



# Inside KNOWLEDGE

When two architects draw up their ideal house, the result is a tranquil home designed to stand the test of time

STORY KATE NIXON PHOTOGRAPHY MAREE HOMER



A colourful Cuadros rug from Ke-zu creates a striking centrepiece in this living room. The homeowners collect designer furniture, including (from left) an Artek 400 armchair, Le Corbusier chaise longue and Noguchi coffee table. Painting by Dick Atkins. For Where To Buy, see page xxx.



Architects Rolf and Linda Haefeli are quite accustomed to clients coming to them with a ‘renovator’s delight’ to remodel into the perfect family home. So it was with great relish that they began to search for a house they could make over themselves. “As architects, we don’t usually get to choose the site for a project,” says Linda, “but this time was different.” Equipped with an exhaustive list of priorities – including plenty of space to accommodate a generous home office – Rolf, Linda and their two teenage children, Lorenz and Selina, set out to find a house with a dream location.

Find it they did – set atop a small ridge on Sydney’s Northern Beaches and offering panoramic seas views. “As we walked up to the double-brick bungalow, it was like discovering a private haven that had the most beautiful light and amazing views in every direction,” says Linda. “For us, it was a question of capturing all this in the design and creating a contemporary home that’s set up for the next half-century.”

Plans for a total overhaul were drawn up and the couple began work on the driveway and garage. “Entry to the site from the busy road was difficult,” she says, “and the garage was in a poor state of repair.” The area was restructured to accommodate two enclosed and four open car spaces, with a wide crossover for safer access. A steep incline from the street-level entry to the house

was softened with landscaping and sandstone pavers. “We wanted to keep that feeling of walking up towards this quiet place and leaving the hustle and bustle behind,” says Linda.

Fifty square metres of soil was excavated to create a rumpus room on the ground floor. Also on this level is a refurbished bathroom and Rolf’s home office, which Linda describes as being sufficiently secluded from the main living areas, yet still close enough for him to wear slippers to work!

“This space was not quite large enough for both of us, so my office is upstairs. I like the views from there,” she says. “We love working from home and wouldn’t have it any other way. Every part of the house is enjoyed, because we’re here all the time.” ▷

#### KEEPING IT GREEN

Linda and Rolf share a passion for promoting Ecologically Sustainable Development principles. Their home includes north-south orientation for solar heat gain in winter, shading in summer and year-round cross-ventilation. Solar panels are installed on the roof and power the hydronic heating system. Dynalite lighting controls save energy by keeping every bulb to a dimmed setting.



‘I love the chameleon look of the splashback. depending on the light and the angle you’re viewing it from, it ranges from red to yellow.’  
LINDA HAEFELI ARCHITECT

THIS PAGE Linda at her Pietra Serena limestone island bench. The splashback is Chroma film polyurethane in ‘chameleon’ paint. Artek 64 stools from Anibou. OPPOSITE The dining table was designed by Linda and made by Design & Create. The floorboards are tallowood. For Where To Buy, see page xxx.



### EASY DOES IT

Creating a low-maintenance home was high on the agenda for Rolf and Linda. Resilient materials – including zinc, rendered walls and aluminum door and window frames – were chosen. Likewise, concrete-based paints, such as Murowash, were selected for their durability. The couple's love of fuss-free living is reflected in large bathroom tiles (which means less grouting) and no architraves or skirting (for easier cleaning). Linda says: "We tried to make things practical, such as positioning the laundry directly off the kitchen, which is just wonderful. I also wanted the bed to be on castors, so I could easily clean underneath it."

◀ The second-storey renovations were the most rewarding for Rolf and Linda, as they offered them the opportunity to capture the sweeping coastal views. "The southern views were totally underutilised," says Linda "We could see that if we opened up the living areas, we would have views of the coastline to the south and to the north. None of the other houses along this stretch have both, so that made it really special."

This level was extended out to the east, to accommodate the new laundry and kitchen, which features a playful Chroma film polyurethane splashback in a paint which changes with the light – "just for a bit of fun" – and a bold Pietra Serena limestone bench. The west side of this floor houses the kids' bedrooms and bathroom. The front room was refurbished for 19-year-old Lorenz and the back room converted from the original laundry and main bedroom for 16-year-old Selina.

What was once an all-concrete backyard now features a spacious timber deck with ramped access to the 11-metre lap pool, affectionately known as 'the tub'. "We built the swimming pool above ground, so it sits at the same level as the deck," explains Linda. "We didn't have to excavate, which saved money."

The final stage of renovations comprised the building of a third level for the main bedroom. This spacious floor includes a walk-in robe, Spanish limestone ensuite and Linda's office. Glass doors open onto a balcony that takes in the ocean views and there's even room for two of Linda's favourite Artek S lounge chairs. "These chairs were designed in the 1930s and they'll never date," she says. "They look as contemporary today as they did back then" – exactly in keeping the timeless look they sought for this house.

*Atelier Haefeli, Avalon Beach, NSW; (02) 9918 3341, www.atelierhaefeli.com.au*



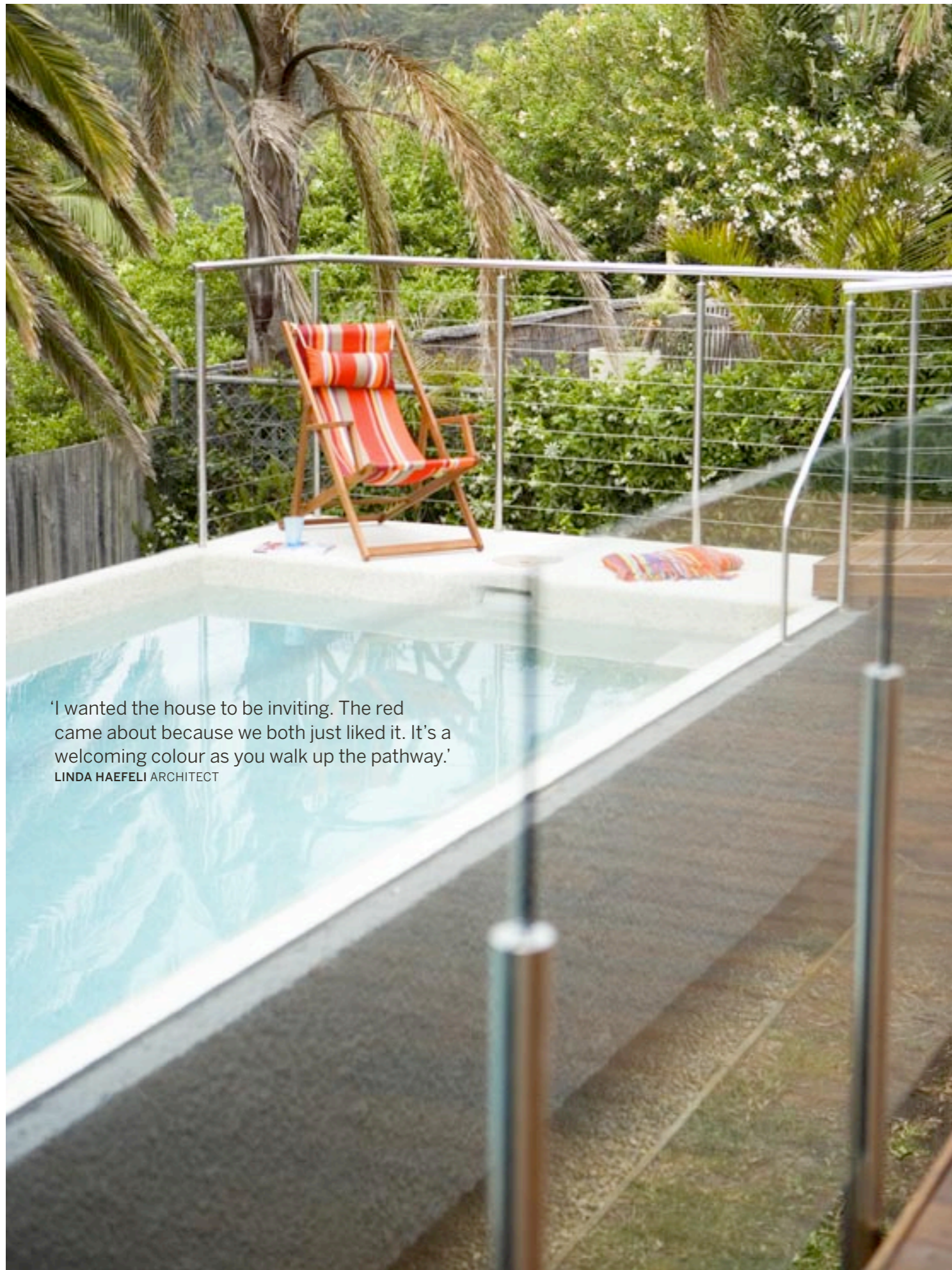
**OPPOSITE** Linda's home office features an IKEA desktop in white laminate. Tolomeo desk lamp by Artemide.

**ABOVE** The ensuite's Caliza Azul tiles and vanity were supplied by Iberian Artisans. Hoesch Foster bath from Bathhouse.

**LEFT** The main bedroom's bed was designed by Linda and made by Design & Create. Suede-look bedside stool from King Furniture. For Where To Buy, see page xxx.



'We used Spanish limestone in all the bathrooms. Its concrete-like appearance ties these rooms back to the kitchen.' **LINDA HAEFELI ARCHITECT**



'I wanted the house to be inviting. The red came about because we both just liked it. It's a welcoming colour as you walk up the pathway.'  
LINDA HAEFELI ARCHITECT



THIS PAGE Murowash concrete-based paint in Bordeaux defines the home's entrance. Zinc roof, cladding and downpipes supplied by Architectural Roofing and Wall Cladding. OPPOSITE A deckchair from Ici Et La is positioned by the concrete lap-pool by Neil Beecroft Pools. For Where To Buy, see page xxx.

#### RAISE THE ROOF

The renovation of this home was so rigorous that even the roof was made over. Out went the original hipped terracotta tiles; they were replaced with zinc, which folds down to line the house's eastern and southern walls. For continuity, the original roofline was retained at the front. "The roof is the main design element that integrates old with new," says Linda. "Zinc is a durable material which flows well from horizontal to vertical surfaces."