



PROJECT

— S Y D N E Y —

male order

IN THIS MODERN ELIZABETH
BAY APARTMENT GREG NATALE
HAS CONJURED THE DREAM
BACHELOR PAD – A TIGHTLY
RESOLVED STUDY IN BROODING
MASCULINE DESIGN.

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GREG Natale is firmly merging his dual abilities in architecture and interior design with an all-in approach to exacting the largest possible space from any configuration. This is not to say he favours the open plan aesthetic, which has dominated apartment living for some time; rather, his method is to strip a space of encumbrances then work with the bones from scratch.

The existing 1970s architecture of the Elizabeth Bay Apartment was diminished spatially by a series of pillars and beams that truncated ceiling height and restricted flow. Natale's solution was to gain height by recessing round cut-outs as a ceiling feature between the beams while concealing the rest. The recesses are lent dynamism and vertical thrust via lighting comprised of a series of rectangular tubes of smoke grey glass from Mondo Luce, in a style reminiscent of the era of the building.

The lightness of the white ceiling and soft shade of the lights also work to expand the whole visually, particularly in contrast with the predominance of black and charcoal used elsewhere. Further expanding the visual line are floor-to-ceiling doors that, when open, allow the eye to travel from one room to the other without interruption.

Crossing from one side of the building to the other, the apartment's bright blue view of the harbour and abundant light could have been overwhelming. Natale has skirted this by placing black plantation shutters on the side from which the apartment is entered. In effect, this allows light to be limited to the side with the main view, which is veiled with diaphanous black linen drapes. The shutters also introduce the black of the apartment through white-framed windows as the visitor approaches. This is nicely done, as the black of the interior is unrelenting, from walls to cabinetry and furnishings. That said it is a wholly

[01] The cabinetry separating kitchen from dining area provides plentiful storage and display space.



[02] The dining room's generous windows let in an abundance of light, not to mention the priceless harbour view.

[03] Harbour views from the bedroom make for a visual lightness in an otherwise dark interior.





[04]



[05]

[04] The bathroom's precise black cabinetry complements the large grey tiles.

dynamic interior, with the signature Natale flair for texture and geometrics imprinted throughout.

Quite deliberately, Natale has created a narrow entranceway that briefly envelops and intrigues with a series of recesses – one housing the sculptural work of Dan Murphy – before opening to the main room and view. Walls of waxed and polished grey stucco reveal textural variation and shift from grey to black depending on light. Cabinetry in crown cut oak stained deep black comprises much of the walls, with recessed alcoves placed at various points. The cabinetry provides the apartment an abundance of storage and conceals quite large walk-in cupboards, as well as the pillars, which were centrally located. It also functions to break the line with touches of colour and the introduction of sculptural forms via an assortment of objects including Bitossi ceramics by Ginevra Bocini and Ettore Sottsass bowls.

The cabinetry forms a continuum to include the kitchen, which is excessively masculine in its execution, but absolutely appropriate to the owner. 'The client wanted a very specific look and feel. He had seen a black interior I had done previously and wanted something similar but even more masculine,' says Natale. Furthermore, by taking a pared-back and minimal approach to the kitchen design, Natale has negated the compression of black rather nicely and delivered a slick functional space that works.

The shutters are, again, a good solution, as light can be adjusted according to need. When fully closed the kitchen is all but invisible from the main room but, while open, the light penetration is absolute. The bathroom continues the very masculine tones in large grey tiles and minimal lines of glass. While austere, it is also elegant and beautifully finished with high levels of attention paid to detail and precise joinery. The black cabinetry continues through the walk-in dressing room and study. For this area, Natale has broken the space with a geometric carpet of black and white that is sumptuously thick and well appointed as a luxurious touch for appreciative winter toes.

Carpet of a similar geometric design has also been used in the bedroom, executed in black-on-black with textural variance. Linens in white, a teal arm chair and a vibrant painting by Scott Petrie break the black, but so too does texture in the form of a woven leather bedhead, the carpet, a Paradox mirror by Glas Italia of geometric stripes and a black-on-black acrylic artwork, *Lightspeed 12* by Dion Horstmans. The fine black linen drapes of the primary room are continued, opening onto a private balcony of deep grey slate.

The black-on-black textural theme is perhaps at its most extreme in the living room, where an all-black custom made Canadian fur rug presides below a 1970s Italian table of twinned rounds in polished black and chrome. Vintage furnishings



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THIS APARTMENT IS ENTIRELY SUITED TO ITS OWNER. IT IS SLEEK, WHOLEHEARTEDLY MASCULINE AND GORGEOUSLY REMINISCENT OF THE DREAM BACHELOR PAD.

have long been a Natale marker and his eye for a fabulous piece is undeniable, with this table looking just about perfect alongside the wholly contemporary Hamilton lounge in speckled grey from Minotti. A side table of round glass is also particularly pleasing, as is a glossy black console that occupies the width of the end wall. This piece features large horn and chrome handles, which are visually echoed by the touches of gold throughout the apartment.

Interestingly, the gold elements Natale has introduced are far from cliché and range from a delicate bowl in a lustrous yellow shade (Bash Vessel by Tom Dixon) to a large cylindrical urn (Beat Vessel also by Tom Dixon) that sits at the bronze end of the gold spectrum. He has also continued the teal blue of the harbour view with accents punctuating the whole in the form of cushions, stools and the occasional ornament, including a wonderful vintage ashtray in dyed alabaster. Natale explains: 'I thought it was important to bring the harbour into the interior,

to connect it visually and anchor it to the surrounding view, I mean you can't deny it, so giving it a continuation that is reduced to a shade with variations makes sense.'

The dining table, also Minotti, is superb. A large round Calcutta marble tabletop (supported by a cross of outlandishly robust chrome legs) in pale grey, with a natural vein of teal through the middle. Black leather chairs with chrome supports complete the dining ensemble.

There is little point in saying this apartment would suit everyone and perhaps that is the point. This apartment is, however, entirely suited to its owner. It is sleek, excessively luxurious, wholeheartedly masculine and gorgeously reminiscent of the dream bachelor pad, for being so. It also significantly transforms as light is manipulated to reveal and conceal the layered intricacies of the textured variance Natale has delivered. *(inside)*

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[05] Strong geometric patterning on the carpet lends the walk-in dressing room design flair.

[06] The black-on-black palette is broken up with teal blue and white in the bedroom.

[07] Teal blue accents in the bedroom succeed in bringing the harbour 'indoors'.

[08] The deliberately narrow entranceway immediately envelops the visitor.