

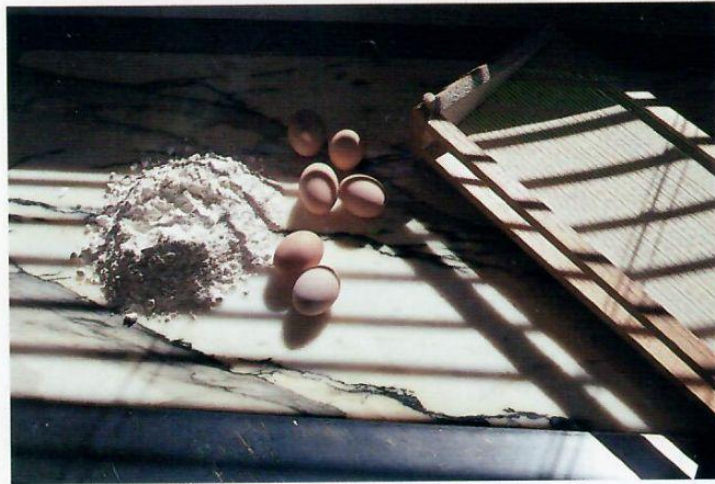
# INTERIOR

A R C H I T E C T U R E

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# PASTA



# PLACE

THE DESIRE TO COMBINE  
ITALIAN SENSIBILITY WITH AN  
AUSTRALIAN LIFESTYLE  
PROMPTED LEADING  
RESTAURATEURS  
STEFANO AND JULIE MANFREDI  
TO COMMISSION  
ARCHITECT LUIGI ROSSELLI  
TO TRANSFORM THEIR  
COTTAGE INTO A

“POLENTA AND  
MUSHROOMS”  
HOUSE.

► The dramatic, sharply  
pointed roof — a cross  
between Nordic European  
architecture and a  
gingerbread house.

Photography  
Ross Honeysett.  
Text Martha Gale.



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Quietly slotted into the middle of a tree-lined street in Bondi Junction in Sydney stands a house designed by Italian-born architect Luigi Rosselli. Originally a one-storey timber cottage with a dark living area and non-existent view, it was kindly referred to by friends as a “dump of a house!” Transformed by Rosselli, it is now a light, bright and deceptively spacious home reflecting the character of its owners, the architect’s philosophy and the eclectic nature of the street.

Clients Stefano and Julie Manfredi had been living in the old cottage for a year. They knew the problems and limitations of the existing space and were able to give Rosselli a clear and precise brief – the old house was too hot in summer, too cold in winter and an office and outdoor area were needed. They were also concerned that the new design should fit in with the local streetscape.

Also included in the brief was the addition of a floor. Rosselli describes the resulting plan as straightforward – “a typical Eastern suburbs layout for an upwardly mobile family”. Adding a second storey Rosselli extended the rear of the house eating up the backyard in the process and creating split level decking with underspace for storage. The terraced decks now provide sweeping views across Bondi Junction and Waverley; previously the house was submerged in its site and swamped by its neighbours.

The striking difference is the roof. Due to local authority restrictions banning the building of timber walls above the upper boundary, the only solution according to Rosselli was to go up and eventually inward, away from the surrounding buildings. The resulting house has a dramatic and sharply pointed roof with a strong front projection reminiscent of a cross between Nordic European architecture and a gingerbread house. This was Rosselli’s way of combating the ruling and the Manfredi’s gregarious character also had something to do with it. Having been offered two solutions they chose the less conventional alternative.

One can see what Rosselli means when he says he is inspired by Swedish and Finnish timber architecture of the

last century as it is the timber construction that is the ultimate driving force behind the house. The colours too are found in Swedish houses. Stefano Manfredi describes the creamy-white and yellow house as a “polenta and mushrooms” house, named after a traditional dish which originates from Milan, the city of his birth.

Progression within the house flows easily. On entering one passes the open kitchen. This opens onto the living area which in turn leads directly out onto the terrace. As successful restaurateurs (The Restaurant, a leading Sydney restaurant is theirs) the Manfredis place great importance on cooking. The Restaurant was one of the first restaurants in Sydney to have an open kitchen and their own kitchen follows on from that idea. In the heart of the house it seems surprisingly small but as Manfredi says: “the less walking whilst cooking, the better.”

Rosselli solved the insulation problem by designing inward opening casement windows on the north side of the building with external venetian blinds. With the windows open and the blinds down one easily catches the sea breeze in the summer. The wooden floors, white timber walls and simple spaces combined with everpresent sunlight, are evocative of a beach house. Even small details are icons of the ocean, from the boat fittings that hold the windows open to the wire strutting running up the banisters.

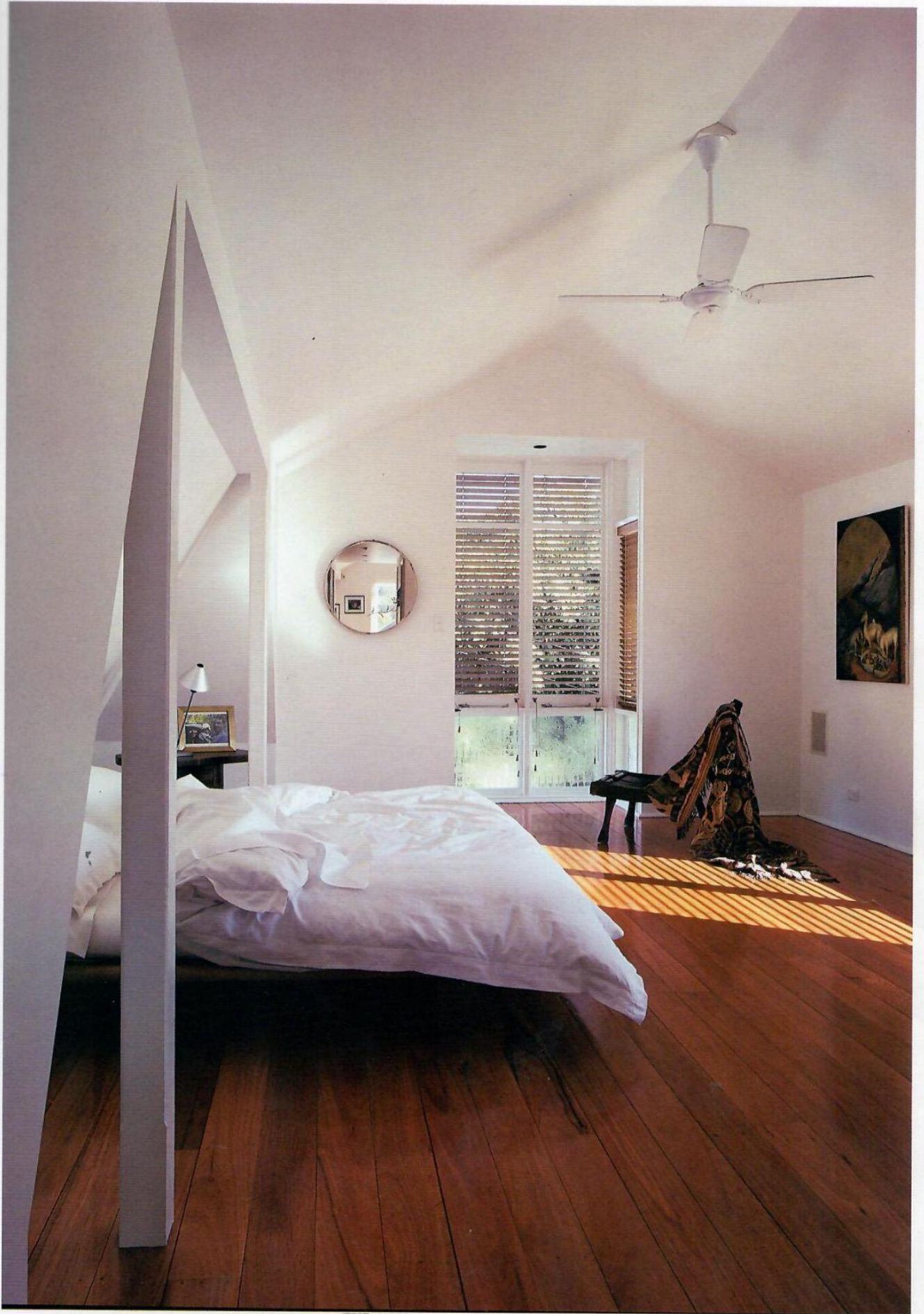
For an architect who declares he is not preoccupied with technology this simple timber house is a reflection of that. Expressionistic in form it reveals something about the architect and his clients. Whereas the architect views it as both romantic and dramatic the Manfredis regard it as urban and modern, a far cry from the typical “cutesy” cottage it could have become. Rosselli follows the philosophy

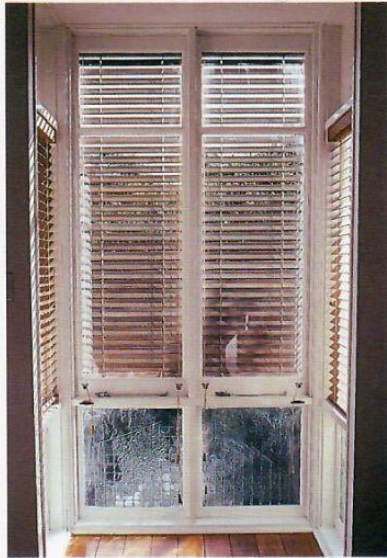
of Aldo Giurgola, a previous employer, when he states that eclecticism is good as long as it’s not a gimmick. “It’s not to prove one can do a certain style but to give an atmosphere.” ♦



▲ Rosselli was inspired by Swedish and Finnish 19th Century timber architecture when designing the house.

► In its simplicity and purity, the bedroom focuses on the never ending play between sun and materials.





*Textured “Ozone” glass tiles from Clapin Burdett filter the light through Lumeno blinds.*

► **The combination of wooden floors, white walls and timber support beams enhanced by the warm afternoon sun, evoke a beach house ambience.**



