

PROJECT N°

# 02

## *Freshwater* SEMI by David Boyle Architect

• SYDNEY, NSW •

This narrow semi-detached house has been transformed into a light, airy home, which “gives a family of four plenty of room to breathe.”

Words by [Chris Pearson](#)  
Photography by [Brigid Arnott](#)

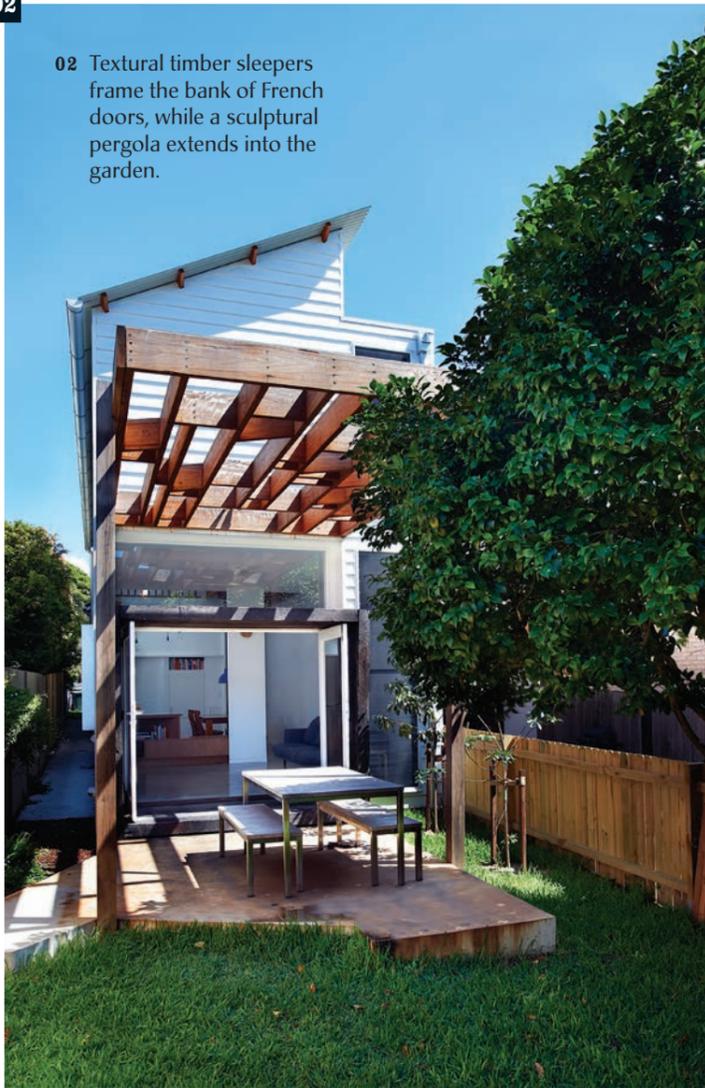
**F**reshwater Semi, on Sydney's Northern Beaches, is a mere 3.6 metres wide, but like Dr Who's legendary TARDIS, as you move through the interior it gets bigger and brighter, revealing clever design details along the way.

When the owners, a couple with two young children now aged five and three, bought the property in late 2009, they liked the sunny backyard and the “weatherboard beach-house feel.” But the south-facing home was dark and damp inside, and its rear was very cramped. The owners hired architect David Boyle to create as much light and space as possible. “We were after two extra bedrooms, a second bathroom, plus a living and kitchen space that would open up to the backyard,” says the owner. “We also wanted the rooms to be flexible, so we could change things around as the kids grew up. We plan on living here forever.”



01 In a 3.6-metres-wide room, a clever use of space and colour prevents any feelings of confinement.

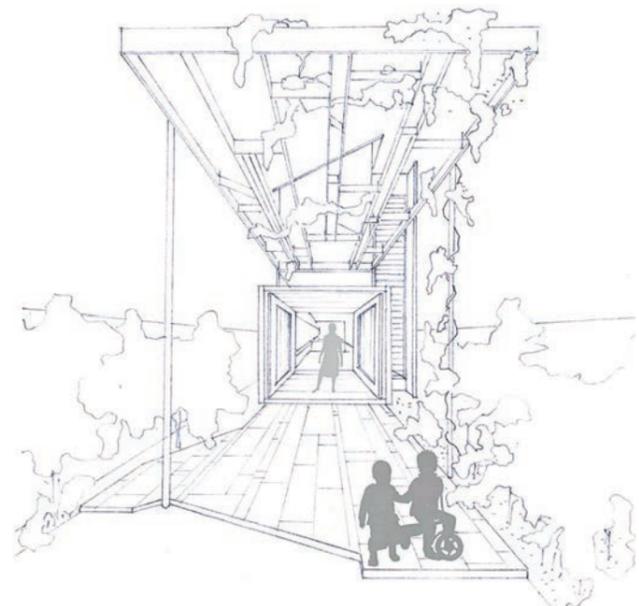
02 Textural timber sleepers frame the bank of French doors, while a sculptural pergola extends into the garden.



03 Only 1.5 metres is added to the roofline thanks to the sunken living area at the rear of the house.



04 A two-storey void soars up through the living area to the next level.  
05 Predominately white surfaces accentuate the richness of the timber detailing.



The local council's building-height restrictions meant there was little room to move upwards, but that didn't deter David. Leaving the two front bedrooms intact, he shaved off an old back section, which had been built in the 1950s and had little connection with the garden, and added a new extension, with two more bedrooms upstairs and an open-plan space downstairs. He set the new living area – situated beyond a new bathroom and laundry, and comprising sitting, dining and kitchen spaces – down half a metre, almost level with the garden, which gave extra room to move upwards. As a result, adding just 1.5 metres was all that was required to effect a wonderful transformation.

A two-storey void soars up through the living area to the next level, where the architect has bookended two bedrooms joined by a blackbutt bridge – the configuration means the two new rooms enjoy the full width of the block. Decking, rather than tongue-and-groove flooring, was used on the bridge to let light travel downstairs.

The new section of the home has a skillion roof, angled so that along its northern edge is a bank of louvres that is inset with an overhang, which lets sunlight into the living rooms below in winter and keeps them shaded and cool in summer. Meanwhile, a new

skylight in the hallway of the original section optimizes light at the front. "The hallway gets beautiful northern sun, while light also penetrates deep into the living areas," says David. "The generous ceiling also gives a wonderful outlook to the garden."

As well as a soaring sense of space, other surprises, such as textural timber sleepers framing a bank of French doors, have been added. These doors overlook the rear garden, which boasts a hardwood pergola consisting of a lattice over a concrete platform. It is "highly graphic, to create a wonderful sense of space and place," says David. "It also filters light and, at other times of the day, bounces it back into the living room."

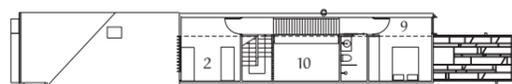
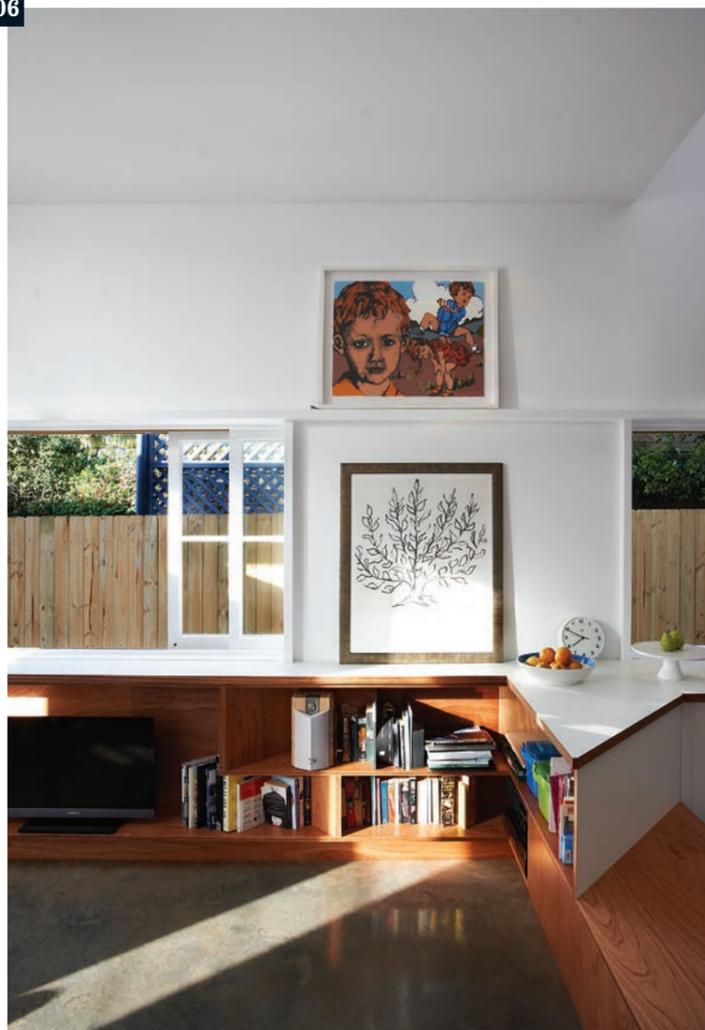
Other passive environmental principles underpin the design. The louvres allow air to circulate, with warm air being drawn upwards in summer and cross-ventilation facilitated by ceiling fans. "Any breath of breeze can be encouraged by opening windows on various aspects, using a stack effect," says David.

The new floor is honed concrete, which provides thermal mass, and includes off-peak electric in-slab heating. The house also eschews steel construction, with timber framing and external walls clad in fibre-cement weatherboard to match existing timber

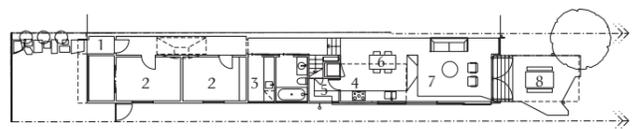
weatherboards, which are in typical beachside style. "It's a simple palette of materials," says David. "With predominantly white surfaces, set against timber features, it creates a rich and sculptural play of light deep into this family home." The blackbutt screen on the kickback stair, for example, adds a sense of separation without sacrificing the openness. "It creates character and adds layers, and light bounces off it," he says.

Much of David's work employs curves and the occasional sharp angle to lend further interest – and this is no exception. The ceiling curves at the edges "to blur the boundary between walls and ceiling," while joinery in the kitchen exploits angles to dramatic effect, echoing the skillion roof soaring above. A triangular column in the kitchen/dining area combines practicality and aesthetics, housing plumbing for the bathroom upstairs while adding a sense of the theatrical to the kitchen. It also echoes the shapes in the pergola outside.

Also avoiding right angles, a blackbutt banquette creates a division between the living room and the kitchen, while also being a place for the family to linger. And linger they do in this airy, light-filled home, which gives a family of four plenty of room to breathe. [E]

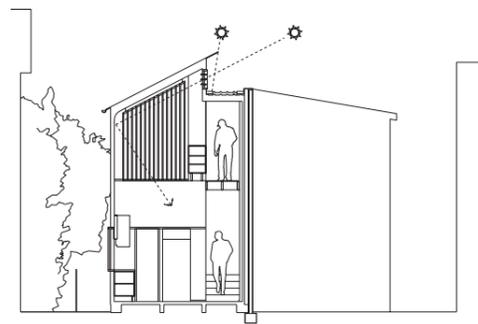


First floor plan 1:400



Ground floor plan 1:400

- |           |                |
|-----------|----------------|
| 1 Entry   | 6 Dining       |
| 2 Bedroom | 7 Living       |
| 3 Laundry | 8 Deck         |
| 4 Kitchen | 9 Main bedroom |
| 5 Pantry  | 10 Void        |



Section 1:200

0 2.5 m

**06** The new floor is honed concrete, with off-peak electric in-slab heating. Artwork: David Bromley (top); Henry Matisse, print (bottom).

**07** A hallway connects the two new bedrooms bookending the upper-level of the house.

**08** Louvres and wide windows allow air to circulate through the house.

#### Architect

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#### Practice profile

A practice that specializes in residential design, with a focus on design excellence based on responsible and creative resource allocation.

#### Project team

David Boyle, James Fraser, Marie Bergstrom

#### Builder

Upgrade Constructions (Anthony Bangel)

#### Consultants

**Engineer:** Mitchell Howes  
Civil and Structural Engineers

**Landscaping:** Owner

#### Products

**Roofing:** Lysaght Custom Orb and Klip-lok roofing  
**External walls:** James Hardie Primeline Chamfer 300 weatherboards  
**Internal walls:** CSR Gyprock plasterboard in Dulux 'Vivid White'

**Windows and doors:** Timber-framed windows and doors in Dulux 'Vivid White', made by Sydney Woodworkers

**Flooring:** Burnished concrete with Dry Treat penetrative sealer; blackbutt decking boards with oil finish; Cavalier Bremworth carpet

**Lighting:** Muuto pendants; Designer Lights wall lights

**Kitchen:** Seabreeze Kitchens joinery in plywood and laminate; Kerlite large-format porcelain sheet splashback in 'Snow White'; Smeg wall-mounted rangehood;

Westinghouse oven and cooktop; Bosch dishwasher; Methven tap fittings; Clarke sink

**Bathroom:** Methven tap fittings; Seabreeze Kitchens shaving cabinets; Ikea vanities and sinks

**Heating/cooling:** Amuheat in-slab heating

**External elements:** Blackbutt hardwood pergola with oil finish; burnished off-form concrete

#### Floor area

200 m<sup>2</sup> site  
137 m<sup>2</sup> floor

#### Time schedule

**Design, documentation:** 12 months

**Construction:** 5 months