

# belle

A photograph of a bright, airy greenhouse interior. The floor is covered in a black and white checkered tile pattern. In the foreground, a wicker armchair with white cushions and a yellow and black patterned throw pillow sits on the floor. A small, round, woven lampshade sits on a side table next to the chair. In the background, a black leather sofa is visible, along with a glass coffee table holding some decorative items. Large potted plants, including a fiddle leaf fig and various palms, are scattered throughout the space, creating a lush, tropical atmosphere. Large windows on the right side of the image let in bright natural light.

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# RIGHT ANGLE

Geometric lines and a palette of stone and glass add up to a modernist marvel of a home, with a sinuous staircase the surprise element at its heart.

Photographs ANSON SMART Words CHRIS PEARSON



This page A raw concrete block wall makes a statement in the living area. Minotti 'Huber' coffee table from De De Ce. Poltrona Frau 'Ciotola' leather bowl from Cult. Customised 'Milano' rug by Greg Natale for Designer Rugs. Eileen Grey side table bought secondhand. Wall sculpture by Dion Horstmans. Vintage Featherston armchair reupholstered in leather from Spinneybeck. Feature wall in Boral 'Designer Block' in Pearl Grey. Opposite page The hallway in travertine exudes gravitas. Vistosi 'Giogali' chandelier from Monduluce. Flooring and stairs in Striato Travertine from RMS Natural Stone & Ceramics. Walls in Dulux 'Lexicon Quarter'.



When designer Greg Natale first saw US architect Paul Rudolph's Milam house in 2005, it "blew him away" with its cubed, sculptural lines and minimalist celebration of concrete, stone and glass. He stored this in the back of his mind until he found a time and place to draw inspiration from it. Years later, this three-storey home overlooking a bush-clad gully in Sydney's inner west offered him the perfect opportunity.

Taking his cues from that 1961 Florida classic, Greg has imbued it with his own distinctive design flourishes, though they're more muted than expected. Ironically, his homage to the right angle reflects Greg's ability to think outside the box.

"I loved the Milam house's cubed form," he says. "As the owners wanted modern, clean and minimal, I thought this would be a way to add interest and complexity, and it would suit the topography of this site." He explored the cube idea on the front facade and then employed several cantilevers as the house steps back on the site. Meanwhile, a palette of blockwork, stone and glass features both inside and out, so the home feels grounded in its setting but paradoxically, it also touches the earth lightly.

The light-filled result, with walls of glass looking into the trees, couldn't be more different from the site's previous house. When the owners, a couple with two now-teenage children, bought the property 20 years ago, it housed a dowdy post-war brick bungalow. But the site won them over. "It was so pretty, with its valley views and, being at the top of a sloping block, it couldn't be built out," says the owner. But it wasn't until 2012 that the couple called in the bulldozers and began a two-year build.

"We wanted something modern, with lots of glass to capture the views into the treetops from all rooms," she says. As well, all the bedrooms were to have balconies. In its aesthetic, she wanted "a 60s feel, but classic, so it won't date".

To blend indoors and out, Greg placed the open-plan living areas, a study and a guest bedroom on the middle level, with four bedrooms on the top storey, while a rumpus room on the lower level leads directly out to the pool and a sloping lawn.

The Milam house gave Greg his design ideas but there are some important departures. While that house eschews curves, Greg introduced what is perhaps this home's grandest gesture, a circular staircase, an organic form among all the many angles, that winds up through the three levels. It's inspired by the open, sweeping staircase in another modernist gem, Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye, near Paris.

Elsewhere, Greg's passion for geometrics is omnipresent, embracing not just the home's cube-like qualities, but also the blockwork feature wall and his signature graphic carpets. Marble, granite, travertine and concrete finishes secure the home to its setting but, lest they appear too hard-edged and solid, Greg has introduced flowing mid-century classic furnishings from Eames, Featherston and Knoll. Other retro-inspired decorative elements, including ceramics by Jonathan Adler, also allude to the Milam era.

The monochrome palette in blacks, whites and charcoals is more muted than many of Greg's projects, reflecting the owners' desire for neutrals. "A lot of my clients want colour," he says, "but it's also nice to work on a house with just neutrals. We are usually more decorative, but this still has layers, such as the curtains, brickwork and art. This is unexpected and different from what I normally do, but it's fun to switch styles," he says. 15

For more go to [gregnatale.com](http://gregnatale.com).



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This page: The curved staircase is an organic feature in the open-plan space. Vintage Florence Knoll sofa recovered in Knoll fabric. Custom-made cushions in Schumacher 'Darya Ikat' fabric in Stone. Saarinen 'Tulip' side table from De De Ce. Jonathan Adler vases in black and white. 'Milano' custom rug by Greg Natale for Designer Rugs. Florence Knoll dining table from De De Ce with Eames moulded fibreglass chairs from Living Edge. 'Real Good' bar stools from Blu Dot. 'Crown Summa' chandelier from Monduluce. Custom kitchen joinery in American oak by Ital Furniture (lacquered in white, and the island stained with black satin polyurethane).



# SPEED READ

» When a Sydney couple bought this site overlooking a tree-clad gully 20 years ago, a humble brick bungalow occupied the site. » In 2012, with interior designer Greg Natale, they began a two-year build, resulting in this light-filled three-storey house, with the living areas on the middle level looking directly into the treetops. » In response to the couple's brief for a modernist home with clean lines, Greg drew inspiration from the iconic Milam house built in Florida in 1961. » Using concrete, stone and glass, he has replicated that house's cubed forms, but has tempered the right angles and his love of geometry with a sinuous, organic staircase, inspired by Le Corbusier, that winds up through the levels. » In a departure from his more flamboyant interiors, this home boasts a monochrome palette of whites, blacks and greys and less embellishment.



This page, clockwise from above: The facade of the house has classic cubist lines. In the dressing room, custom-made joinery in charcoal grey-stained American oak. 'Dianne' Axminster carpet by Greg Natale from Designer Rugs. In the guest bathroom, Arabescato honed marble and Striato Travertine flooring both from RMS Natural Stone & Ceramics. Opposite page: In the main bedroom, vintage bedside lamps from Becker Minty. Bedhead custom made in Kelly Wearstler 'Stroke' fabric, with cushions in Kelly Wearstler 'Agate', both from Elliott Clarke. 'Debra' bedside table from Worlds Away. Painting by Scott Petrie.

