

"It's such a nice feeling, having your own space," says Bingle (relaxing in front of her favourite piece, a painting by Alun Rhys Jones). "If I've been overseas, it feels like home when I walk in the door."



My PRIVATE LIFE

AT HOME WITH LARA BINGLE



"I've always lived by the beach, so it was a nice change to come to the harbour," says the Sutherland Shire-raised Bingle (taking in the view from her balcony on Sept. 30).

Opening the doors to her new home, the model reveals how she's grown from her mistakes

When Lara Bingle bought her first home late last year—a chic waterfront apartment nestled in the exclusive Sydney suburb of Darling Point—she opted against celebrating with a champagne-soaked house-warming party as most 24-year-olds might have done. Instead, “I had a few friends over and we cooked a nice dinner,” says the model, reclining on her couch. “I haven’t had any parties here. I like to keep it as private as possible.” While the whitewashed, one-bedroom abode has stunning views of the harbour, nobody can gaze into it—a far cry from the \$6 million Bondi Beach penthouse she shared with her former fiancé, Australian cricket captain Michael Clarke, 30. “After I broke up with Michael, I really wanted a change—Bondi became far too hectic,” explains Bingle, who says she finds it “easier” having minimal contact with Clarke. “It was a beautiful home right on the beach, but it was very exposed. It was really important to

HAIR AND MAKEUP BY MAX MAY/COMPANY 1; STYLING BY IMOGENE BARROW/COMPANY 1; STYLING—LEFT: SINGLET BY STOLEN GIRL/FRIENDS CLUB; RIGHT: SINGLET BY RICK OWENS AND TRACK PANTS BY BONDS

Celebrity interior designer Jason Sullivan helped Bingle renovate her apartment, including adding this custom entertainment unit and bookshelf.



me to find a place that was private and quiet. Here, I can sit out on the balcony and no-one can see me.”

Bingle has learnt to value her privacy the hard way. As a young model who scored a proposal and huge diamond ring from Clarke in 2008, Bingle was a golden girl—but their split two years later, followed by the nude-shower photo scandal involving AFL player Brendan Fevola in March 2010, saw her become more of a whipping girl. Earlier this month, unflattering photos of her looking curvier than in her Speedo ambassador days created national buzz, and even her manager, Hermione Underwood, concedes, “I think the public has a love-hate relationship with Lara.”

Bingle herself says, “I used to try and persuade public opinion, but at the end of the day you can’t make people like you. It wasn’t making me happy, thinking about what people were writing and saying.”

The result of her public travails? With hindsight, Bingle has a new perspective on her spotlit life and is able to concede she has regrets. “Michael and I especially went through a lot in our five years together,” she says, sitting on the grey fabric couch in her living room. “Getting engaged, my dad dying [from cancer in May 2008], his dad getting cancer—we lived a very public life, everything was open and out there. I’ve learnt you have to protect your life a lot more than I did.” She admires what Clarke is

“doing now” in his approach to dating model Kyly Boldy, 30: “You never read about his new relationship. I wish that I had kept my wall up a bit more.”

As to barbs she has put on weight this year, Bingle says she’s a size 8–10, but acknowledges her shape has changed: “I’m just trying to embrace my curves and make sure I stay fit and well.” She hopes to further her international career next year, and her dream is to appear in pin-up bible *Sports Illustrated*. To keep the goal in her sights, she employs both a sprint trainer and a personal trainer, and varies her workouts with swimming and Pilates. She agrees her body has become more voluptuous since her teens—“without a doubt it gets