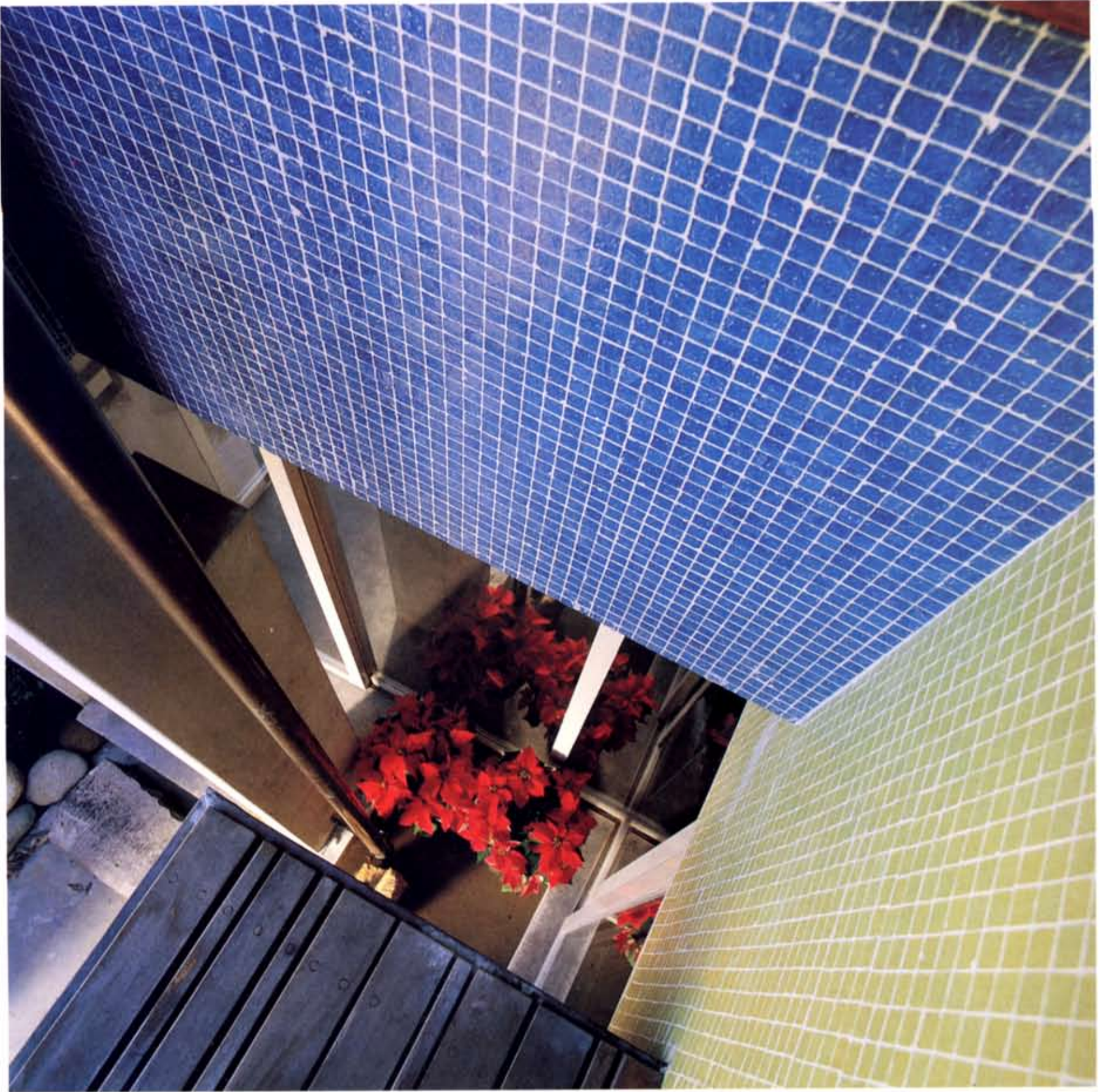




PHOTOGRAPHY ASHLEY BARBER
TEXT BILL MACMAHON

W I L D T H I N G

“VERTIGO, ANGELS & COLLISIONS”



"TIGHT CORNERS THAT APPEAR LIKE
PUZZLES DIFFUSE THE CERTAINTY OF SPACE."

Confined within the narrowest of boundaries is the house of two young Sydney architects. Taking a small house, they have transformed it into a puzzle where patterns, colliding walls and reflecting glass diffuse certainties of dimension, squash preconceptions of usable shapes and generally overturn the ideas you cherished of your grandmother's inner-city terrace. Architects over the age of 30 have been known to run from the house suffering stylistic vertigo, induced when they look down into the crashing waves of something they were always told was not acceptable.

Yet architects still in the kindergarten years of their professional progress have a kinder view. The richness of cultural eclecticism is accepted at face value.

Indonesian mother-of-pearl screens that transmit a dusty translucent light across the gold-leafed cast-iron bath are beautiful, not just in their glowing effect, but also in their razor-sharp juxtaposition of traditions.

Anodised aluminium louvres next to painted timber angles, Moroccan fabrics threaded with mirrors against raw cement render, rose-printed laminates against white marble; all combinations that sit sharply against each other. The effect is sometimes one of a surreal theatre; full of surprise, shock and humour and other times of a Zen combination that looks absolutely right.

Spaces within the house have a tendency to slide. Flat surfaces, whether walls or the sides of kitchen benches or even the details of the stairs stop short of such a thing as a right angle. The corner seems to defer to the surface by doing a little hop before surfaces come to meet. Sometimes walls just stop short, allowing one of the walls to slide past.

A long bench moving between the two living spaces serves as

the kitchen, its position pinning together these two areas marked out by a Saarinen coffee table and dining table. Eating is the most social activity and the placement of the kitchen suggests that while sitting at the table or reclining upon the ply-crowned banquette, coffee and Greek biscuits are always at hand. Large single-pane glass doors centrally pivot so that the ground floor opens entirely to the small garden court.

Above, the bathroom is enclosed merely by fine horizontal timber blades and large vertical aluminium louvres of a type usually found on Harry Seidler buildings of the 60s. The openness of this arrangement requires a hearty constitution before diving into the hot bath on a cold winter's morning. Again the containment to the room is tested by a panel that opens between the bedroom and the bathroom allowing communication between the two spaces. The bedroom with its floral carpet and rose cornice asks again just where this house is coming from or going to.

Is it modern or post modern, Victorian stylistic deconstruction or a collection of pieces as ordered in their relationship as a sample room in disarray? Perhaps the notion of stylistic combination should be put aside. This is a house built by two architects.

It is their shack, their home. This is a special case where the designers are most keenly tuning their space to the sensibility of their relationship to the things we build buildings from. The Scandinavian architect Alvar Aalto built his retreat in the woods from every material that he built with. Over the summer he would gauge not just the qualities of the materials in their aspect of physical endurance, but also undoubtedly their enduring quality to his sensibility. ♦



**"TO CLIMB THE STAIR ONE MUST
ALWAYS BEGIN WITH THE LEFT FOOT."**

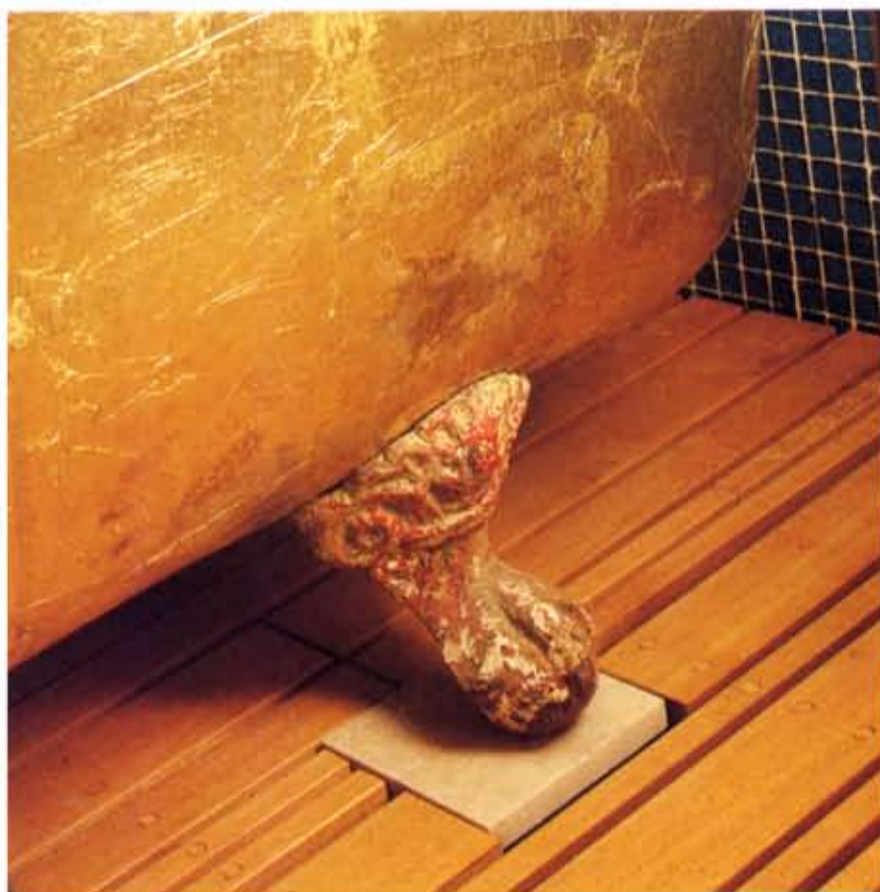


CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT.

LIMES & LEMONS ON THE KITCHEN SILL. FROTH & ROSES

UPON THE SINK. COFFEE JARS & COREN, STAIR OVER KITCHEN.

HOUNDSTOOTH ON HOUNDSTOOTH, THE DINING TABLE.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT.
GOLD LEAF, MARBLE & THE BATHTUB. THE FUTON ROOM —
PLANTATION SHUTTERS TO THE COURT. THE AIRY BATHROOM.
SLIDING FILIPINO MOTHER-OF-PEARL SCREEN.



'A DIFFUSION OF PATTERNS,
COLLIDING WALLS & MILK BOTTLES.'



“THIS IS WHERE WE
DRINK OUR COFFEE.”