

GET THE LOOK

LIVING ROOM SOFA  
Living Divani 'Neo Wall'  
Dedece  
[dedece.com.au](http://dedece.com.au)

COFFEE TABLE  
Custom design by  
Decus Interiors  
JP Finsbury  
[jpfinsbury.com.au](http://jpfinsbury.com.au)

RUG  
'Winter Nightsky'  
Robyn Cosgrove  
[robyncosgrove.com](http://robyncosgrove.com)

# COASTAL BEAUTY

An award-winning interior design firm based in Sydney creates a sophisticated yet unconventional beach house on the NSW Central Coast, writes Andrew Conway.

Question: When is a beach house not a beach house? Answer: When it's in the very capable hands of Alexandra Donohoe Church, founder and managing director of Sydney-based Decus Interiors and her team of highly creative designers.

The brief from the clients – a couple and their adult son seeking a retreat from their busy lives in Sydney – was threefold: design a home where they could entertain regularly, reference their love of travel and reflect the magnificent coastal setting.

But there's little straightforward about this sophisticated yet unconventional, elegant yet relaxed, stylish yet innately comfortable home. "We intended to make this beach house as 'un-beachy' as possible," says Donohoe Church.

The project was a blank canvas from the start, a new build in breezy Killcare on the NSW Central Coast, perched on a gently sloping plot that was home to a quintessential (but unlivable) beach shack that sadly had to be demolished.

Located about 1.5 hours from Sydney in Bouddi National Park, the block enjoyed a magnificent, north-facing and almost-uninterrupted panorama of beach, wilderness and ocean, which had to be central to the finished home.

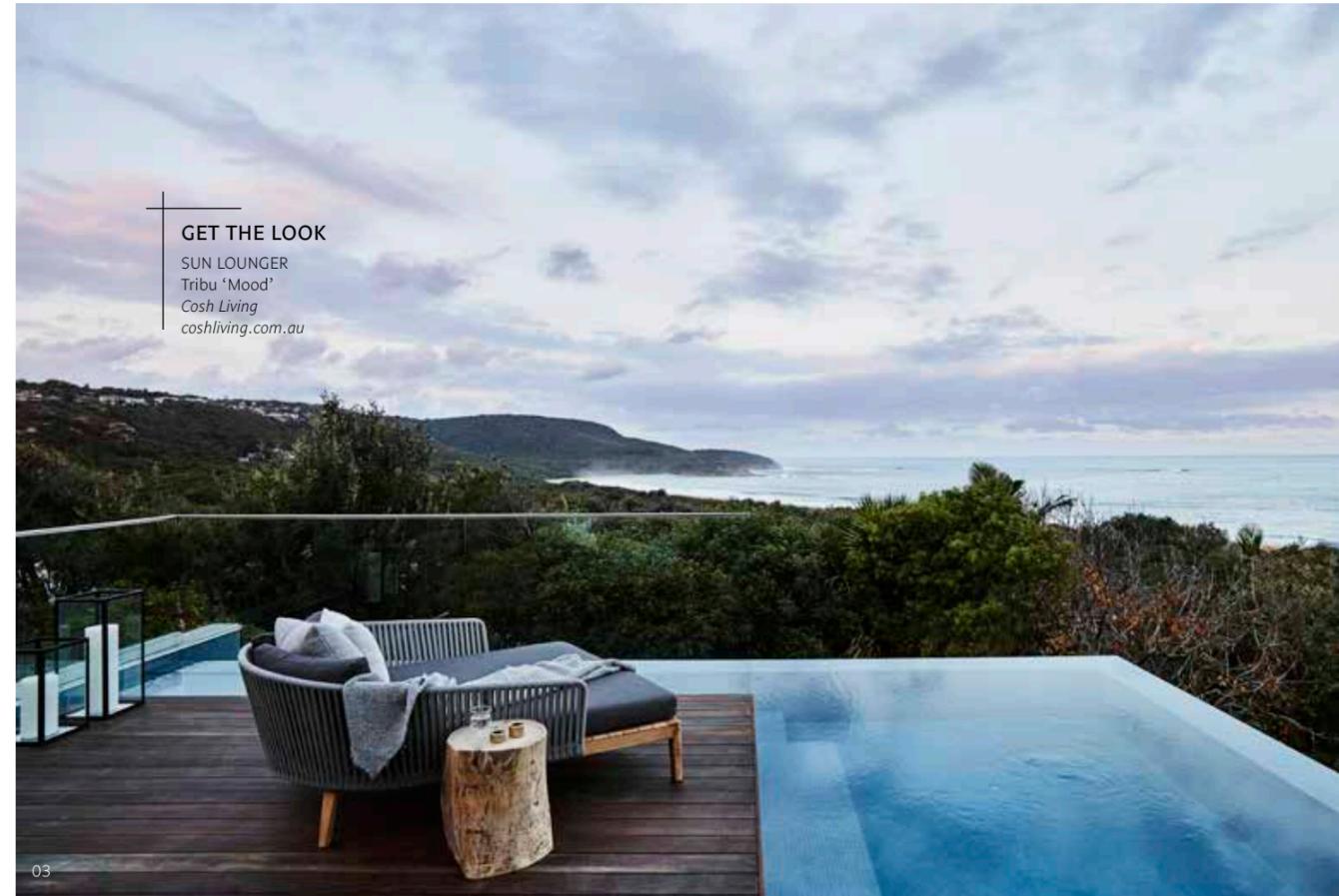
Working closely with architect-builder Square Design, the multi-disciplined Decus Interiors stamped its signature across the



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COUNTER STONE  
"Concordia" honed  
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02



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SUN LOUNGER  
Tribu 'Mood'  
Cosh Living  
coshliving.com.au

03



**GET THE LOOK**

STONE MANTLE  
Sourced by the owners  
on an overseas trip

05



**GET THE LOOK**

ARMCHAIRS  
Vintage French  
Mulholland Chair  
Sourced from L.A.

04

01 Living areas frame the view 02 Designer lighting and dramatic countertops in the kitchen 03 Outlooks don't get much better than from the pool 04 A reading nook 05 The home features antiques from the owners' travels 06 A custom-built table stars in the dining room 07 Bijoux powder room features a dramatic stone basin. All images © Anson Smart

project: luxurious but livable, with texture and practicality, while marrying the characteristics of European historic houses with relaxed Australian coastal comfort.

"There's a sense of free-flowing space throughout the house with many rooms bathed in natural light," says Donohoe Church. "Then we set out to balance these spaces with a rich palette and unexpected, intimate nooks."

"Using a calm base palette, we addressed the balance of space and light, introducing sophistication through layering even richer colours and textured materials," she adds. "It was also important to reflect the clients' interest in antiques and vintage pieces collected from their travels."

A key design focus was to integrate and maximise the breathtaking dual vista. Expansive floor-to-ceiling windows were strategically placed to ensure a flood of natural light into the main living spaces, while providing a seamless flow and connection to the open-air entertaining and pool area.

The unexpected abounds: a bijoux powder room with dramatic Breccia Nera stone layered on a custom-designed vanity, accessed via a hidden door set within the library joinery; an uber-cool 'speakeasy' bar concealed behind another secret door.

“There’s something intangible but powerful about injecting a little tension and the unexpected into every design,” says Donohoe Church. “We love the beauty in layering and the nuances of textures and materiality. These elements convey great richness to a space.”

Founded in 2009 – and now a team of 10 designers working across architecture, interiors and procurement – Decus Interiors is featured in glossy home design magazines worldwide, and was the proud recipient of a 2020 Australian Interior Design Award in the ‘Best of State’ category for another coastal home in Western Australia. “What I love about our studio is that we all work hand-in-hand,” concludes Donohoe Church. “Everyone touches each project in some way throughout the process.” ♦

Style file  
[decus.com.au](http://decus.com.au)

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Custom  
Original Finish  
[originalfinish.com.au](http://originalfinish.com.au)

DINING CHAIRS  
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Dedece  
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‘Breccia Nero’  
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