

home | Guy Allenby



## clean skin

When the space is small, clear out the clutter.

**1** A large deck, with a view of the beach, works as a sun-eating area. With the dining table set up outdoors, there is more space in the living room which is washed with light from the built-in fish tank at night.

**2** Give a streamlined effect, the open-plan living space has no corners, skirting boards or architraves.

**3** A simple mix of white walls and primary and grey tiles was used in the kitchen. "I wanted to have that stark white feeling so it remained clean because I'm a bit of a clean freak," says the owner.

**S**HAUN Carter and Eva-Marie Prinos are sitting enjoying the morning sun on a beachfront deck on Sydney's northern beaches with the apartment's owner, Geoff. Just below a high tide is breaking on a narrow strip of sand and behind is the small, white, tightly designed one-bedroom guest Carter and Prinos have created for the man they describe as a "dream client".

Geoff, a former draughtsman and keen surfer, speaks about the pair, from the design and architecture from The Superlatives, in equally glowing terms.

It's an unusual state of affairs. However common it may be for a client and his or her architect to develop a bond in the building or renovating of a home, there's often a residual tension and shared stress to colour (if not strengthen) the relationship.

In this case, though, everything seems to have happened with ease. There's no sense of architects and client being comrades-in-arms, having successfully negotiated - and done battle - with the council, builders and sub-contractors together.

Perhaps because the local council's rubber stamp was not required. The job was to re-fit the "late '70s/early '80s" apartment without the necessity for any structural work at all. Besides, the client took total responsibility, beyond the actual design, for the job. Geoff did much of the demolition of the flat's original inclusions with his own hands and he supervised the sub-contractors himself (and did so with apparent deftness - hence the "dream client" tag). More than that he owned - friends, family or architects included - "saw anything until it was finished," says Geoff.

"We were did a lot of information [about how the construction was coming along from the joins], says Carter.

"He was fairly confident that he had enough experience of building places to do it himself," he adds, "and I guess there is a huge cost advantage if you can manage your own project."

As Geoff explains, the reasons for project managing himself was "wanting to see everything and be involved in everything, as much as it being a cost thing."



"I think that for the money he spent, this is extraordinary," says Carter.

The original flat already boasted a huge deck, together with an open-plan living space and a bedroom, opening onto the outdoor area and the full sweep of one of Sydney's best surf beaches.

The job was merely to put the dated interior and install a crisp, monochrome, contemporary one in its place. The new interior has no corners, no skirting boards and no architraves. New internal doors are solid core, have no joints and stretch from floor to ceiling. The bedroom now includes a walk-in robe.

The walls and joinery are white, the floor, previously carpet, has now been finished in large, grey metal grey polished concrete tiles. The tiles carry through the entire house, including bathroom, open-plan living/kitchen space, bedroom and television room study.

"Because everything was white, that was the big reason we went for a dark floor," says Carter. "It could sustain it with so much light and it also gave it a good anchoring. It didn't give you a sense that you got lost in all the white."

The simple white and black palette suits Geoff. "I wanted to have that stark white feeling



**4** A walk-in robe in the bedroom keeps any clutter out of sight.

**5** The late '60s/early '70s bathroom got the sleek and shiny treatment.

Photos: Brett Boardman  
Plans adapted by Robert Patterson

so it remained clean because I'm a bit of a clean freak," he says. "I never really wanted to have clutter and lots and pieces everywhere."

Besides, in an essentially very small space, clutter takes away from the sense of spaciousness, an illusion aided by the fact that the outdoor area functions as the primary dining space.

"He recognised that he was going to do most of his eating out here," says Prinos. "The idea was that there wasn't going to be a dining table in there," she says pointing to the living space inside, "so that freed up that space rather than trying to squish everything in there."

A small table on casters, with four stools, has been built to match the kitchen and living room joinery. It slides out from the corner of the room when weather doesn't permit dining alfresco.

The television has been consigned to what has been dubbed "the cave", a very small second bedroom - now home to two armchairs, a decent sized TV and desk built into dark-tinted joinery. Close the cave's door and it is, says Geoff, "almost like having your own home theatre."

In the living room a huge built-in fish tank functions as the main focal point and, other dark, casts a shimmering "purple-blue wash" over everything.

Night lighting is a stark contrast to the intense daylight, reflected from the ocean in the east-facing apartment.

"A light box" near the ceiling, the fish tank and recessed wall lights in the kitchen afford enough light to read by in the evening. "Just," says Geoff, "which I'm delighted about. There's never any bright lights in this place. It's beautiful ambient lighting."

In the morning, the rising sun, filtered through blinds to "reduce heat and glare" wakes him up and he typically lifts his head "slightly" to check the sun!

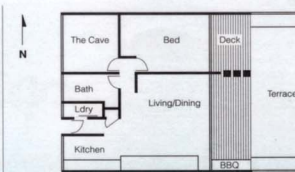
The break is 30 metres north of the beach, but sometimes - just sometimes - it's only a few easy steps away beyond the deck.

Perfect.

**NEXT WEEK**  
A Federation home renovation in Bexley

### GET THE LOOK

Doors are solid core with timber veneer, on chests head from floor to ceiling. Flooring is polished concrete Scaier tiles. "Fossil" 600mm square wall lights by Studio Job. Kitchen and bathroom benchtops by Teacup. Handles from Industrial Expressions, 1812 4890, and tapware from Fograstra, 9332 4900. "Purist Glider" chairs from Superstudies, 9333 4377. Furniture from PYZK, 8881 1771, and artwork from Chew Boat House, 7187 1031.



**THE AIM**  
To bring a 40-year-old beachfront apartment into the 21st century, boards installed over the original concrete deck because of "strange issues".

**HOW LONG DID IT TAKE?**  
"From first meeting to the construction drawings was three months, and then another five months [to see it built]."

**FEATURES THE OWNER IS HAPPIEST WITH?**  
"It is so uncluttered and simple. The whole place is so easy and relaxing. It really does feel like you're on holiday."

**WHAT THE OWNER WOULD DO DIFFERENTLY?**

"The deck" (after the photographs were taken, the owner had to remove most of the timber boards installed over the original concrete deck because of "strange issues").

**INSIDER TIPS**  
"If you use an architect (as long as you are looking for jargon-free, you'll know within the first week whether they are the right guy to go for or not."

**ARCHITECT**  
The Superlatives, 8331 7220

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