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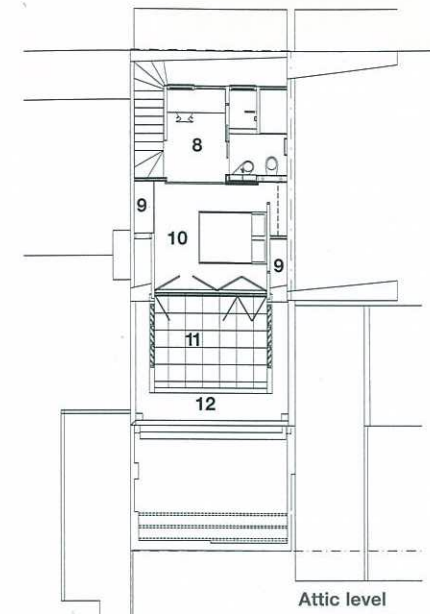
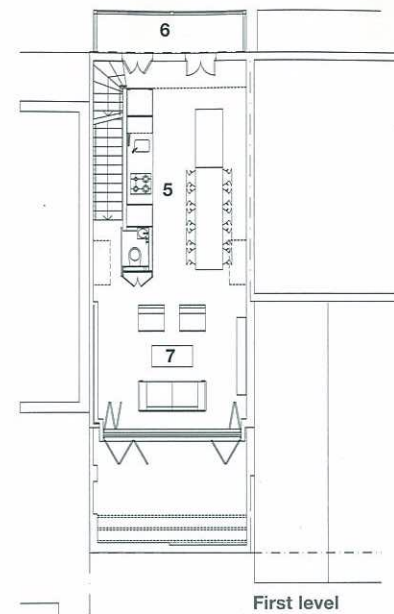
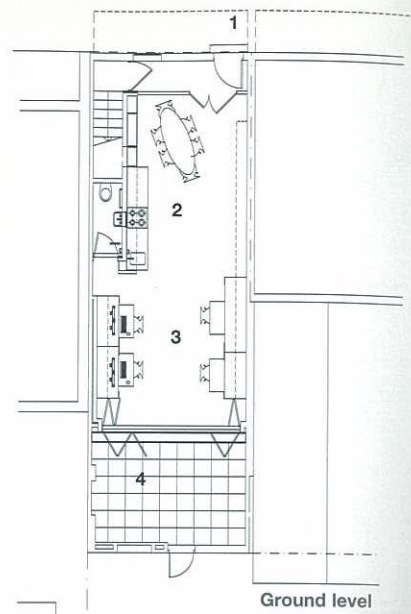


SERENE MODERN SPACES



MIXED USE

Sydney architect Erik Rudolfsson has set up his home and office in an East Sydney terrace. The ground-floor studio feels part of the lively street, and the upper floors are designed for relaxation and retreat.



- 1 Entry
- 2 Kitchenette
- 3 Office
- 4 Court
- 5 Dining/kitchen
- 6 Balcony
- 7 Living
- 8 Study
- 9 Void
- 10 Bedroom
- 11 Deck
- 12 Pond



OPENING PAGES, LEFT: The living and dining spaces on the first level are arranged so that they benefit from direct light via generous glazing at the front and rear. **RIGHT:** In lieu of a balcony or deck, bi-fold doors push right back to open the living area up to the breezes. **PREVIOUS PAGES, LEFT:** An Ant Table, by Everythink, is a flexible option for the living space. **RIGHT:** The kitchen is neatly contained within a wall of Tasmanian oak joinery. **THESE PAGES, LEFT:** At the top of the stairs the upper-level study is divided from the bedroom by a sliding panel. **RIGHT:** The ground-level powder room.

“concrete has lots of advantages, such as blocking fire and noise transmission,



plus the fact that it allowed me to put a pond on the attic level”

SOMETIMES IT TAKES AN OUTSIDER to realise the potential of a place. Although Swedish-born architect Erik Rudolfsson could hardly be called an outsider (he has lived in Australia for 18 years and studied architecture here), his renovation of a Victorian terrace house in East Sydney evinces a distinctly European sensibility.

“I wanted it to be mixed use. Something commercial downstairs with an apartment above,” he says. “It’s the ideal situation, I think, for the inner city, like an Italian *piano nobile* over a studio or workshop below. And it’s good for a number of reasons ... it means someone is home all the time and there’s life in the street. Purely residential is not the best option for the city.”

Erik bought the 4.7-metre-wide terrace, which sits at one end of Stanley Street, East Sydney, in 1997. Stanley Street was one of Sydney’s earliest cosmopolitan “eat streets” and Italian restaurants still abound there. “Up until the 1980s, it was one of the few places in Sydney where you could get a proper cappuccino,” Erik recalls.

Nowadays the suburb is in a state of flux and gentrification. Many of its Victorian terrace houses are being renovated and restored, and the sound of heavy construction machinery drilling the new cross-city tunnel nearby competes with the squeals of schoolchildren in local playing grounds. Another tunnel under the suburb, linking the Sydney Harbour Bridge to the Eastern Distributor, has taken much of the rat-run traffic off the streets, allowing a return to a quieter pace. And although prostitutes and drug dealers still ply their trade on street corners, they are largely ignored by the suburb’s new residents who live in smart apartment buildings like the nearby Burley Katon Halliday-designed Republic and Harry Seidler’s The Horizon.

From the street Erik’s terrace looks like many others in the area. But in this case a slick, modern interior over three levels is hidden behind the plain exterior, and is contained within the roof’s original ridgeline. Because of the extent of previous termite damage, Erik decided to gut the building, retaining only the facade to meet council demands. In order to maximise the internal space, he chose to use concrete slabs for the flooring. “The concrete floors brace the building so no steel frames were required,” he explains. “The idea was to combine structure and finished surface, which meant I saved space. Concrete has lots of advantages, such as blocking fire and noise transmission, plus the fact that it allowed me to put a pond on the attic level. I also like the look of it.”

The key to Erik’s renovation, which he designed with himself as the client, is flexibility. “That was my main concern,” he says. “At the moment I use the ground floor as a studio, but it could be a shop or a showroom. It could also be combined with the flat above to make one large residence, or be used as a separate bachelor’s flat.”

The front door opens to a small vestibule that feels a little like an internalised verandah space. Straight ahead is a door leading into the studio, while to the right is another door leading to the apartment above. The studio would make a well-set-up bachelor pad. A fully equipped kitchen runs along one wall and behind it, tucked into the space under the stairs, is a small but smart bathroom. When closed, the frosted door into the red-tiled room acts as the shower screen.

The rear half of the downstairs area occupies the full width of the site and opens, via floor-to-ceiling folding glass doors, out to a small courtyard that backs onto a reserve. Tall masonry walls, softened with warm violet-grey render, enclose the space. It’s the same colour that pigments the steel-trowelled concrete floors.

The second storey is the apartment’s living space, with another streamlined kitchen fitted into a joinery wall that also houses a laundry and a powder room at the top of the stairs. “It’s a very simple floor plan, really. There’s a service pod and the circulation goes around it.”

Fitting the kitchen along one wall frees up enough space beside it for a dining table. Skylights on both sides of the room provide a subtle demarcation between eating and living areas. “I like open-planning but spaces still need to be marked,” says Erik. “There needs to be a delineation between where you sit to watch television and where you dine. It can be a few steps or a piece of joinery, or lighting.”

Again, full-height folding doors with external louvres allow the room to be opened up completely to the outside, with a view straight out into the canopies of several large eucalypts. “The door joinery is what I spent the money on. Everything else is robust and hard – that was the intention. It means you can rent out the apartment and if the floor gets scratched, it doesn’t matter,” Erik explains.

A flight of timber treads with open risers leads to the top floor, which has been neatly fitted into the attic space. Two dormer windows face Stanley Street: one illuminating a small study area, the other providing light, ventilation and a view from the L-shaped bathroom.

A sliding door separates these two front rooms from the bedroom behind. It, in turn, opens directly onto a terrace, which is bordered on three sides by a trough-like fish pond that acts as a retention tank, taking all of the roof’s stormwater. On either side, screens of fixed vertical timber louvres direct the viewer’s gaze into the trees. “Because it’s an apartment, having an outdoor area is really important,” Erik says. “The park is one of the best features about this place and I designed the apartment to look straight into the trees.”

It seems a pity, then, that Erik’s favourite elevation – the rear vertical stack of three neat cubes – is only ever appreciated by the birds and the occasional resident out walking their dog. **JENNA REED BURNS**



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CONSULTANTS
 Engineer Duncan Bray Pty Ltd
 Landscaping, interiors era erik
 rudolfsson architecture

PRODUCTS
Roofing BlueScope Zincalume metal deck, slate grey **External walls** Brick walls rendered **Internal walls** Render and set brick walls in Berger Breatheasy, Dulux 'Whisper White'; Gyprock Plasterboard, set and painted in Berger Breatheasy, Dulux 'Whisper White' **Doors and windows** G James clear anodised aluminium doors, with inserted Aneeta frameless glass double hung windows in outer door frames **Flooring** Boral structural slab, polished and sealed **Lighting** Gamma Avanti; Lumascope **Kitchen** Electrolux Gallery cooktops, r'hoods, oven, microwave and d'washers; Liebherr integrated fridge; Caroma and Hansa tapware; Franke sinks; Tasmanian oak plywood joinery; Fontainebleau Nefiko Marble benchtop and splashback; Dulux 'Whisper White' polyurethane joinery to office; CaesarStone 'Snow White' bench top and splashback to office **Bathroom** Caroma Walvit toilet; Duravit basin; Euroclassic; Caroma taps; Hansa shower mixer; Classic Ceramics tiles; Asko washing machine and dryer; Devi heated towel rail; Madinoz towel rail, toilet roll holder, towel hook, handles **Heating** Rinnai Infinity 26 hot water unit; glazed attic pergola; external al shutters **External elements** concrete pavers to court and attic deck **Other** era work stations; Interstudio floor lights and furniture; Sydney Stainless Engineering ss handrails

TIME SCHEDULE
 Design, documentation
 6 months
 Construction 12 months

PHOTOGRAPHY
 Brett Boardman

ABOVE: The ground-level office maintains a connection with the street. **BELOW:** The bedroom deck takes in glimpses of the city skyline.

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