

HOUSES

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romantic rural site that architects and feature editors dream of, they now found themselves grappling with the messy complexities of the city – neighbours, planning codes, and of course existing building fabric.

Penny and Huw's projects retained the rationality and environmentally sustainable ethos of the British "high-tech" firms the couple had worked for but they also began to focus on the more haptic, human qualities presented by natural materials. Typical of their output is the Paddington Terrace project, which saw an existing, dark and poky Victorian terrace transformed into a light and airy contemporary dwelling. Most of the building's internal walls were knocked down to allow light and air to filter through the interior. A memory of its original floor plan, though, is retained in the exposed steel structure that both frames the space and demarcates how it was once divided. The coolly rational quality of this intervention is tempered by the use of thick-cut pale Oregon pine as flooring, which both enhances the luminescence of the interior and lends it warmth.

Remarkably, despite the fact that the architects had to grapple with the knotty challenges of heritage overlays, existing building fabric and a dense inner-city location, Paddington Terrace still reads very much as a singular work. This is true of most of the residences that the practice has designed since Bombala Farmhouse, many of which are modifications to city homes. Bellevue Hill House, for example, appears as new but is largely composed of pre-existing structure. In this case the building, a kitsch confection in pink paint and "period" detailing, was blessedly free of heritage constraints. Its bones, however, were perfectly serviceable, and for economical and environmental reasons the practice opted to retain them. The "new" building is a powerful reduction to the bare essentials – a composition of orthogonal volumes and abstractly composed window openings.

More recently, the practice has had an opportunity to stretch its high-tech muscles again. Kharkov House began life as a commission to improve access to a 1920s-era villa, also in Bellevue Hill. Entry to the house, which is perched on top of a sheer sandstone cliff, could only be gained via taxingly steep stairs or a rickety motorized inclinator. After mammoth excavation work, the occupants not only had a brand new glass elevator to whisk them to their

2011

Paddington TERRACE

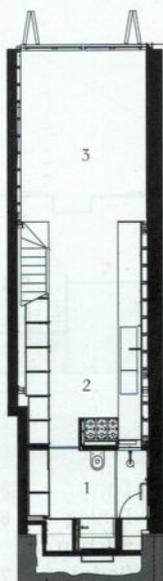
• SYDNEY, NSW •



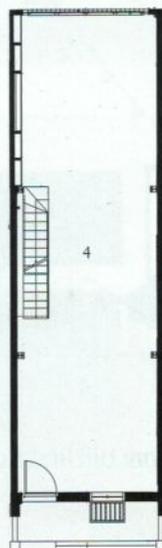


04 Despite the challenges of heritage overlays, the existing building fabric and a dense inner-city location, the Paddington Terrace still reads as a singular work.

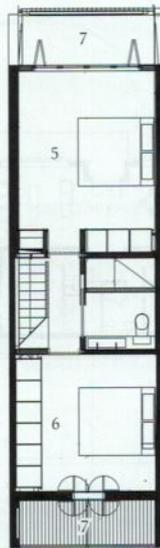
05 The interiors of the Paddington Terrace have been transformed into light and airy contemporary spaces.



Paddington lower ground floor 1:200

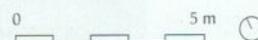


Paddington ground floor 1:200



Paddington first floor 1:200

- 1 Laundry
- 2 Kitchen
- 3 Dining
- 4 Living
- 5 Main bedroom
- 6 Guest bedroom
- 7 Terrace



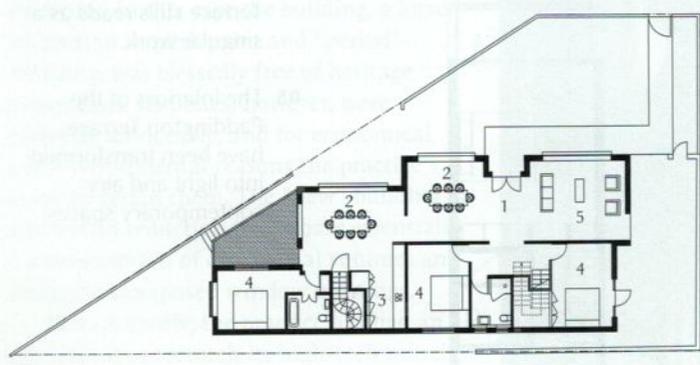
2009
Bellevue Hill
HOUSE
• SYDNEY, NSW •



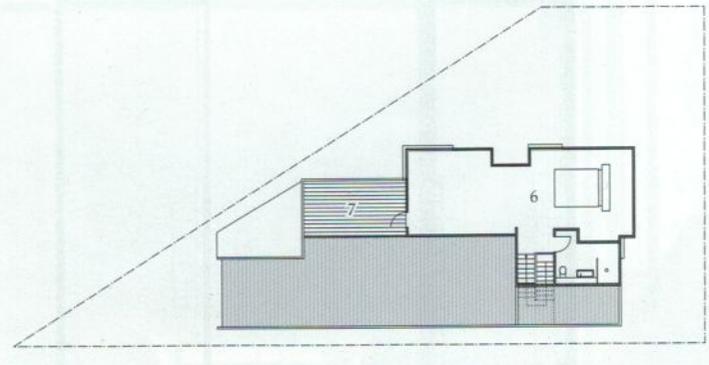
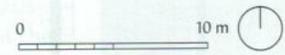
06 The Bellevue Hill House reads as a composition of orthogonal volumes and abstractly composed window openings.

07 Despite being largely composed of pre-existing structure, the Bellevue Hill House appears new. Artwork: Emily Kame Kngwarreye (background) and John Mawurndjul (foreground).

08 The clean, simple interiors of the Bellevue Hill House feature timber flooring in a herringbone pattern. Artwork: Emily Kame Kngwarreye.



Bellevue Hill ground floor 1:400



Bellevue Hill first floor 1:400

- | | | | |
|---|---------|---|--------------|
| 1 | Entry | 5 | Living |
| 2 | Dining | 6 | Main bedroom |
| 3 | Kitchen | 7 | Deck |
| 4 | Bedroom | | |



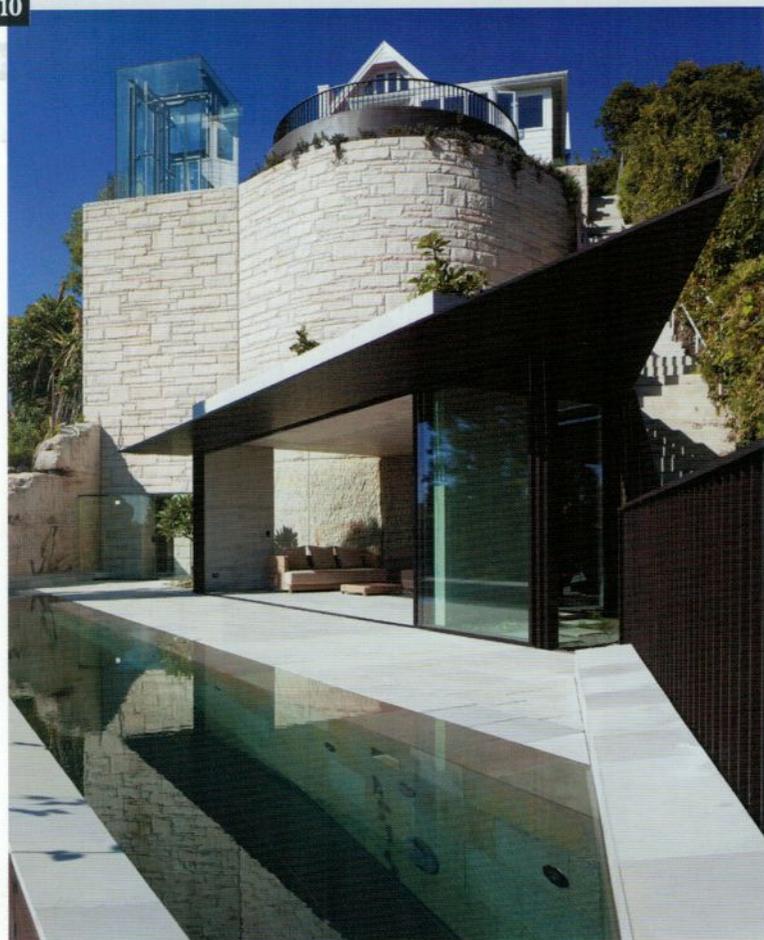
2011

Kharkov HOUSE

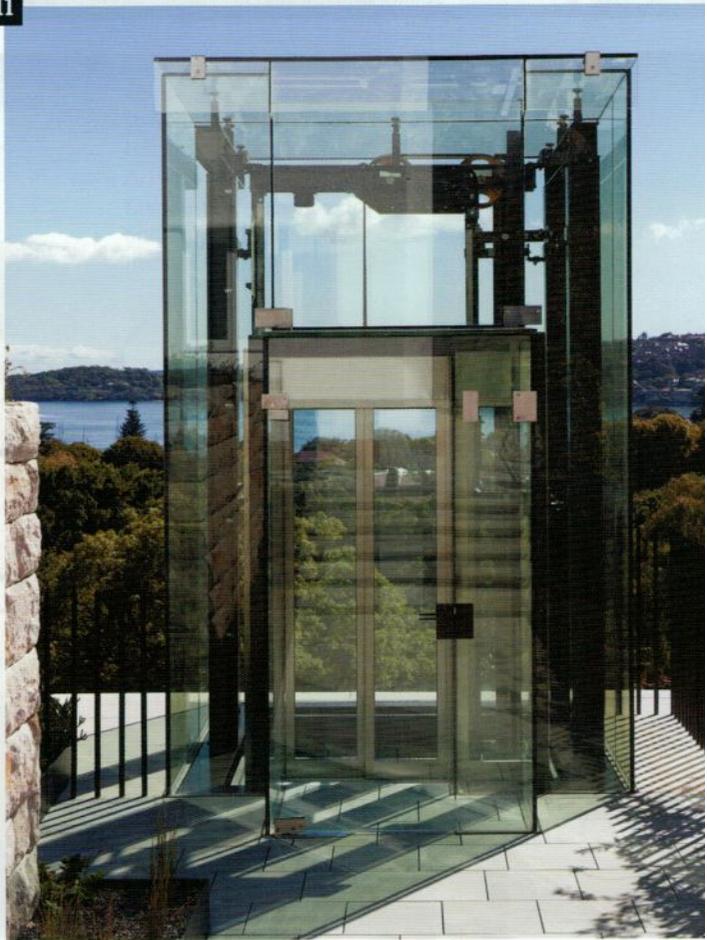
• SYDNEY, NSW •



10



11



09 A new outdoor living space comprising a lap pool, lawn and cabana is embedded in the cliff at the Kharkov House.

10 Perched on top of the sheer sandstone cliff, the original Kharkov House was difficult to access.

11 The new glass elevator at Kharkov House has been designed to preserve the original building's spectacular views.

12 The proposed Cave House is envisaged to hunker down into its setting and features a turf roof. Visualization: Matt Fonda and Sonny Lee.

door but also new outdoor living space by way of a lap pool, lawn and cabana embedded in the cliff. It is the lift, though, that is the star of the show – rather than ending up with clunky, purely functional bolt-on mechanics, the architects sourced something special – a German, machine room-less lift. “The lift came from Germany, the glass from China – it was like a Foster’s office project,” says Huw. “If we hadn’t had those experiences at Foster’s and so on, there’s no way we would have known how to tackle it.” The fact that the lift had no machine room meant the architects could keep its cliff-top entry enclosed in a bespoke glass shell, preserving the original building’s spectacular views. The final outcome, with its high-tech elevator and trimly elegant cabana in black and bronze, is a bit *Thunderbirds*, a bit James Bond – and a far cry from the *Fraggle Rock* jumble Huw recalls first encountering. From messy complexity, Penny and Huw once again managed to craft clarity.

Still, the two can’t help but look back wistfully now and then to their first project

at Bombala. As Huw says, “We often fantasize about building little farmhouses in the middle of nowhere.” Fortunately, they do have at least one project on the boards at the moment that boasts a location as singular as their designs normally are. Named Cave House, it is located in Tuross Head, on the New South Wales coast, on a sloping, bush-clad site with serene views out to a nearby lake. As Huw describes, “We asked the clients to imagine walking through the bush and stumbling upon these rock ledges, the kind that wallabies sleep under, but simply wrapped in glass to become a house.” Hunkered down into its setting with a turf roof, the design is the antithesis of “touching the earth lightly.” Nevertheless, the building is near invisible in its bush surrounds. In Cave House, unlike Bombala Farmhouse and almost all of the work that has come since, what Collins and Turner is proposing is not singular but radically recessive, an anti-monument. Murcutt’s Magney House, ironically, will be just up the road. collinsandturner.com

IN PROGRESS

Cave HOUSE

• TUROSS HEAD, NSW •

