

The living room, these pages, doubles as a gallery and work space for the woven elements of Dani Marti's art; he paints in his studio above. "I play hip-hop music upstairs and classical music downstairs," he says, highlighting the differences in mood. The sofa, re-upholstered in Brella waterproof yachting cloth, is fitted with castors. Other pieces include a pair of '50s Carl Jacobs 'Jason' chairs, a red leather 'Butterfly' chair from Euroform, and a coffee table from DeDeCe. Cushions are in Jim Thompson silk. A Targett 'Antennae' lamp sits on a white-painted speaker. Hanging above the sofa is Marti's *Black Cross*, acrylic and enamel on canvas.



A SYDNEY ARTIST DECLARES HIS HOME AN ALL-WHITE CANVAS AGAINST WHICH WORK, AND LIFE, EVOLVES.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **CHRIS CHEN**



In the new kitchen-dining area, opposite left, the original pantry wall was demolished and the balcony incorporated to create extra space. The new pantry (not seen) now occupies the dumb waiter, a remnant from the building's serviced apartment days. Breezway glass louvres fill the original west-facing balcony opening, topped with a Silent Gliss 'Sheerweave' blind. The dining

table has a Charles Eames base; chairs from DeDeCe. Cupboards, benchtops and skirting are in Abet Laminati laminates; floor is Amtico vinyl. Tapware by Vola. The bicycle is Marti's preferred mode of city transport. Opposite, top: Marti's wood and plastic *Happy Cross* hangs in the entrance above a bench designed for shoe removal and storage. Opposite, bottom: flowering chives.



The entrance hall, above, painted Evergard 'Bistro Brown', provides a focal point in the white interior. A Spanish bronze chandelier, a family heirloom, casts a warm glow, aided by the original maple joinery. Facing is Marti's plastic net/acrylic *Yellow Hills*, beside the guest room door; the slatted construction hanging on the right is a loo window ("very Zen"), a gift from friends in Melbourne. In the left foreground is a work by Phil Drummond. The floorboards are painted with white Evergard two-pack acrylic urethane.



With an uncompromising sweep of brilliant white and a rigorous paring back of clutter, Barcelona-born artist Dani Marti has brought the required sense of clarity and calm to his top-floor apartment in a five-storey, National Trust-listed block on a Sydney Harbour bay. “I wanted to be more involved with my art,” he

says, “and I needed a very empty, neutral space to be able to look at my work. In a way, it’s a step towards a warehouse space.”

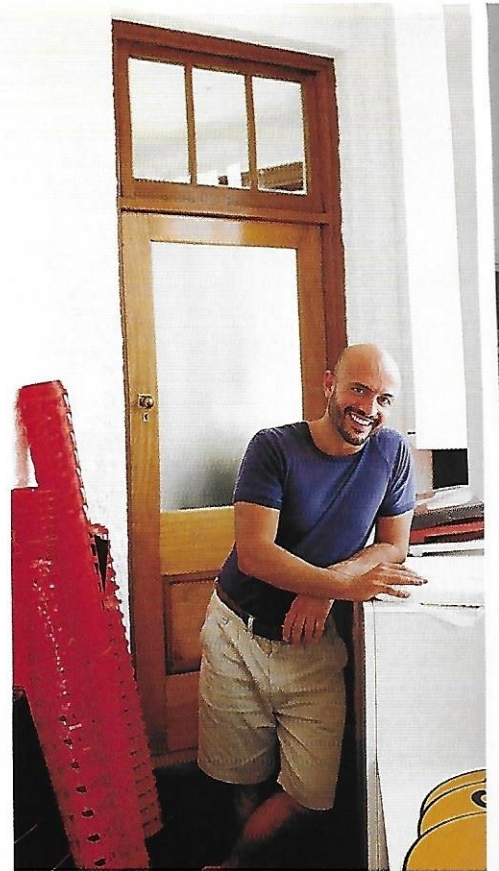
An initial renovation four years ago by interior designer George Freedman had delivered a kitchen/dining space by incorporating a pantry and balcony into the existing kitchen area, as well as providing a new bathroom fitout. “Strong, powerful” colour played an important role in defining individual rooms.

Says Freedman: “Dani wanted a complete change from what we’d done previously, without too much additional expense. So

we decided to repaint the apartment, including the floor, turning it into an all-white space.” A visit to Yuill Crowley Gallery in Sydney’s Dymocks Building dispelled Marti’s initial reservations about turning the floors a brilliant white. “I had seen some bleached, limed floors before then, but I realised that I wanted something more gutsy,” he says. “I wanted the floor to look like a wall. What I like is that there’s no edge – the room is complete.”

The single exception to the overall blanket of white is the entrance hall, which retains the Evergard ‘Bistro Brown’ walls from Freedman’s first renovation and the original exposed maplewood joinery, creating a warm, womb-like space at the centre of the apartment and defining the other rooms, which form a ring around it. The living room and the main bedroom each has its own access to a study/storage area, which occupies another former balcony space adjoining the guest bedroom.

Furniture in the apartment has been reduced to “only the



essential items for [Marti's] lifestyle", with existing pieces re-covered or simply painted white. In the living room, furniture is fitted with castors to allow the floorspace to be cleared or rearranged for work. While Marti paints in a separate studio upstairs, he likes to produce the woven element of his art at home, working on the floor. "The good thing about the floor is that I can use it as a wall, so I can see how my work would appear on a white surface," he says. White walls and the original picture rail allow the apartment to function as a gallery space. "I tend to change the work every two weeks. I bring it down from the studio and look at it for a while."

Lighting had to offer the flexibility required of a continually evolving and multi-functional space. A small opening was cut into the bathroom ceiling to provide loft access in order to install a series of recessed halogen spotlights ("an advantage of having the top floor flat", says Marti). Angles are regularly altered to

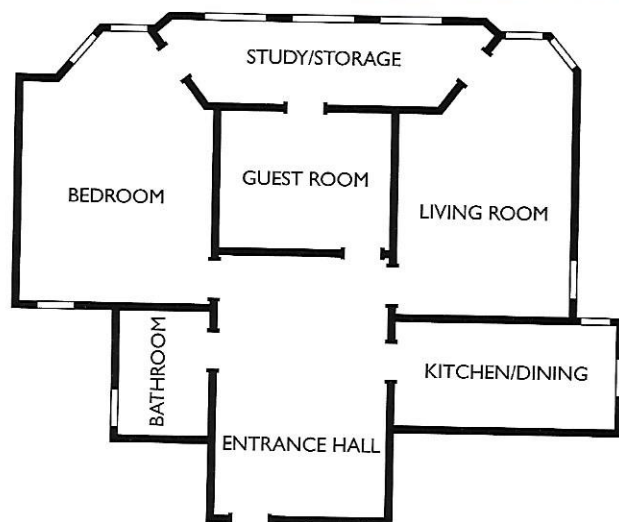
highlight different objects or provide pools of light for working.

Being up high and with windows all around, the apartment benefits from good cross-ventilation, supplemented by ceiling fans in each room. The original balcony opening in what is now the kitchen-dining space has been fitted with glass louvres, with a heat-proof mesh blind installed to temper summer extremes. In other rooms, roller blinds are mounted at the base of the windows for greater flexibility of control, offering eye-level screening while retaining natural light above.

In homage to the pristine whiteness, the apartment is designated a shoe-free zone, with a simple, custom-made bench in the hall to assist in footwear removal and storage. But, as in much of Dani Marti's work, there's a deeper reasoning beyond obvious practicalities. "I like the idea of people removing their shoes," he says. "There's a psychological change when you walk into this space." **WRITER: JULIE SIMPKIN PRODUCER: JANET JAMES**

The guest room, opposite, left, opens to the study/storeroom, which occupies a section of the original balcony. Dani Marti's *Buddhahood #4* hangs above the day bed, which is covered with the same white Brella yachting cloth used to re-upholster the living room sofa. Silent Gliss roller blinds, here and throughout the apartment, are fixed to the base of the windows, rather than the

top, for increased natural light without loss of privacy. Opposite, right: Dani Marti in the study/storeroom. Here (and in corners throughout the apartment) he stores the rolls of industrial netting that forms the woven element of his artwork. The concrete floor of the former balcony was painted black, and the once grey-green pebbledash walls given several coats of brilliant white.



In the main bedroom, above, an Art of Stone wrought iron bed, now painted white, is covered with a Country Road Homewear white herringbone throw. Hanging from the picture rail are (from left): *Midden*, *White Fields* and *Blue Fields*, all by Dani Marti. On the carved Spanish glory box beside the bed sits a small Buddha (detail, opposite), which Marti salvaged from domestic dumping. A ceiling fan supplements natural cross-ventilation. The plant beside the window is one of only two that survived the paring-back process.

The Zen-like understatement of this dining setting, below and opposite, top left and centre, is given a clever colour accent with blush-pink pomegranates wrapped in old sheet music at each place-setting. The central focus is a KWL Imports '2001' glass vase, \$99.95, with floating gardenias, visually anchored to the table by a 'placemat' of breadcrumbs. Standing sentinel are glass tumblers, \$12 each from Parterre Garden, planted with baby's tears. 'Empire' dinnerware and cutlery; 'Hyacinth' bamboo placemats, \$5.95 each; all from Empire Homewares. B&B 'Apta' table and chair from the Maxalto collection from Space Furniture. Details, last pages.



Growing bulbs indoors, opposite, top right, can be doubly rewarding when they are used to decorate the table. Hyacinths in bulb-forcing jars, \$12 each from Parterre Garden, sit on a tablemat of cut spring onions for interesting texture, colour and aroma. Bottom left: antique green glassware from Woollahra Antique Centre and The Olde Wares Shop makes a talking point when used for replanted bulbs and flowering plants, rather than fresh cut flowers, for a table or sideboard display. Bottom centre: for a foodie fillip, wrap a candle with asparagus spears and hold it all together with philodendron leaves bound with devil's gut. Bottom right: a shallow yellowstone bowl, \$55 from Papaya, is a delicate counterpoint to miniature jonquils, placed on a 'Hyacinth' bamboo placemat, \$5.95 from Empire Homewares. Miniature 'Iceberg' rose bush planted in a crackle-finish celadon bowl; enquiries to Bison Homewares. Details, last pages.

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