

# Fortress of plenitude

*Behind ultra-modern fortified walls sits a minimalist home with a bunker-like entrance that gives no hint of the abundant views upstairs*

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**Staircase** This spiralling centrepiece is inspired by the work of architects such as Brazilian Paulo Mendes da Rocha. The table is the 'Paracarro' by Giovanni Offredi for Saporiti, while on top sits a 'Seine' table lamp by Space Copenhagen for Gubi and ceramics from Australian stores Ma House, Freedom and Trit House. It's an imposing space in a style that architect Travis Walton and designer Simone Haag describe as 'soft minimalism' ►



**S**tood on ladders, above the roof of an old house riddled with asbestos, architect Travis Walton and building developer Bear Agushi hatched a fiendish plan. ‘A lot of people didn’t realise the potential of this place and said you’re not going to be able to get sea views,’ recalls Travis, who runs his eponymous studio out of Melbourne, a short hop from the coastal location of Sorrento. He and Bear have proved them very wrong. The new-build home that now occupies the site has been flipped, raising all of the main living areas up to make sure you get not just the ocean vista, but also a sightline across the treetops to the golf course. The issue, though, was what to do with the ground floor. Travis’s ingenious plan is reminiscent of an ancient castle, with an imposing concrete wall and a large portcullis-like gate, which allows access to the front door, as well as a garage.

‘It’s such a sexy way of building anticipation about what’s inside,’ says Simone Haag, who herself was tasked with orchestrating this home’s interior. The designer settled on a scheme that takes influences from the home’s brutalist materials palette (concrete, dark-stained oak, blackened steel and stone), but sprinkles it with notes of boho and unexpected art. ‘Nothing too decorative, pretty or soft,’ adds Simone, ‘just really strong elements – and few of them.’ Here, we look at the pieces that made the cut in more detail as we take a tour with Travis and Simone... [traviswalton.com.au](http://traviswalton.com.au); [simonehaag.com.au](http://simonehaag.com.au)



**Entrance** The view up the front path shows this modern castle’s gate open, with a view through to the concealed front door. The Norfolk pines that twist in front of the house gave the property its name, ‘Norfolk’

**Above** Architect Travis Walton and interior designer Simone Haag, plus the brass front door, which was left untreated because, says Travis, ‘it will react to the salt in the sea air and get that really gritty patina over time’ ➤

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**Snug** Entirely clad in stained oak, this room has the feel of a ship's cabin, but rather than overlooking the ocean, its views are across the golf course. 'Golfers come in and out of view like boats in a harbour,' says Simone. There's a whisky cabinet and a wood-burning stove in this room, but it's the fabric choices that create the most atmosphere here. 'One of the first meetings we have with a client is what we call the palette play session. We pull all these textiles and ask them to sort them into green light, orange light, red light. We ended up with this really interesting collection,' says Simone, who used them to upholster an unlikely but brilliant selection of seating, including a sofa her team designed themselves. 'We wanted it to look like it was from the 60s,' she says. There are two 'Chirimoyo' chairs by Mexican studio Mestiz and a 1970s lounge by Jan Dranger and Johan Hultdt. The 'Bamboo Bracelet' coffee table is by Dusty Deco, while the side tables are from Arki Living and local designer Scotty Bemelen. 'Tapis Shaped #029' by Hommés Studio hangs on the wall, and the rug underfoot is 'Old Yarn' from Loom ▶





**Living room** 'The owner is all about snuggling up with the family and watching the footie,' says Simone, who knew that the sofa was all-important here. She chose the 'Snow' by Note Design Studio for La Chance because of its sculptural back, which would add interest when viewing it from the adjoining dining area, but went to great lengths to ensure it also passed comfiness tests. The joinery around the TV is blackened steel, for what Travis calls a 'luxe industrial' look, while many of the other furnishings are vintage – from the 'Sitar' chair by Enzo Berti (intended for outdoors) to the glass-topped coffee table. There are two rugs – 'Mountain' by Hali and the shaggy 'No08' by Cappelen Dimyr – but no art on the walls. Simone has added a 'Cityscape' plinth by Paul Evans instead, holding *Who Cut Your Hair?*, a vessel by Megafauna Studio. The floor lamp is the 'Toio' by Achille and Pier Giacomo Castiglioni for Flos



**Kitchen** Simone describes this space as an 'anti-kitchen', its appliances artfully disguised behind brass cabinetry. Located opposite the main living area, with a dining table designed by the owner in between, this space's vast dark-green stone island is paired with black marble on the splashback and worktop behind. 'You could almost miss the difference,' admits Travis, but subtlety is key here. Often not used as the main kitchen (the owners love to cook outside), this space is beautiful without imposing its function. Around the table, Simone has paired 'Flo' chairs by Patricia Urquiola for Driade with vintage pieces from The Feelter. The stools are the 'Donut' by Alessandra Baldereschi for Moggi and the sculptural seat by the window is by Scotty Bemelen, founder of Bieëmele, who lives nearby ►

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**Outdoor kitchen** Situated beside the main living area, this is where the majority of the cooking actually takes place. 'Outdoor dining is imperative here,' confirms Travis, who added concealed blinds around this space so that it can be used even when the Australian weather is less than optimal. Simone's elevated take on outdoor furniture includes a 'Nera' marble dining table from Bova Gallery and 'Delphi' chairs from MCM House ▶





**Bathroom** 'We wanted to give this room a feel of being in the countryside, so we played with bringing light in, with a continuous glass roof over the vanity,' says Travis. 'It also extends over the shower, so when you stand there, all you can see is the sky above and you really get a sense of being outdoors.' Stained oak again clads the walls, while the basins are carved from the same dark-green stone as the kitchen island. The mirrored cabinets with their brass surrounds are custom-made to further fit in with this home's palette, while the tapware is from Par Taps



**Bedroom** Clad entirely in dark-stained oak – the boards are wide to mimic the width of the concrete beams elsewhere in the house – this room has an innate cosiness. Where much in this house is brand-new, the headboard was a piece already belonging to the client, which Simone had re-covered in one of the chosen Nobilis fabrics from their palette session. The rest of the furnishing is sparing; there's another chair by local sculptor Scotty Bemelen, a 'Felton' wall light by Coco Republic and a custom bedside table by Petite. 'They are ceramic and we trialled different glazes on them, but they have no storage,' says Simone with a laugh, noting that the owner is something of a minimalist, so room for a book will suffice **See Stockists page for details** [ED](#)

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