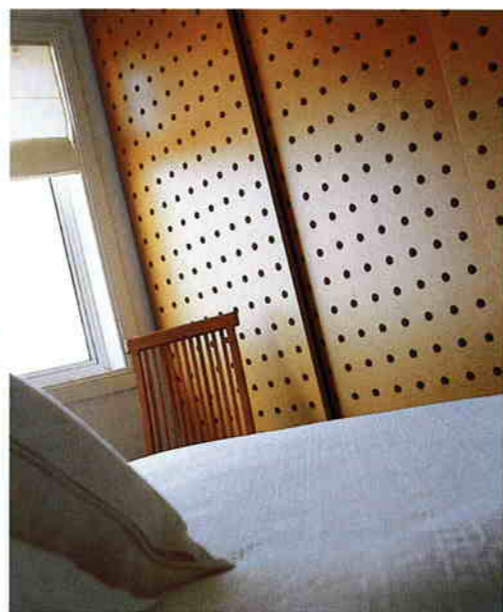
"We went to a nearby restaurant and sat there, having dinner, while I drew all over the tablecloth," he says. Seeing my raised eyebrows, he laughs. "It was paper," he assures me. "I started drawing plans and working out figures of what it would cost. I set a budget there and then, working on a five-year plan. We calculated the amount of



A freestanding joinery "wall", **above**, made by The Designing Pair, provides storage space for both the kitchen and the bathroom behind. **Left:** a wooden sculpture from Papua New Guinea. "The diversity and rudimentary nature of this art appeals to me," says Vasiljevich.



The ceiling-high drawers on either side of the bed, **left**, are a partial visual trick: the top four drawers are false fronts to a cupboard. More storage space is provided behind the bedhead. The bedspread is from Country Road and the lamps are by Lamperti. **Below:** perforated doors allow air to circulate inside the wardrobe.



The rear of the kitchen cabinetry, **above**, provides storage space for the bathroom. **Opposite, top:** the "guest room" with its fold-down bed by Interfar Furniture. **Opposite, bottom:** the terrazzo floor, stainless steel benchtops from Metafab and customwood cupboards facilitate cleaning and the sweeping of airborne sand.

rent we'd pay to live in a place like this for five years and that was the total figure we'd spend on renovations, so we wouldn't overcapitalise."

Because the building already existed, Vasiljevich, the first student to graduate with both interior design and architecture degrees from the University of Technology in Sydney, used his interior design skills rather than his architectural background to design the apartment. The major consideration, of course, was to open the space to the view, which required demolishing most of the internal walls.

To maximise storage space, Vasiljevich designed the partition between the kitchen and bathroom as a freestanding piece of cabinetry. In keeping with his philosophy that everything should have a multitude of uses, the cabinetry, made from versatile customwood, provides storage space for both the kitchen on one side and the bathroom on the other, hides the compact laundry and conceals lighting which runs along the top of the entire unit. It is the pivotal piece of the whole apartment.

Colours throughout are generally restricted to a simple scheme of three: white walls and floor, the shiny silver of stainless steel which is used on all the benches (picked up in the terrazzo floor by flecks of pale grey), and the warm caramel colour of the customwood. "With a view that's as dominant as this one, you've got to keep to a simple palette," says Vasiljevich. "The mood and the colours of the ocean are always changing." Van Niekerk also points out the chameleon nature of the cliff face, which can change colour dramatically according to the weather and the time of day.

It was the cliff face which provided Vasiljevich with the inspiration for the panelled door of oxidised dutch metal which swings around to create a "guest room". Pushed back, it hides the cabinetry that conceals a fold-down bed. This design was prompted not only by lack of



space but by Vasiljevich's disdain for separate rooms that serve only one purpose and are used rarely.

Having dual degrees that complement each other, Vasiljevich has filled the apartment with clever ideas and creative touches. Roll-out shelves holding computer equipment are hidden in the bench-height cupboards which line one wall and double as servery space when the couple entertain. Higher than usual kitchen and bathroom benches are designed to prevent back strain caused by bending.

But clever ideas aside, it is the space and its location that are the apartment's salient features. "What we wanted was a quality of living space that would give us a great lifestyle without having to live right in the city," says Vasiljevich. With a panorama such as this just beyond the edge of the balcony, five years may be all too short a time.

JENNIFER BURNS

