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# DOUBLE UP

A Sydney designer and her builder husband took a crumbling four-storey terrace and turned it into two fabulous apartments

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## cheat sheet

**Who renovated it** Married couple Eliza and Matt Boers, an interior designer and builder, tackled this project together.

**Style of home** An 1800s terrace house in inner Sydney, converted into two self-contained apartments.

**🕒** Work began in February 2020 and the top-floor apartment (shown in this story) was finished by April 2021.



**LIVING AREA** Luxury furnishings were chosen for their appeal to local buyers. Bertoia 'Diamond' armchair, Dedee. Offset timber table by Philippe Moulin for Resident, HGFS Artwork by Louise Olsen. **STAIRCASE** (opposite) Light now flows through, courtesy of the exposed staircase with open treads and evenly spaced stringers. Metal rods powdercoated Dulux Monument.





**T**he renovation of this Sydney home was a true family affair for interior designer Eliza Boers of Ettie Tom. Purchased at auction by her father-in-law, the 19th-century Darlinghurst building was terribly rundown and the interiors lined with old brown bricks. The reconstruction work was assigned to Eliza's builder husband Matt, while she was tasked with renovating the interiors. Given the price and location, the couple wanted to capitalise on the property, so they made the savvy decision to strata the single terrace and create two apartments: one occupying the basement and ground floor, and the other occupying the first and second floors.

In April 2016, the couple moved into the basement level while the upper storeys were leased to a bunch of uni students. "There was no sound separation so it felt like they were going to fall through the roof!" recalls Eliza. Needless to say, Eliza and Matt moved out when they had their first baby two years later.

The planning process was difficult and the couple worked closely with their architects, R Squared Studios. "It was a complex design and build due to restrictions within the existing structure combined with heritage requirements, tight access and the rigmarole involved in converting it to a Class 2 building," says Eliza. "It's not very common to see two apartments in the one terrace so it was a unique concept, like a mini development."

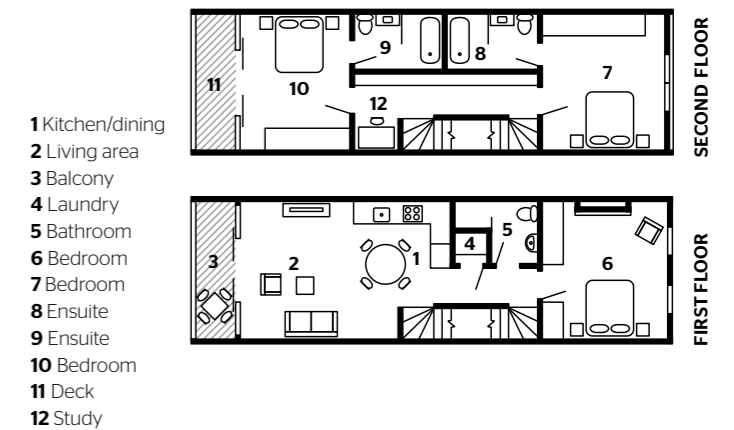
Once they got the ball rolling, the challenges came thick and fast. Most significant was the constraint of working 12 metres

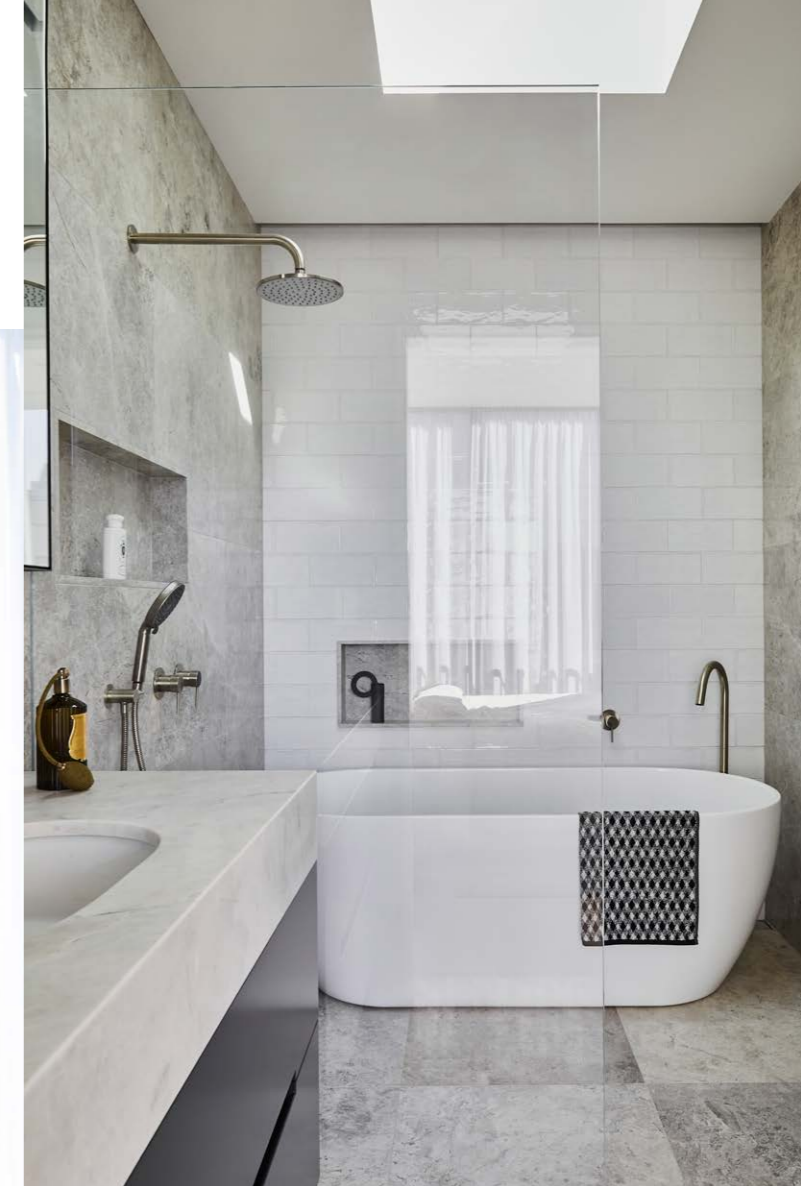
**DETAIL** (above) The slim console is a Sovet Italia design from HGFS. Accessories, Curatorial+Co. Artwork by John Young, through Olsen Gallery. **LIVING AREA** (opposite) A widened opening with sliding glass doors has expanded the view. Sconces, Est Lighting. Marie Michielssen for Serax side table, Ondene. SPO1 'Etoile' coffee table, Space. Artwork by Michael Cusack.



"We only wanted natural materials and went luxe all the way with marble, good quality fixtures and appliances, and beautiful oak flooring. It needed to feel fresh and contemporary but still within the heritage context"

ELIZA BOERS, INTERIOR DESIGNER





“Even though it’s one terrace split in two, we wanted it to feel like two self-contained and spacious homes”

ELIZA BOERS, INTERIOR DESIGNER



high up in a structure that was only 4.5 metres in width sitting boundary to boundary. And it wasn't long before Eliza and Matt discovered why it looked so dilapidated; the double-brick walls on the facade had been neglected, and termites and damp were causing all the structural timber to decay. Heritage restrictions dictated that it had to be retained, so a significant amount of work was involved in reinstating and bringing its features back to life. This involved rendering the entire facade and lining the roof with cedar shingles. Cosmetically, in went a new front door with updated hardware and all the existing shutters and front windows were repaired and repainted.

The couple decided to tackle the top-floor apartment first. Walking in off the street, a flight of stairs goes directly up to level one, where the narrow footprint is organised into an open-plan kitchen, dining and living space with a bedroom to the south. Once they started stripping back the render, Eliza and Matt uncovered brick walls stamped with the details of Sydney's old Marrickville brick pits, dating back to when the first settlers arrived in Australia. They also discovered a 150-year-old paw print from what they suspect was the brick mason's dog. In homage, they decided to leave that wall exposed.

**STAIRS** (left) Another perspective of the open staircase. **KITCHEN** (above) “This space needed to feel fresh and contemporary but still within the heritage context,” says Eliza. Super White Dolomite benchtop and splashback, Granite & Marble Works. Polyurethane joinery in Dulux Pebble Grey and Polytec Woodmatt in Bottega Oak. Artwork by Chris Langlois. **BEDROOM** (opposite, top left) B&B Italia ‘Spool’ side table, Space. Artwork by Michael Cusack. **BATHROOM** (opposite, top right) Dogal marble wall tiles and Kasbah ‘Uni’ ceramic white tiles, Surface Gallery. Sky white granite vanity benchtop, Granite & Marble Works. Elli bath, Parisi. Bath towel, Missoni. **BEDROOM** (opposite, bottom) Natural white polyurethane wardrobes with custom oak handles. SPOI ‘Royce’ chair, Space. Rug, Armadillo.

VESSELS (IN KITCHEN) BY RINA MENARDI, GREG NATALE AND LOBMEYR. SCULPTURE (ON BATHROOM VANITY) BY CASSIE HANSEN, DISH BY KH WURTZ





As the long-term plan was to sell, there was no specific aesthetic brief per se, but the design did need to appeal to a broad market. And based on the location in Darlinghurst, Eliza knew luxury finishes would please the target demographic. Botched 1970s alterations meant there was nothing in particular worth salvaging, so the interiors were completely gutted and new oak flooring installed throughout. Super White Dolomite is used for the kitchen benchtops and splashback, with coordinating ceramic and marble tiles in the revamped bathrooms tying things together. To achieve more light, a staircase between the first and second floors was designed with exposed treads and a metal handrail, rods and stringers to allow light to filter through from the new skylight above. “Even though it’s one terrace split in two, we really didn’t want it to feel that way. We wanted it to feel like two self-contained and spacious homes,” says Eliza.

The rear of the building was extended to align with the neighbours and, although council rejected the couple’s proposal for a top-floor main-bedroom terrace, they managed to create a small Juliet balcony. “The bedroom is internal, but there are floor-to-ceiling sliding doors and a balustrade so it opens up completely – it kind of feels like an outdoor room,” says Eliza. “Even the slightest changes would have been an improvement on what was here before. Now there’s an amazing mix of functionality, style and the ultimate in social city living.” **ID**  
*Ettie Tom interior design can be found at [ettietom.com.au](http://ettietom.com.au).  
Find R Squared Studios at [r2studios.com.au](http://r2studios.com.au), and Matt Boers Constructions at [mattboersconstructions.com.au](http://mattboersconstructions.com.au)*



**STAIRS** (above) The apartment occupies the first and second floors, but the entrance to the building is on street level so stairs are required to access it. New oak stairs and flooring, Woodcut. Walls painted Dulux Natural White. Moooi 'NR2' pendant light, Space Furniture. Artwork by Merryl Greaves.  
**STUDY NOOK** (left) A built-in Polytec Bottega Oak desk and shelf keep things streamlined. Uncino chair by Ronan & Erwan Bouroullec for Mattiazzi, District. Artwork by Michael Cusack. **BEDROOM** (opposite) By the fireplace is a Tom Dixon 'Fat' chair from Manyara Home. Black marble bowl, Greg Natale. Artworks by Sarah Boyts Yoder (on wall) and Louise Olsen (on mantel).

GREAT FINDS



**CLOCKWISE** (from top left) Tom Dixon 'Fat' lounge chair, \$2950, Living Edge. Moooi 'NR2 Suspension' pendant light, from \$1950, Space Furniture. *Empty And Full* original oil-on-linen artwork by Louise Olsen, \$19,000, Olsen Gallery. Fiammetta V marble fruit bowl, \$411, Amara. B&B Italia 'Spool' side table, from \$2055, Space Furniture. Atlas rug (200cm x 300cm), \$1945, Armadillo. Linen duvet-cover set in Moss, \$390 for queen size, In Bed. Resident 'Offset' stool in Oak, \$645, HG Furniture Solutions. Maner Studio 'Arc Nordic' table lamp, \$1550, Great Dane Furniture.

**BEDROOM** An angular GTV 'Suzenne' lounge chair from Space Furniture reinforces the asymmetric lines of this top-floor space. **ENSUITE** (above) Dogal marble wall tiles continue the luxe look in the wet areas. Kasbah 'Uni' white ceramic wall tiles, Surface Gallery. Basin, Studio Bagno. Pink vase, Dinosaur Designs. **BEDROOM** (opposite) The tiled side table from Manyara Home is the perfect perch for the Arc lamp from Great Dane Furniture. Artwork by John Young, through Olsen Gallery.



ADDITIONAL PRODUCT SOURCING: CORINA KOCH

LESSONS LEARNT

“Make sure you properly understand the task ahead of you”

ELIZA BOERS, INTERIOR DESIGNER

“This was a complex design and build due to restrictions with the existing structure, heritage constraints and the requirements involved in converting the dwelling into a Class 2 building. It was also sat on the boundary, so access for construction was tight. In hindsight, we may even have reconsidered and kept it as one residence.”

