

Out of the pink and out of the ordinary

RENOVATOR'S DREAM

By TERRY SMYTH

IT was an apartment that had seen better days. It was living in the past, in what architect Justin Quinlan described as "a state of disrepair, with an eclectic blend of mid-'70s finishes, including pink wallpaper and gold tiles".

It had everything but the fantasia lamp, the fluffy bar and the print of horses running through the surf.

The outside, too, was desperate and dated. The apartment was on a middle floor of a mid-1970s multi-storey, blond-brick apartment block. Charitably, the block could be described as very ordinary – hardly worth a first, let alone second, glance.

For all that, though, one look out the window proved it was an apartment with great potential, perched on the edge of a cliff in Vaucluse, overlooking Diamond Bay with breathtaking views of the ocean.

For Mr Quinlan, the challenge was to make the 1970s remnant meet its potential.

"It was an absolute waterfront apartment with uninterrupted water views, but internally it was standard '70s planning where everything was segmented," Mr Quinlan said.

"The client, an Australian pilot based in Hong Kong, demanded a total conversion into an interior worthy of the spectacular views. So we opened out as much of the space to the view as possible."

That involved a total makeover, including the replacement of all the joinery, plumbing, fixtures and fittings.

"The brief shifted slightly during the development process as the client realised that his Hong Kong residence would become his principal place of residence and that the apartment would most probably work as an executive rental for the majority of the year," Mr Quinlan said.

"Substantial work throughout the apartment has converted the interior from a

series of small, separate rooms into a large, free-flowing space with an exceptionally high standard of finish."

Achieving those high standards wasn't easy, however. There were problems along the way.

"The dated building fabric provided many hurdles, with both the walls and the floor having variations of up to 60 millimetres within three metres," he said.

"Also, being exposed to direct and incident sunlight for almost the entire day meant that any minor flaws or inconsistencies in surface finish would be glaringly obvious."

The windows were replaced, except for those facing the view, which already had full-length glazing.

"The view itself was the inspiration for the lighting feature that provides the centrepiece of the living space," Mr Quinlan said.

"Comprising a drop-ceiling panel and continuous shelving unit, this dramatic element folds into the wall and frames and enhances the view of the water from the entry, kitchen and living areas."

The architect is especially proud of the effect created in the living area by the relationship between the folded panel and a timber-slatted feature wall. "Complemented by the Norman and Quaine furniture, it's really quite beautiful," he said.

To further increase the area of interior space open to the view, the existing kitchen walls were removed and replaced with bifold doors that open onto the living area.

"We also pulled back the walls at the entrance," Mr Quinlan said. "Previously, when you entered the apartment you walked into a corridor that had a restricted, shotgun view of the water. Now, when you walk into the space you're immediately open to the entire view."

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THE PLAN: MAKE AN OLD APARTMENT WORTH THE VIEW



■ **The property:** A two-bedroom apartment in Vaucluse.

■ **The architect:** Justin Quinlan of Archengine, East Sydney.

■ **The brief:** Upgrade and redesign the interior of a dated and dilapidated apartment to provide

high-grade finishes and make the most of panoramic water views.

■ **The cost:** \$130,000.

■ **The time:** 18 weeks.

■ **The result:** The architect said: "From our point of view, a successful solution."

