

A full-page portrait of Eva-Marie Prineas, an architect, sitting on a white ledge in front of a large window. She is wearing a black sleeveless dress with a white collar and black pants. She is smiling at the camera. To her left is a small black stool. To her right is a large potted plant and a small model of a building. The window behind her shows a view of a city with trees and buildings.

PEOPLE

## *Eva-Marie* **PRINEAS** *of Architect Prineas*

With a solid technical grounding and a “brilliant nuance in mixing old and new,” Eva-Marie Prineas creates generous and pertinent projects with authenticity.

Words by Genevieve Lilley  
Photography by Katherine Lu, Chris Warnes and Brett Boardman



01 The small scale of the firm allows the principal to be directly involved with clients. Photograph: Katherine Lu.



Architects often get wistful as they recall their first and leanest project. For Eva-Marie Prineas, it is a very compact warehouse apartment in Sydney's Darlington that has this effect. The apartment was completed for and by herself and her husband, on a budget of less than \$50,000. Most of those funds were spent on joinery, but some simple yet dramatic elements that were used (the blackened plywood floors and big pivot doors, for example) remain a preoccupation of the practice today.

The couple reluctantly sold the apartment in 2011 when their small boys got "more wriggly," and they moved to an old Victorian terrace in the inner west, which they are now about to rework. The tradition of fusing old with new is a very strong thread in Eva-Marie's work and is indeed one of the trademark skills of her twelve-years-strong practice.

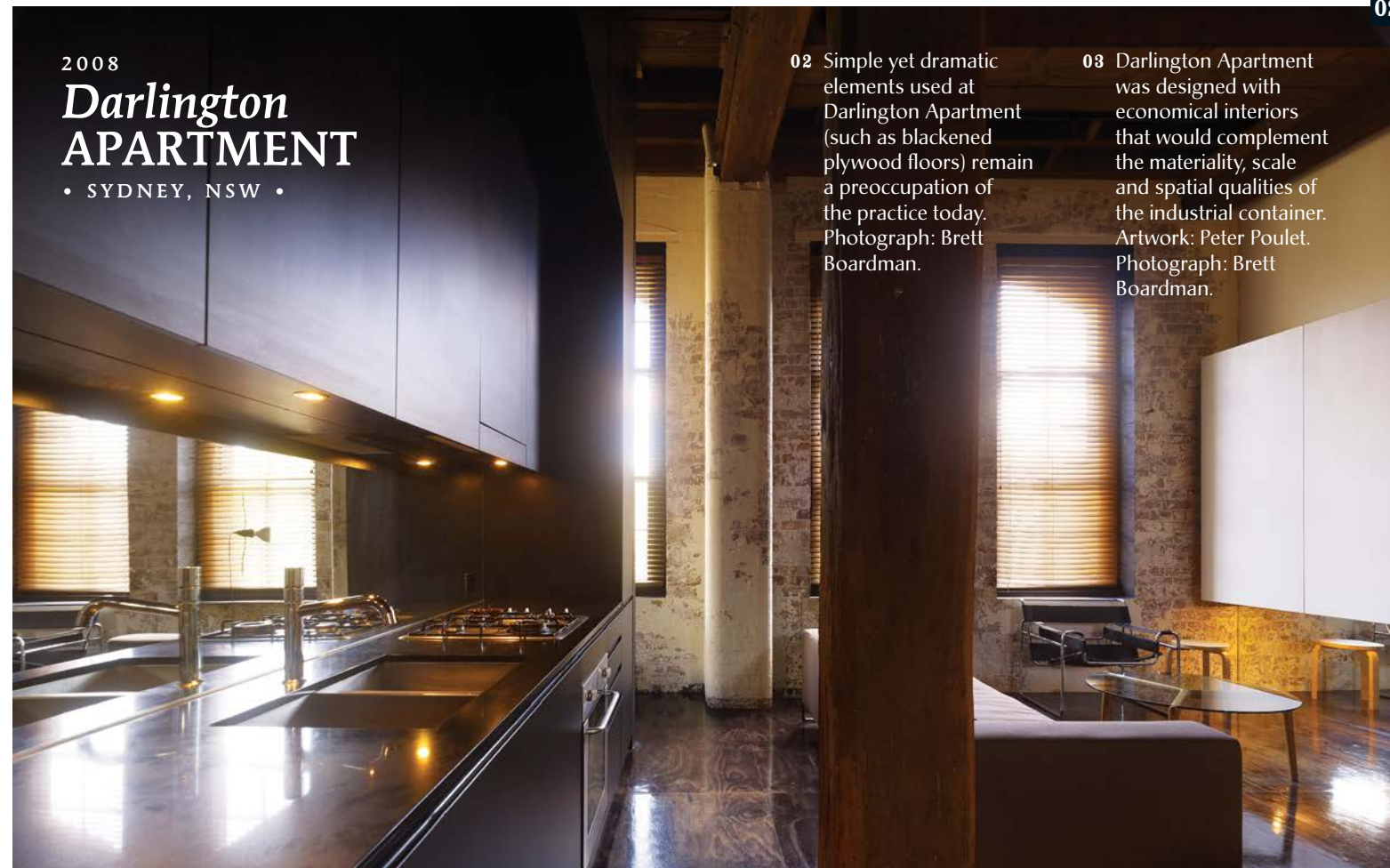
Back when Eva-Marie was a student, she spent months measuring and drawing the Wollomoolloo finger wharf for her then-employer Clive Lucas, Stapleton and Partners. In 2015, her Apartment Finger Wharf project found her back there again. The apartment is a city pied-à-terre for a couple who live in the mountains, but its floor plan was flawed and dark, with a second bedroom opening only onto an internal communal corridor. The clients wanted the space transformed to become a comfortable, "homey hotel room." A kitchen and dining/entertaining area weren't needed, given the profusion of good restaurants downstairs and nearby.

Eva-Marie strategically replaced the glazing with bigger doors that slide back – though the facade is heritage-listed, she was able to demonstrate that, when shut, the new glazing looked like the existing. The existing balustrade was higher than

building codes required, so a new, slightly raised timber deck over the old balcony surface eliminated an awkward hob at the doors and allowed a seamless transition between inside and out. The client was keen on recycled French timber floors and this choice, along with a brass kitchen bench, became the defining element of the fitout. The brass benchtop went through many prototyping iterations (visible welds don't work in brass) to achieve an integrated sink in the kitchen. The space now has adaptable qualities – the second bedroom borrows a view through other spaces and various areas can be opened or closed off.

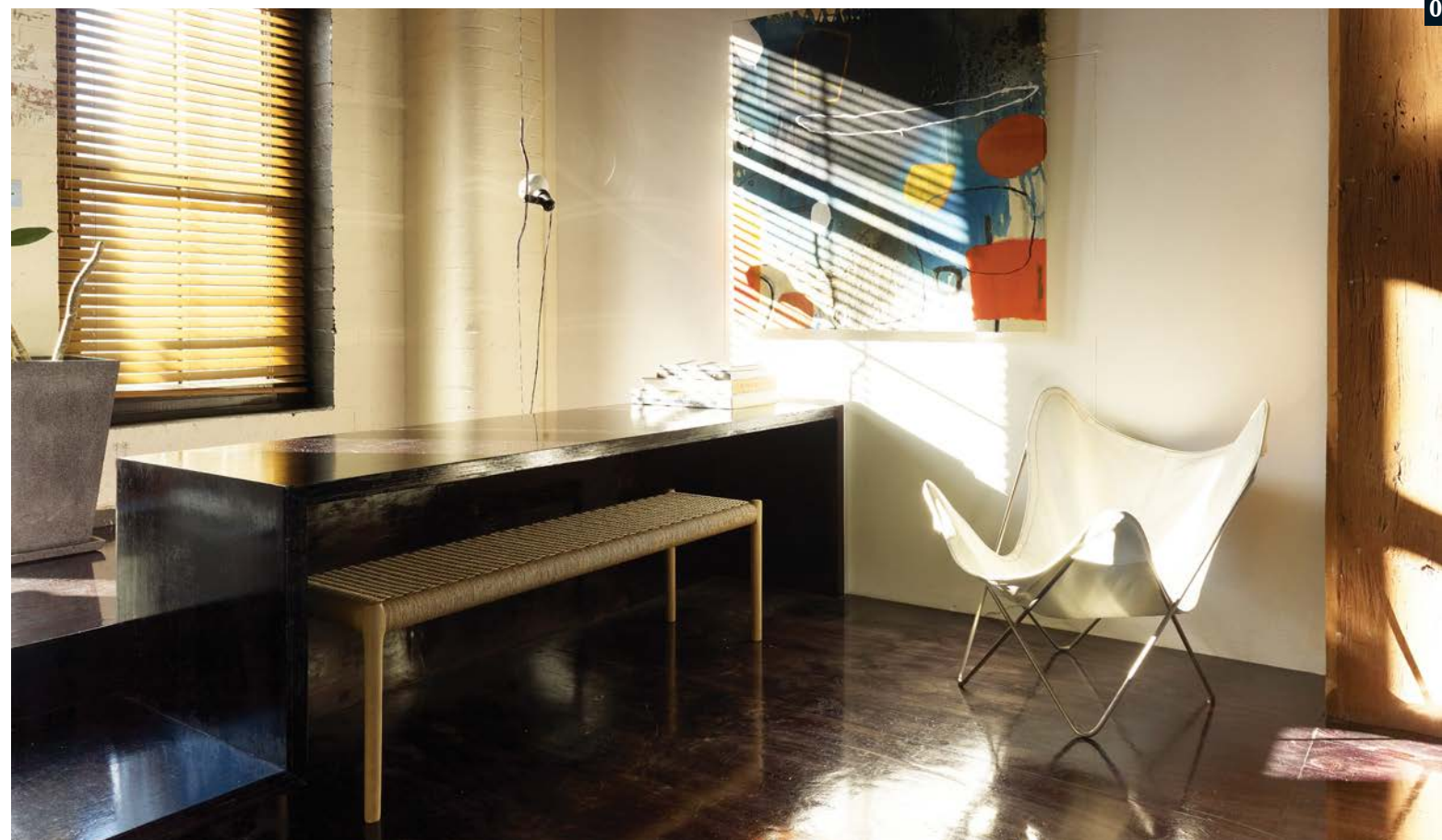
Eva-Marie has a great skill in restoring houses, and in knowing what to change and what to leave. The new work that she creates next to old fabric is very assured. She seems to add a layer of "touring quirkiness" to old houses by tweaking the circulation routes through them.

## 2008 Darlington APARTMENT • SYDNEY, NSW •



02 Simple yet dramatic elements used at Darlington Apartment (such as blackened plywood floors) remain a preoccupation of the practice today. Photograph: Brett Boardman.

03 Darlington Apartment was designed with economical interiors that would complement the materiality, scale and spatial qualities of the industrial container. Artwork: Peter Poulet. Photograph: Brett Boardman.

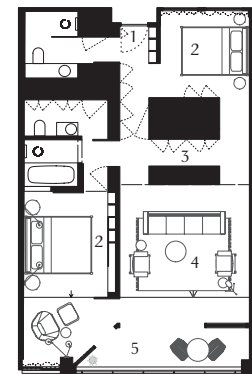






2015  
**Apartment  
FINGER WHARF**  
• SYDNEY, NSW •

**04** A brass kitchen bench is one of the defining elements of Apartment Finger Wharf, which was designed as a “comfortable, homey hotel.” Photograph: Katherine Lu.



- 1 Entry
- 2 Bedroom
- 3 Kitchen
- 4 Living
- 5 Terrace

**Apartment Finger Wharf plan 1:250**

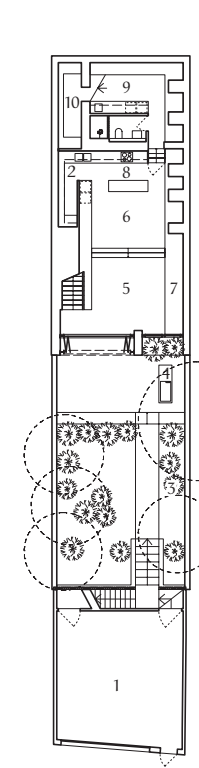


**Apartment Finger Wharf sections 1:250**

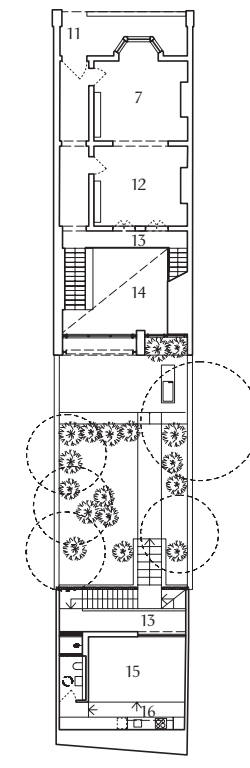


2015  
**House  
ELYSIUM**  
• SYDNEY, NSW •

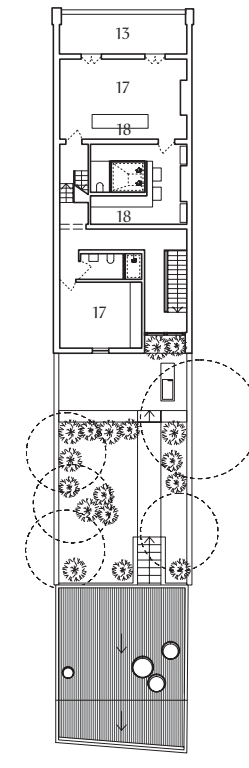
**05** On the lowest level of House Elysium, large windows face west onto a garden, with a discreet studio/garage tucked into the end. Photograph: Chris Warnes.



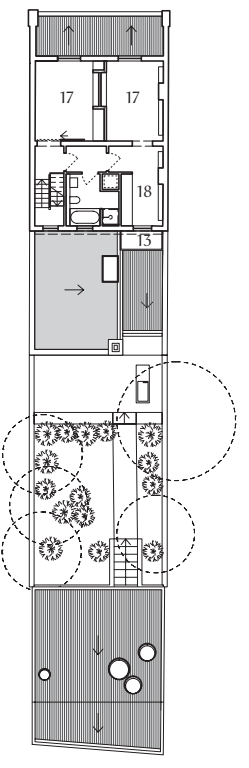
**House Elysium  
garden level 1:400**



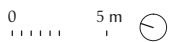
**House Elysium  
street level 1:400**



**House Elysium  
upper level 1:400**



**House Elysium  
top level 1:400**



- 1 Garage
- 2 Walk-in pantry
- 3 Garden
- 4 Barbecue
- 5 Lounge
- 6 Dining
- 7 Library
- 8 Kitchen
- 9 Laundry
- 10 Cellar
- 11 Entry
- 12 Study
- 13 Balcony
- 14 Void
- 15 Studio
- 16 Studio kitchen
- 17 Bedroom
- 18 Walk-in robe



She delights in adding big windows or non-traditional volumes to create elements of surprise.

In the case of House Elysium, original rooms were retained, but beyond is a huge void to a lower, garden-level family/eating room. One has the choice of stairs down to this space or crossing the width of the terrace to a concealed stair to two upper levels. On the upper levels, original features are fully restored, but room configurations are tweaked – a traditional fireplace sits opposite new basins as part of a wonderfully generous new bathroom.

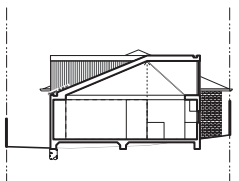
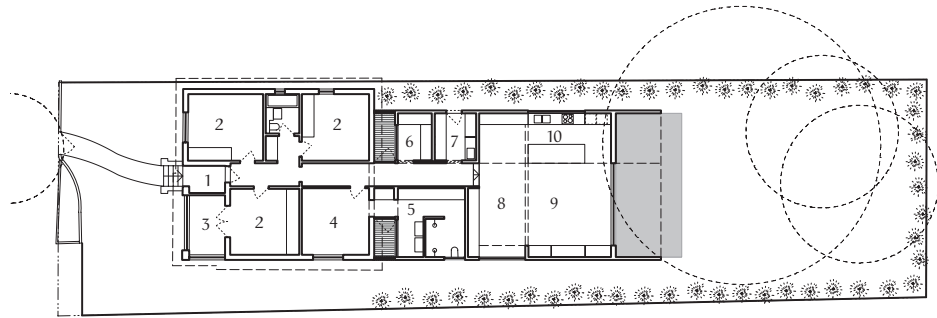
At the garden level, a basement kitchen is a masterpiece of reflection, with generous storage space and rich finishes; it is evidently a cool, calm space in summer and a warm, inviting family hub in winter. Huge windows face west onto a shady jungle, with a discreet

studio/garage building tucked into the end of the garden. The rear building has a split-level relationship with the main garden and the stairs to each level are screened by slatted timbers. This allows the main house and studio to have glazing facing each other without overlooking. Finishes are both restrained and rich.

This skilled mixture of modesty and luxury is also visible at the other end of the practice project scale, such as in the Allen Key House. This project is so named as all the interiors are designed around standard IKEA joinery dimensions. Yet the house uses many of the generous devices that mark Architect Prineas's work. Oversized dormers harness light and give beautiful views of the treetops. The rear roof-shaped portal is clearly an embracing and unifying form creating a protected outside space. On one

side of the rear space the kitchen window offers glimpses of dense foliage, and on the other side, the dining area is bathed in light from a picture window facing the side boundary, the adjacent narrow outdoor space filled with bamboo.

Breeze Block House is an earlier iteration of this preoccupation with side boundary gardens and crevices as a means of gaining light and outlook. This house, in a leafy Sydney suburb, was carefully reworked with great playfulness. The original dwelling has been respected and restored, but the rear forms and garden screen constructed in breezeblock make a series of outdoor rooms and decks, with garden crevices between and beyond the forms. The block is then used as a device to screen the garden "front of house" from more mundane service areas. The storage/carport in the garden seems



**Allen Key House plan 1:400**

0 5 m  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**Allen Key House section 1:400**

- |                |            |
|----------------|------------|
| 1 Entry        | 6 Study    |
| 2 Bedroom      | 7 Laundry  |
| 3 Sunroom      | 8 Dining   |
| 4 Main bedroom | 9 Living   |
| 5 Walk-in robe | 10 Kitchen |

06

2015

## Allen Key HOUSE

• SYDNEY, NSW •



07

**06** The rear roof-shaped portal at Allen Key House is an embracing form that creates a protected outside space. Photograph: Chris Warnes.

**07** Allen Key House is named after the fact that its interiors are designed around standard IKEA joinery dimensions. Photograph: Chris Warnes.









# OUR PALETTE

• MATERIALS & FINISHES •

Architect Prineas creates considered projects with a focus on sustainability, timelessness and adaptability. Here the practice shares some of its favourite materials and products.

01



01

## Vola tapware

Architect Prineas likes to specify Vola products because the brand is “underpinned by a sense of respect for design and design heritage, while also endorsing sustainable practices in material selection and production processes,” an ideology that is very close to the intent of the practice. The Vola KV1-500T1 kitchen mixer is seen here at Apartment Finger Wharf. [en.vola.com](http://en.vola.com)

02



02

## Custom handles

The practice often custom-designs joinery and doorhandles, such as the oversized doorhandle to a child's bedroom at House Elysium (pictured). The doorhandle incorporates the finishes used in the bedroom joinery.

Photography:  
Chris Warnes 01, 02, 05, 06  
Katherine Lu 04

03

## Artek Stool 60

The Artek Stool 60 is a quintessential functionalist piece. The simple and elegant seat is sturdy and light. Architect Prineas likes to specify the stool as it can be used across a range of settings in a home. [anibou.com.au](http://anibou.com.au)

03

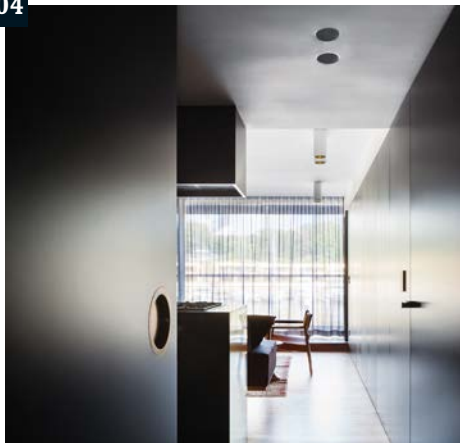


04

## Valchromat boards

Valchromat is a sustainable material, with all wood used in manufacturing the boards FSC-certified and sourced from forest waste, residue from timber mills, pine and recycled pine. Brown chips are visible at random, creating tonal variation that adds a sense of depth and richness to the final product. Valchromat is seen here at Apartment Finger Wharf.

04



05

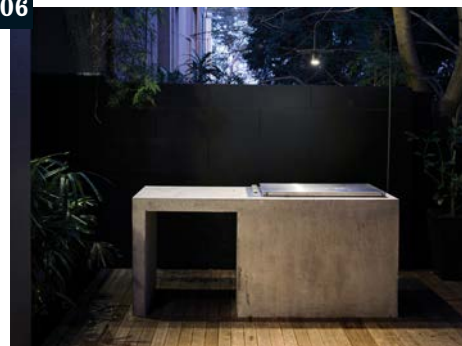


05

## Limewashed plywood

Architect Prineas uses plywood for its warmth, its sustainability and its structural and aesthetic qualities. Plywood is used at House Elysium (pictured) to create a volume that is inserted into the existing house, redefining the two-storey space in a contemporary way.

06



06

## Custom barbecue

Architect Prineas's first version of this concrete bench was designed more than ten years ago as a way of integrating a freestanding barbecue into the garden. The practice now makes the benches to measure and the design has evolved to include a custom outdoor light. The practice likes the idea of a barbecue being “in the garden” as opposed to attached to the house, as seen here at House Elysium.