



UNASHAMEDLY AUSTRALIAN

After bushfires swept across their property, these homeowners re-envisioned the future, building on its story while weaving memories into the new structure

WORDS KARSHA GREEN **PHOTOGRAPHY** BRETT BOARDMAN





DETAILS

HOUSE Robinson's Run
LOCATION Budgong, NSW
FINAL COST \$4.5 million
DATE COMMENCED May 2020
DATE COMPLETED Feb 2022



Robinson's Run is a 70-acre block of Australian bushland, nestled below a stone escarpment in Budgong, near Kangaroo Valley. Homeowners Ian and Michelle operate Southbound Adventures, an outdoor education company. With a deep love and appreciation for the bush, the couple wanted to renovate the existing 1970s brick house that they used as a weekender, however in January 2020, the catastrophic Currowan and Morton bushfires swept through the property, destroying almost everything. Seeing opportunity within such tragedy, Ian and Michelle enlisted Dom Bennett and John Wilkin from Bennett Murada Architects to "reimagine and regenerate the property holistically and write a new chapter in the story of this site".

"The owner's ability to accept catastrophic bushfires as an integral part of the Australian bush experience, regroup and reimagine the project, and then commit to deliver a more evolved and distilled version, is truly unique," says Dom, co-founder and managing director of Bennett Murada Architects.

"While the original 'weekender' ethos remained intact, the scale of the project grew to become a five-bedroom house designed to suit short-stay, responsible luxury accommodation for small groups of up to 10 adults and their families. The house was to be supported by a maintenance shed with self-contained accommodation for owner/staff use. Dams were rebuilt, vehicle access clarified, and native vegetation re-introduced to the site."

The main house is more than 500sqm, constructed in rammed earth, stone and zinc cladding. Spread over three levels, each aligns with the fall of the land. The ground level houses a television rumpus room, along with a bunk room, separate pinball room and cellar. On the middle level is the kitchen, living and dining area with large pivotal glass windows that frame the views of the two dams nearby. The main suite occupies the top level, equipped with its own kitchen and living

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areas, as well as celestial-style windows that allow one to wake with the morning sunlight, and a fireplace for the cooler evenings.

“Part of the joy of experiencing this building is the way it is slowly revealed on approach through clever ground sculpting and soft landscaping, enhancing the arrival experience. Equally, the experience of both living and sleeping space is inextricably linked to the connection of those spaces to beautifully landscaped spaces at grade. Successful landscape design has allowed this building to sit comfortably and effortlessly in the landscape,” says Dominic.

Design elements of Robinson’s Run draw on the “rhythm, colour and grain of the escarpment”. Rammed earth walls, up to a metre thick, anchor the home to the site, as do chunky timber beams expressed on the large terrace adjoining the kitchen. Paired with off-form concrete, the home has a simple, raw and textural palette that mimics the regularity and repetition in the layers of rock and bush that surround the home.

While most of the house is new, there are elements from the former brick house that appear, as well as fallen trees from the fire that were on site. Fallen bloodwood and ironbark trees were milled on site and seasoned during construction, then built back into the fabric of the building as joinery and feature timber elements. Rusty star pickets from the wire fences were salvaged and reused as part of

the entry gate and screening structures. And the puddle of molten aluminium that was previously a machinery shed wall was cast into the concrete pool wall structure.

“Rammed earth is a low-embodied energy building material with fantastic thermal mass characteristics. It is a non-toxic material with no volatile organic compounds or toxic fumes, and it’s also termite resistant. Additionally, rammed earth is a great material for bushfire-prone applications. However, the thick walls, large span openings, and complex detailing of the rammed earth design presented a significant challenge for the design and construction teams. Close collaboration was required with the rammed earth contractors to deliver a structurally sound and architecturally beautiful spine to the building,” says Dominic.

“The architecture of Robinson’s Run seeks to distill Ian and Michelle’s learned experience of this place and offer the same raw and sensual experience to their friends and family. The result is unashamedly Australian without being twee, sustainable without being overtly green, and prioritises sensory experience over opulence.”

Bennett Murada Architects acknowledges the Wodi Wodi People as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which this project is sited, and recognises their continuous connection to culture, community and Country. 🌿

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EDITOR'S FAVOURITE

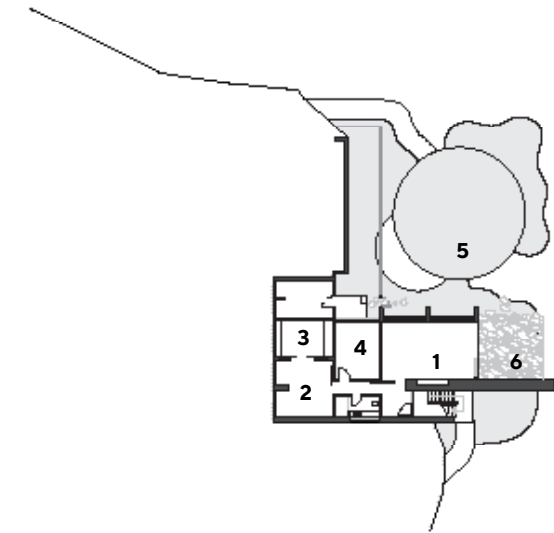
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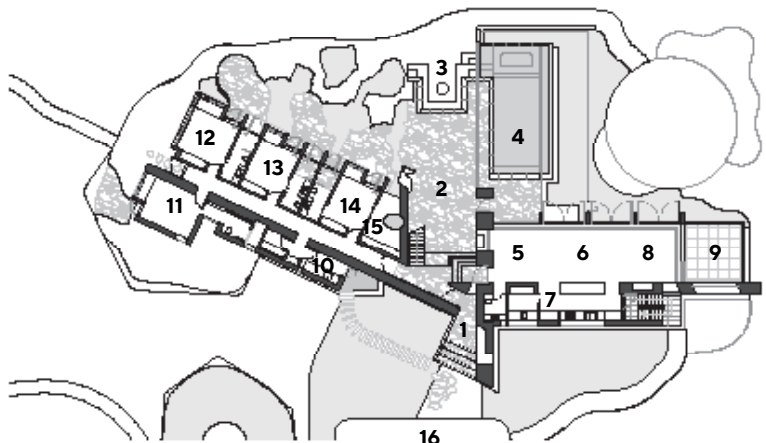


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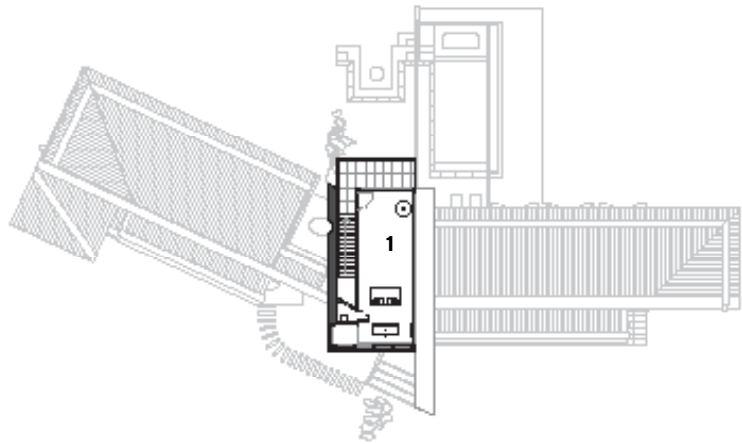
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LOWER GROUND FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR

LEGEND

LOWER GROUND FLOOR

- 1 Casual living
- 2 Arcade room
- 3 Wine cellar
- 4 Plant room
- 5 Formal lawn
- 6 Covered play

GROUND FLOOR

- 1 Entry
- 2 Outdoor living
- 3 Fire pit
- 4 Pool
- 5 Sitting
- 6 Dining
- 7 Kitchen
- 8 Living
- 9 Balcony
- 10 Laundry
- 11 Bedroom 1
- 12 Bedroom 2
- 13 Bedroom 3
- 14 Bedroom 4
- 15 Private courtyard
- 16 Parking

FIRST FLOOR

- 1 Master bedroom

PROJECT TEAM

ARCHITECT Bennett Murada Architects,
bennettmurada.com.au

BUILDER Buildline Constructions, buildline.com.au

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT Arcadia Landscape
Architecture, arcadiala.com.au

STRUCTURAL

Engineer James Taylor
and Associates

FIXTURES & FITTINGS

Tapware Rogerseller

Appliances Winning
Appliances

Kitchen mixer Brodware

External shower Brooklyn
Copper

Ensuite Studio Bagno

Outdoor bathtub Stoked
Stainless

Indoor bathtub Concrete
Design House

FURNITURE &

FURNISHINGS

Furniture Simon Ancher,
Dedece, Grazia & Co, Great
Dane Furniture, Jordan,
Living Edge, Scott Van
Tuil, Hay Shop, Design by
Them, Cult

Lighting Jordan, Great Dane
Furniture, Living Edge, Hay
Shop, Douglas and Bec,
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