

## EST LIVING – CLOVELLY APARTMENT

*Firm Instagram handle: @jamesgarvanarchitecture*

**Project name:** Clovelly Apartment  
**Architect:** James Garvan Architecture  
**Location:** Clovelly  
**Photographer:** Katherine Lu  
**Builder:** Sean Hancock – Hancock Homes

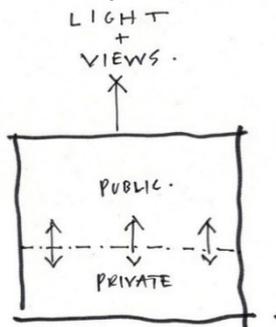
### BRIEF

---

This is my home; it is a very personal expression of how my family and I like to live. The project was an opportunity to strut my stuff, to create something that embodied my design principles and ambitions, but ultimately, I just wanted a home that intuitively felt good and nourished my soon-to-be-growing family.

The key components of the brief were as follows:

- Employ sophisticated composition and crisp detailing whilst retaining a sense that the home is a humble, comfortable and approachable series of spaces.
- 1965 vs 2019. Reconfigure the apartment to better reflect contemporary priorities and lifestyles.
- Maximise the efficiency of the floorplan. Most contemporary two-bedroom apartments have ~75sqm to work with, so we had to make our own 62sqm floorplate work as hard as possible.
- Engage with the ocean views and landscape
- Clearly delineate between private spaces and public spaces



Project Program Diagram

### CLIENTS

---

My wife and I had been living in this 1960s single bed apartment, perched on top of the clifftops at Clovelly, for a few years. We loved its intense connection to the ocean and landscape, but the internal configuration drove us mad. We were married in our front yard and soon had a baby on the way, which necessitated an additional bedroom – it was the spark that got this project up and running.

### RESPONSE TO BRIEF

---

The inspiration and references for this project were born out of its cliff-top context and the way that we like to live; we are connected to the landscape, socially active and sometimes reclusive.

The response to the brief and the primary/ distinctive elements of the project are as follows:

#### EXPRESSED STRUCTURE

In order to completely reconfigure the floorplan, ten out of a possible eleven load-bearing walls were removed and replaced with expressed steel beams. These beams are left exposed and describe the remanence of the previous floorplan within the new arrangement.



Honestly expressed exposed steel framing marks the apartment's previous configuration

### JOINERY WALL

An operable and dynamic joinery wall with a series of 'secret' pivoting panels divide the private spaces from the public spaces and anchors the kitchen/dining/living against the ocean view backdrop. Although the bedrooms and bathroom are immediately adjacent to the living spaces, you don't have a sense that they are there. Indeed, it is only the bespoke brass finger-pulls that bely the fact that there are rooms beyond the panelled joinery wall.



'Secret' pivoting panels divide the private spaces from the public spaces

### EAST-WEST ARRANGEMENT

Anchored by the joinery wall to the west, the east-west arrangement of all elements in the public living space ensures a strong engagement with the vast ocean view to the east. The directionality of the furniture and joinery encourages your eye to go beyond the foreground to the landscape and ocean in the midground and off to the horizon in the distance.



The east-west internal arrangement ensures that the ocean plays a strong role in the interior of the apartment

### FLOORPLAN -1965 vs 2019

A complete re-work of the 54-year-old floorplan was undertaken. The existing floorplan prescribed to 1960s ideologies; the kitchen was back-of-house, the rooms were small and compartmentalised, and access to the ocean views was limited.

In orienting the consolidated kitchen/dining/living space longitudinally along the eastern facade, the new floorplan prioritises the living spaces and connects them strongly with the view and access to natural light. This living space is bright, serene and ever-changing given its proximity to the ocean. In contrast, the private spaces are proportioned to be more intimate, dark and calm. Each of these intimate rooms can access the views to the east via the permeable operable wall.

Given the limited floorspace and the fact that existing windows could not be modified, the floorplan is extremely efficient. Joinery units are used to separate rooms in lieu of walls, structural framing is buried in external walls and circulation paths throughout the home are economical.



1965 Apartment Configuration



2019 Apartment Configuration

### MATERIAL PALETTE

The material palette is restrained and relies on variations in textures and tones to achieve richness. Imperfect powdery white-set plastered walls are contrasted by high-gloss enamel painted ceilings whilst the limed plywood joinery and oak floorboards bring warmth and approachability to the palette.

The passage of time and the human touch is marked by the soft marble table-tops and bespoke raw brass fittings and fixtures; polished over time where touched and tarnished elsewhere.



Raw brass fittings are polished over time where touched and tarnished elsewhere.

### OBJECT DISPLAY & STORAGE

An additional layer of personalisation is brought to the project via the various object displays throughout the home. The central joinery display that nestles between the steel beams overhead not only provides an opportunity to display objects, but softly delineates between the dining and lounge spaces. It re-proportions those spaces without losing connectivity between them.

The limited floorspace demanded the maximisation of storage – joinery units are incorporated throughout the home with every unit either displaying objects or concealing them.



## OUTCOME

---

If the objective of great architecture is to enrich people's lives, then the level of happiness that this project has brought us is living proof. At the time of writing, we have been living in our new home for the past few months and our baby is due to arrive next week – without exaggeration, we couldn't be happier.

## CHALLENGES

---

Being your own client is HARD – suddenly, all your decisiveness goes out the window and a simple exercise like choosing a loo-roll-holder becomes agonising! The project was delivered on time and on budget without compromising on the design imperatives, but these three driving factors were constantly in tension.

Undertaking such an extensive modification to a first-floor unit in a four-storey building was certainly a challenge, particularly from a services and access point-of-view. Installing 3000kg of new structure and re-routing plumbing and electrical runs in an old building without disturbing or accessing the units below or above required some lateral thinking. Collaboration with the builder was strong and we problem-solved our way through the project very effectively.

## SUSTAINABILITY & DEVELOPMENT MODEL

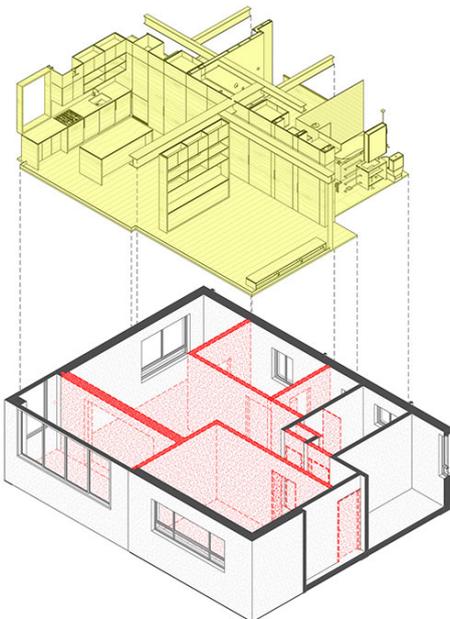
---

### SUSTAINABILITY

A deliberate choice was made to avoid any mechanical ventilation. In opening up the floorplan and introducing the operable joinery wall, every single room now enjoys natural cross-ventilation negating the need for air-conditioning. In addition, automated heavy window-coverings shield the apartment from direct sunlight in summer whilst trapping in warm air in during the winter months.

### DEVELOPMENT MODEL

This project might be looked at as an effective development model for units in other 1950s/60s apartment blocks. The ordeal of undertaking major structural, plumbing and electrical modifications have been vastly outweighed by the upside of additional amenity, increased functionality and the improved light, space, views and quality of life for the inhabitants.



### MATERIALS & PRODUCTS

Joinery – Limed Marine Plywood  
Floorboards – Engineered 'Hekke' oak floorboards by Tongue N Groove  
Benchtops – 6mm Porcelain 'Argento' by Artedomus  
Tabletops – Slabs of carrara marble by Euromarble  
Sofa – 'Nook' by Jordan  
Dining Chairs – 'Le Corbusier' by Thonet  
Ceramics & Pendant Light - Mud