

The panoramic rewards of patience



PICTURES: DAN HIMBRECHTS

Architect Kevin Ng on the balcony of the house he designed at Vaucluse, in Sydney's eastern suburbs. 'Our approach was to really maximise the views'

It's taken eight years but the owners of this house have realised their dream at last

MITCHELL NADIN

WHEN architect Kevin Ng presented his clients with an ambitious design to redevelop their Sydney block of land in 2004, they instantly fell in love with the plans.

Despite a budget shortfall, the young couple were so taken by the design they refused to compromise. So it was decided to delay the project until they had saved enough money to build their dream home.

Eight years and two children later, the home — completed late last year — stands as a testament to the value of patience.

The sun-drenched harbourside home at Vaucluse, in Sydney's eastern suburbs, sits on a steep west-facing block, with 180-degree views that stretch



The sleek concrete structure pays homage to 1950s styling

from Manly in the north to the Harbour Bridge and across the city.

Mr Ng, who works for Bondi design firm MPR Design Group, said the clients knew they had a special opportunity to make the most of the land and refused to settle for second best — even if it meant they didn't move in as soon as they would have liked.

He said the primary objectives were catching the maximum possible sun and light through each of the home's four levels, a task that required some lateral thought.

Trust between client and architect was paramount in any architectural venture, he said.

"We knew the client from a small project we worked on earlier, so there was already a confi-

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dence in our work from the outset. We also knew what their taste in design was," he said. "Because our approach was to really maximise the views but respond to a challenging brief, the design evolved to accommodate the four levels on a site that would normally only allow for a three-level house."

The strong horizontal lines of the home pay homage to classic

styling of the 1950s, with cantilevered eaves and uncomplicated open spaces. But Mr Ng said the sleek concrete structure also worked on a practical level; adopting the parapet roof allowed the floor level to be raised to allow for maximum views and sun.

The use of concrete throughout the home also added lightweight thermal mass, while contributing a sense of unvarnished honesty to the home's structure. Despite the clean lines of the design, nothing is hidden — you can actually see how the structure is put together.

This philosophy also translates into the material palette used, with locally cut sandstone, polished concrete, generous aluminium and steel work, and swaths of glass that seamlessly blend the indoor and outdoor spaces.

The home was shortlisted for an award in the single residential category at the World Architecture Festival in Barcelona earlier this year.