

Prime *VIEW*

A random phone call led designer Nina Maya to a dream commission — to revitalise the interiors of the former Sydney home of Australia's longest-serving Labor prime minister.

THIS PAGE, FROM TOP designer Nina Maya in the formal living area; **fireplace** produced by Belvedere and Choice Interiors; **fireplace surround** in Grey Scape marble and limestone from Worldstone. In the formal dining room, Michaël Verheyden leather **bowl** (on table), from Ondene; ceramic **beaker** and **cup** from Planet; **wall sconce** designed by Nina Maya Interiors with Oliver Tanner Art & Design; *Upon Waking* (2021) **artwork** by Marisa Purcell from Olsen Gallery. **OPPOSITE PAGE** in another view of the formal dining area, **table** and **dining chairs** designed by Nina Maya Interiors, produced by Contempo & Co.; Covenant **pendant light** from Lost Profile; Studio Floris Wubben **vase** from Alm.

In an era when sharp political discourse has dulled down to sanitised sound bites and cancel culture keeps the party room gagged, who doesn't long for some of the intellectual larrikinism of the late Bob Hawke, the longest-serving Australian Labor prime minister who unapologetically lived out loud. 'Hawkey' blared his iconoclasm with a unifying bravura that convinced all Australians of their unassailable right to equal opportunity, be it in his shaping of historic workplace accords or the building of his Northbridge home — a five-storey 'edifice complex' in glass and steel towering over the sparkling waters of Sydney's Sugarloaf Bay.

Testifying to the rise of a lowly ACTU research officer to the leader of federal government, the archly contemporary architecture completed in 1993 was, for Australia's 23rd PM, both a figurative and formal watershed; albeit one fitted with a private jetty, a gentlemen's club, five palatial bedrooms and a pro-standard rooftop putting green. The house post-dated Hawke's deposition as

prime minister by his deputy Paul Keating (1991), platformed his very public split from first wife Hazel (1995) and back-dropped his marriage to writer Blanche d'Alpuget (1995), who, more than two decades later, would speak of his last breath exhaling in the main bedroom (2019).

For Nina Maya, the former fashion company founder turned designer, who was tapped to tender for the building's refurbishment by the new owners after Hawke and d'Alpuget bought into a smaller harbourside apartment, the weight of legacy must have been leaden.

"Yes, it was one of the more unusual situations," understates Maya of

fielding Hawkey's ghost in a "gift" commission that ensued from an "out-of-the-blue" request to meet with architect Ian Traill — a designer she didn't know, working for a client couple she'd never met. "But isn't it always the random calls in life that reward?"

She remembers Traill's scouting visit to her home — a Tardis magicked from the tiny footprint of a pushed-over Paddington bungalow — and his enthusiastic approval of its spatial trickery and textured minimalism. She believes his walk-through won her the project and vindication over parental cautions that she was crazy to buy the site. "But then colouring my teenage bedroom beige was my parent's definition of madness," she adds, with the laughing share >>

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NINA MAYA



