

## Rose Seidler House, Sydney

A convention-breaking Mid-century Modern home remains an inspiration for architect Eva-Marie Prineas.



Cover of The Australian Home Beautiful (February 1951) in Volume 1; Harry Seidler scrapbook or press cuttings (1949-1956). Courtesy of the State Library of NSW

As told to Rachel Lees

**Rose Seidler House is a Modernist home designed in 1948.** It's in Wahroonga on Sydney's Upper North Shore, which is a leafy suburb with large blocks and homes. Traditionally the houses there are older and built to the English model. Because this style comes from a colder climate – with small windows and a tendency to be very inward-looking – these houses don't really respond to the Australian landscape. Rose Seidler House is very different.

**Harry Seidler's mother commissioned the design.** He'd just completed his architecture degree at Harvard and his parents had immigrated to Australia [from Austria] and wanted him to move here as well. I love that part of the story because my parents gave me my first commission, which was a much smaller renovation to their house in Kythira, Greece. Then my uncle commissioned me to renovate his house at Avoca Beach on the NSW Central Coast.

**The building is quite graphic and memorable in its form.** Once you've seen it, you won't forget it. It's a small home on a very large block and I love its modesty of scale; its rooms aren't oversized and there aren't a million bathrooms. It has a flat roof with walls enveloped by glazing so there are windows around the whole perimeter; it overlooks Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park and has views of the surrounding bushland from every room. There's an outdoor deck with a colourful mural on one wall that was designed and painted by the architect and can be seen from various living areas in the house. It's simple and creates a lovely space to live in.

**People look at this house today and still think it's very modern.** That's incredible considering it's more than 70 years old. The only thing that gives its age away is the technology, the appliances in the kitchen – otherwise it's timeless. My work doesn't look anything like Harry Seidler's but we think in the same way and I use elements of this house: the way the windows or the courtyard is designed; using moveable sliding walls, which provide flexibility to reconfigure the space internally; and the way he incorporates artwork. It was remarkable for a house to be designed like this in those days and it's now a living museum so you can visit it. ✨

Eva-Marie Prineas established her Sydney-based practice (studio [prineas.com.au](http://prineas.com.au)) in 2004. She co-founded DARCH (now EmAGN), the Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) group for emerging architects, and has been elected to the AIA's NSW Chapter Council.