

Arch 464  
ECS  
Spring 2012

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Quiz #1

### "What's Black and White and Light All Over?"

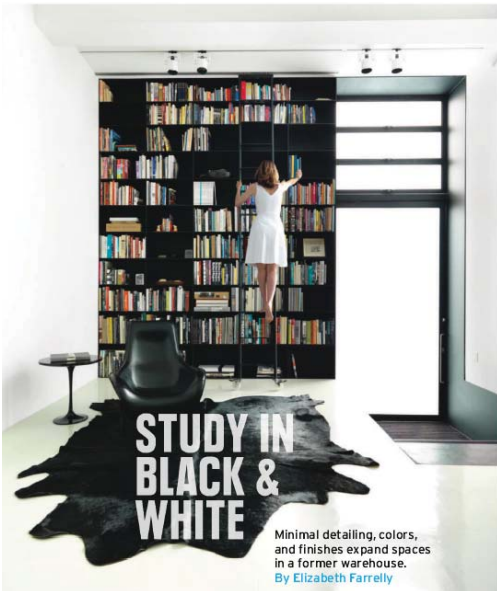


The garage, on the 882-square-foot site opens onto a back street that defines the north edge of the site. Note that one garage sidewall is black and the other is white.

The front door below, a double height steel portal, is at the end of a pedestrian cul-de-sac.



All images: *Architectural Record*, October 2011, photography © Iaian D. MacKenzie



**STUDY IN BLACK & WHITE**  
Minimal detailing, colors, and finishes expand spaces in a former warehouse.  
By Elizabeth Farrelly

For this problem you are the architectural lighting critic for *The New York Times*. Your editor wants you to analyze and report on a residential retrofit in Sydney, Australia, which was praised in *Architectural Record*. Use the information from *AR* to help form your opinion (sorry, you don't get to go to Sydney!).

**Context.** Sydney is in the southern hemisphere..

**READ THE ENTIRE QUIZ BEFORE YOU BEGIN!**

*The south wall of the office consists of a black bookshelf and the translucent glazed entry door.*

**“YOU ONCE WROTE THAT** Modernists couldn’t do front doors, so I’ve tried to prove you wrong,” says architect Ian Moore, as he pivots the massive milk-glass front door to admit me from the street. And prove me wrong he resoundingly has, with a front entrance noticeably grander and more ceremonial than that of the Sydney Opera House (at which my original point was aimed).

The milk glass, within a fine, matte-black frame set into the rustic brick facade of a 19th-century warehouse, prefigures a super-rationalist interior where monochromatic minimalism reigns supreme.

The architect’s brief, as he explains it, was for “a black-and-white Ian Moore house with a large, very well-lit bathroom.” Moore, an engineer who became an architect after working with Foster + Partners on the HSBC headquarters in Hong Kong (1986), is known for his superslick white boxes. So this was something of a departure. The stark palette

accords well with the client’s collection of black-and-white photographs, a number of which—including Mervyn Bishop’s portraits of Roy Orbison and Mick Jagger—are prominently displayed on an upstairs wall.

Because of an earlier, 1970s residential conversion, relatively little structural intervention was required to turn this former grocery warehouse and subsequent engineering workshop into an ultrachic urban terrace house; much of the effort was an exercise in lining, finishing, and furnishing. A 5½-foot drop in grade between the two street entrances led to creating a split-level ground floor, with a tall living space entered directly from the street and overlooked by the kitchen on a mezzanine. It, in turn, is backed by a garage opening to a second street.

Moore colored everything that existed—walls, ceilings, and floors—white, while everything new—stairs, cupboards, the kitchen, furniture (and even the dog food)—is black. The upper-level bathroom, however, a black

anodized-aluminum glass-topped box, lit from the roof and dividing the bedroom and sitting area, stretches the rule. Because the bathroom existed there before, it should be white. But two new walls, plus a mirrored wall should be black. Here Moore departed from his conceit. “The bathroom was about space and light,” he says, “so I abandoned the strict regime in favor of its purity.”

The structure occupies about a 15-foot-wide terrace-house slot in the inner-urban Surry Hills neighborhood of Sydney. Subtracting from the 882-square-foot lot, the minimum widths for toilet, stair, and car left about ⅔ inch for a new semi-structural wall between the garage and stair. The only material that fit the bill was steel plate. Finished in a matte-black epoxy paint, then washed with vinegar and rubbed to a soft sheen with (of all things) baby oil, the steel plate became something of a motif. It forms not just the staircase slot—with its freestanding sheet-steel balustrade—but the

full-height cupboard doors in the garage/utility room, the large built-in banquette that marks the level-change between kitchen and first-floor living space, and the floor-to-ceiling bookcase, which, slotted together in the manner of the Eames House of Cards, covers the living room’s south wall.

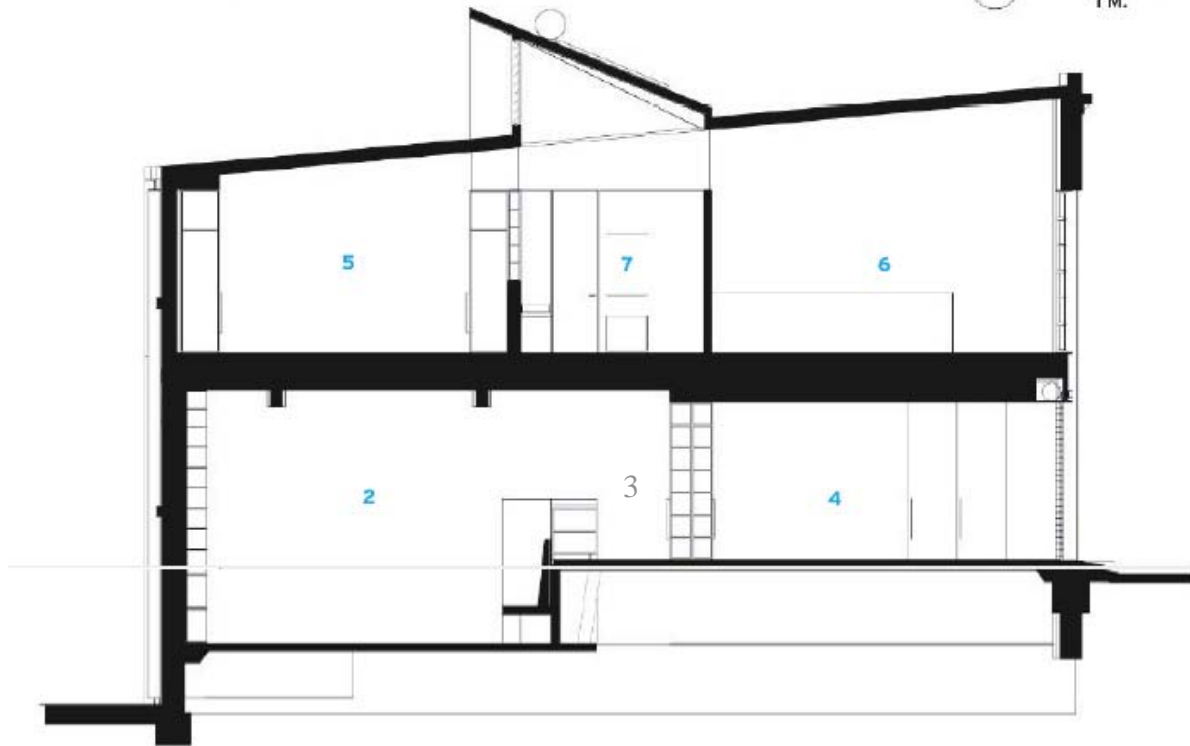
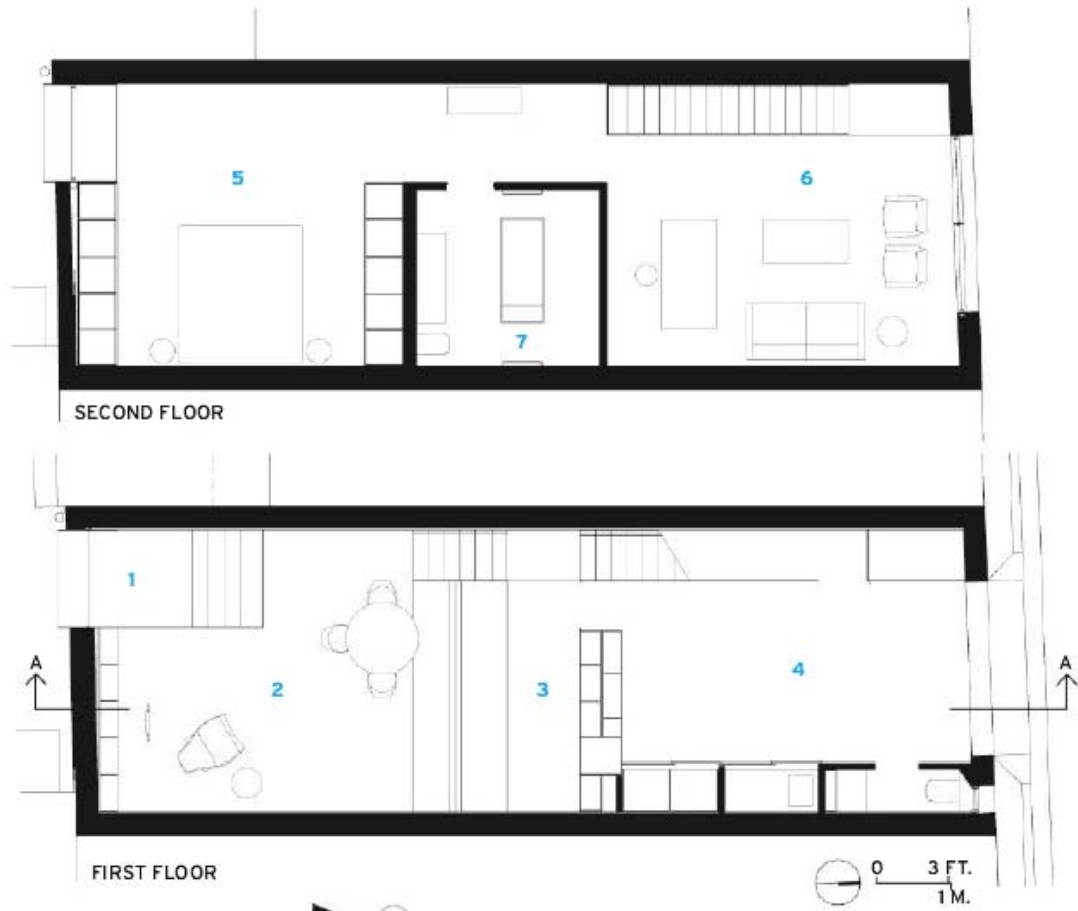
The precise design called for immense devotion to detailing white plasterboard, black steel, white rubber (for the flooring), and glass. It’s a brave thing to adopt such a strict a regime for a domestic environment. So, does it work?

For me, it’s probably a little too brave—too demanding, too rigid for habitation. But architecture should be measured against its own brief, and it is clear that Moore’s client, an art director and stylist, loves it. In fact, it passed the ultimate test, as Moore’s client is now his fiancée, and he is already living there. That’s got to be not one, but two, votes of confidence. ■

*Elizabeth Farrelly, an architecture critic and columnist for the Sydney Morning Herald, wrote Blubberland: The Dangers of Happiness (2007).*



*The all-white daylighted bathroom above contrasts with the black and white palette of the living room (top left) and the bedroom (bottom left). Note that the bathroom is lit by a south-facing clerestory monitor and shares daylight with the living room and bedroom through a relight located above its black outer walls.*



SECTION A-A

- |                 |               |
|-----------------|---------------|
| 1 ENTRANCE      | 5 BEDROOM     |
| 2 OFFICE/DINING | 6 LIVING ROOM |
| 3 KITCHEN       | 7 BATH        |
| 4 GARAGE        |               |

- 4 pts. 1. **Indicate** how light is distributed in the residence's four major spaces—living room (6), bedroom (5), garage (4), and office/dining/kitchen (2, 3). **Use** the plans below to show the spatial distribution of light. **Annotate** your drawings explain your thinking and representation of the light.



- 4 pts.* 2. The architect has chosen a "stark palette" of matte surfaces—either black or white, including even the white translucent glazing in all the door and window apertures. **Fully discuss** the merits and limitations of this palette in creating or mitigating glare. Use diagrams to show specific instances in the building that illustrate your discussion.

- 2 pts. 3. The architect's design intent was to create spaces for displaying Mervyn Bishop's black and white photography, some of which is hung on an upstairs wall not shown below. The homeowner has obtained two new prints, which are about 2 feet wide—a beach scene and a street scene, shown below. **Show where you think they should be hung in the living room view below and explain why.**

