



WATERFRONT HOME

MASTERPIECE

An artist and her husband saved this falling-down Point Piper house and transformed it into a dramatic, harbourside home and studio.

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French-born artist Sophie Dagleish is sitting in her sunny studio working on a soft abstract painting that she's preparing for her first solo exhibition this November. The studio, like the rest of the artist's Sydney home, is surrounded by nature: Sophie can see leaves, trees and sky on both sides of the room. "I had always visualised the house of my dreams being a cross between a treehouse and a see-through house," she says in her soft French accent.

It seems Sophie got her wish with this home – perched above the water on Sydney Harbour – which she shares with her Melbourne-born husband Mark Dagleish and their two daughters.

After spending 17 years in London, the couple wanted to settle permanently in Australia and Sydney, with its warm climate and proximity to the water, was their city of choice. After a two-year search they came across an unusual '60s house designed by the late German émigré Hugh Buhrich. They loved the strong and heroic elevation of the home, which is characteristic of Buhrich's work, with its massive and irregular cantilevered slab supported on tall columns. Originally designed for one-level living on the upper floor and one small room set back in line with the rock face below, there are now four bedrooms and bathrooms over two levels below the third-level living, dining and kitchen area.

In 1961, the year the house was built, it was listed among the 10 best buildings and houses in *The Australian Journal of Architecture and Arts*. Sadly, for years it had been left empty and exposed to the elements. Architect Louise Nettleton described it as "a decrepit shell" and the Buhrich-designed joinery and built-in furniture with fantastic curves was long gone or beyond saving. Even so, Sophie and Mark felt an immediate affinity