

THE AUSTRALIAN

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MANSION

FEBRUARY 2025

INCORPORATING NEWS FROM DOW JONES' MANSION GLOBAL

Snow business

Japan's ski property hotspot

Vote of confidence

US market optimism soars with Trump's return

Bottoms up

Home bars raise the local glamour stakes

ART & CRAFT

An early 20th century architect's home is reborn

+ 12-page interiors section

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COVER Techne's renovation of modernist architect Rodney Alsop's former home, built in the 1920s in Melbourne's Toorak



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Editor's letter

Welcome to our first edition of *Mansion* for 2025, jam-packed with stories on how you can make an average return of 300 per cent on Japanese real estate investments in the ski resort town ship of Niseko (albeit over the long haul); the demand for marina berths on Sydney Harbour – they're selling strongly at two new luxury residential developments; and the continuing popularity of that old chestnut, the designer home bar.

I've just returned from skiing in Niseko, and apart from the resort township on Japan's north island copping more snow than it has seen in 68 years – and costing half what Thredbo or Falls Creek does in terms of lift passes, ski hire and lessons – I was very impressed with the snow's quality as well as its quantity and, of course, by the real estate. And don't mention the sublime food!

I am also impressed with the opportunity to buy prized marina berths at two new developments on Sydney Harbour – at Mortlake and Putney (17km and 14km from the CBD, respectively) – with apartment buyers snapping up these rare offerings. But they don't come cheap. In the Mortlake development the marina berths start at \$585,000, plus the cost of your off-the-plan apartment. See Michelle Singer's story on page 16.

Although the days of Covid are well behind us – will anyone ever forget those lockdowns? – the home bar has not lost its popularity. In fact they seem to be a growing trend, according to some of Australia's key designers, including Yasmine Ghoniem of YSG Studio. Take a look at Libby Moffet's story on page 34. There's also her lovely cover piece on renovating the former residence of a pioneering architect in the swish Melbourne suburb of Toorak, where logistics boss Paul Little has just sold his grand mansion Coonac for more than \$120m.

We hope you enjoy this issue.

Lisa Allen
Editor



34 COLLAROY ROAD, GUANABA, QUEENSLAND



🏠 4 📏 4.5 🚗 7 🏠 1,510m²* 📏 7.64acres* 🌊 82.8m* 🛠️ 📄 📅 📞

EUROPEAN-INSPIRED RIVERFRONT ESTATE

Offering unsurpassed seclusion and privacy, 'Rivendell' is a grand 7.64 acre riverfront estate. Set amongst glorious botanical gardens, it has been architecturally designed to fuse timeless European elegance with modern Australian luxury.

Flawless and comforting, relax by the fireplace in the formal lounge, or celebrate life's milestones on the expansive alfresco terrace. A chef's kitchen and butler's pantry complete with Miele appliances and a commercial walk-in cool room also feature, along with a home theatre, executive office and four spacious bedrooms, including the sophisticated master suite.

In the grounds, privacy and tranquillity prevail. Stroll through the curated gardens, embrace sustainability with a thriving fruit orchard or take a dip in the temperature controlled magnesium pool. Additionally, indulge your equestrian passion with an arena, stables and paddocks. Enjoy complete serenity while staying conveniently connected to everything the Gold Coast has to offer.

*approximate *gross floor area

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Raising THE BAR

Homes are stepping up to cater to the ongoing cocktail trend that began during the pandemic

From custom-made drink trolleys to dedicated rooms featuring sultry lighting and colourful stone surfaces, home bars are adding a new splash of glamour to Australian residences.

Leading interior designers report that demand for bar spaces has continued to rise since the Covid-19 lockdowns of 2020-21 put the spotlight on home entertaining.

"We all became specialised bartenders over Covid, brushing up our cocktail-making skills in an attempt to differentiate Friday and Saturday nights from the humdrum of the work-from-home [WFH] week," says interior designer Yasmine Ghoniem, director of YSG Studio.

"Lockdowns are well and truly over, but the habit of making a cocktail is here to stay."

Justine Hugh-Jones, principal of residential design practice Hugh-Jones Mackintosh, agrees.

"Everyone's asking for home bars," Hugh-Jones says. "Particularly with WFH, people want to delineate their home space – and what's better than a sundowner or cocktail at the end of the day to say work's over?"

Interior designer Greg Natale says while home bars have always been popular in his eponymous design studio's large-scale projects, he's noted a "distinct increase" in requests across all clients.

"A beautifully designed home bar or cellar isn't just functional, it's a statement piece that enhances the home's value and atmosphere and the owner's lifestyle," Natale says.



Natale says his practice often integrates bars into walls, incorporating 4-5m of joinery that blends with surrounding architecture, or creates dedicated bar rooms with features such as central islands and customised cabinetry.

While the aesthetics can often lean towards a "moody, masculine vibe" with rich dark materials, that's not always the case, says Natale,

whose creations include an impressively large bar featuring white stone and furniture in a home in Sydney's Neutral Bay.

YSG's Ghoniem says her studio has incorporated bars in dining rooms and kitchens using feature stone and integrated downlights on shelving to "really show off the bottled merch".

Regardless of its location, Ghoniem says it's

Home bars can feature luxurious stonework, with innovative lighting and decorative flourishes that help the mood



important that a bar's design is a conversation starter, pointing to a favourite "bar on wheels" she designed for a penthouse project.

Crafted by Maiden, the eye-catching trolley features a blue granite drink preparation surface that complements the apartment's kitchen benchtop, as well as an integrated lamp that can be switched on at night when the party spills out to the balcony.

Hugh-Jones says she often designs bar zones within kitchen and dining areas, but in a recent project in Sydney's Mosman her firm created a

dedicated cellar room off the living area. Featuring black steel framed glass doors, the room includes a high table as well as relaxed lower seating.

If space is an issue, the designer recommends incorporating a beautiful drinks trolley into the styling of a room.

"A trolley says 'come sit down and have a conversation, just relax,'" she says.

Bars can also be a "really sexy" addition where homeowners can indulge in more daring finishes such as jewel-coloured stone, according to Hugh-

Jones, who created a feature wall of onyx for a bar in a San Francisco residence recently.

When it comes to the practicalities of creating a great bar, the designer believes seating is key.

"You need to have good seating next to a bar so you can connect to the person making the drink," she says.

Ghoniem recommends using a stone surface such as granite, which is less absorbent than marble, in case of spills.

"You also need drawers to store cocktail-making utensils that you don't want on show. An

integrated bar fridge located under the counter is a plus too, so mixers are at the ready when guests arrive," she says.

Natale points to the need for custom cabinetry and shelving to keep bottles and glassware organised, and says the right lighting can make a bar space more intimate.

"Dimmable sconces, LED strip lighting, statement pendants and integrated cabinetry lighting are strategic ways to light up your bar," he says. "We often bring in a lighting designer to help nail it."