

Bricon Projects completed the build of this cocoon-style dwelling at Culburra Beach, NSW.

SOUTHERN FRONTIER

THE EPITOME OF MODERN COASTAL DESIGN, THIS HOME ON THE NSW SOUTH COAST IS A SANCTUARY THAT PROTECTS AND INSPIRES ITS OWNERS.

WORDS RACHEL WHITE PHOTOGRAPHY CLINTON WEAVER





ON A WINDSWEPT, SEASIDE PLOT at Culburra Beach, on the South Coast of New South Wales, an artist couple's home has been skilfully designed to mimic the sway of the low, native foliage that surrounds it. "It's such a windy site that the shape of the trees has been distorted by the constant winds along the coast," says the home's architect, Virginia Kerridge. "You can clearly see which way the wind comes from, and the ascending roof form, which flattens towards the beach, evolved from that."

While expertly designed to blend with its natural setting, the home's primary function is to shield its inhabitants against the elements on a beautiful, but at times brutal, site. "Sometimes when you're in there, you're really glad to be inside," says Virginia. Not only is Culburra Beach – on Jerrinja Country – under constant attack from the Pacific's

salty gusts, but since the Black Summer fires of 2019/20, it's also categorised as a high-risk bushfire area (bushfire attack level FZ). "We hadn't designed an FZ building before, so it was a bit of a learning process," recalls Virginia. "But in the end, it was a good outcome – because of the way the walls are constructed, the home feels very self-contained, you really do feel very safe in there."

Inspiring not just a feeling of safety, the reality of strict building codes ensures the home is as protected from the elements as possible. This is reinforced by the selection of hardy, fireproof materials throughout. Prefabricated Dincel walls are internally lined with timber, filled with concrete, and externally covered in rugged aluminium cladding. All the windows are made of FZ-grade timber, and the full-length ones are fitted with fire shutters. >

FROM LEFT "The homeowners wanted a workable concrete floor and surfaces that would stand the test of time," says architect Virginia Kerridge. "That can end up being quite a rugged look, so we wanted to counter that with natural materials, so we didn't end up with too many hard elements." Joinery by Mark Watson at MAW Design; cavoodle George relaxes on the shady deck. *Banksia integrifolia* flourishes in the gardens, which were designed by Jane Irwin Landscape Architecture.

“Culburra Beach House has a great sense of freedom being right on the beachfront,” says Virginia. “The owners love the area and were excited by the prospect of having a purpose-built new home.”

Internally, there was more flexibility to explore the owners’ practical and aesthetic requirements. “When they came to see me, they’d just been on a holiday to New Zealand,” says Virginia. Inspired by the simple baches – seaside shacks – they had stayed in while touring the country, the couple presented Virginia with the feeling they wanted to create in a home, rather than a prescriptive brief.

“The owners are a potter and a musician who is also a painter,” explains Virginia. “What they really wanted was an escape; somewhere where they could be creative. The house is nestled into its site, so from the beach it is hardly visible. This sense of restraint gives the house the feeling of being a getaway.”

Along with flexible spaces that have multiple potential uses, internal material selections heavily favour sustainable, recycled materials (like the extensively used pre-aged hardwood) that reflect a connection to the ever-present outside world, while creating a nurturing atmosphere conducive to creativity.

The 200-square-metre, L-shaped floor plan is relatively simple and includes a north-facing living, kitchen and dining zone with a deck, a ground-floor ceramic studio, an upstairs studio for making music or painting that doubles as a guest room, and a master suite boasting sweeping views of the sea and sky.

Between the dwelling and the ocean, landscaped gardens artfully bridge the gap between the natural and built environments. “The garden is very dominant, which is

a good thing,” says Virginia. Naturalistic plantings of endemic species were chosen by the team at Jane Irwin Landscape Architecture to combat erosion while supporting the existing ecosystem. A meandering stepped path solidifies the connection between land and sea. “The idea was to create a garden that looked like it was already there,” explains Virginia. “And it does – it just integrates into the rest of the bush and is incredibly low-maintenance.”

Proving that necessity really is the mother of invention, this home, and its gardens, walks a tightrope between restrictive building codes, a sometimes-inhospitable site, and client expectations – forcing Virginia to draw on all her experience and abilities.

Instead of resulting in a compromised design, strict parameters fired Virginia’s architectural inventiveness, and the resulting home delivers emphatically on all fronts. It’s both completely in harmony with the natural world while delivering a creative, cocooning atmosphere that reflects its owners’ elegant, pared-back style.

The home also performs the most basic of functions, protecting its inhabitants from the elements, with aplomb. And while it has been shortlisted for two major architecture awards, Virginia says there’s only one outcome that truly matters: “The most rewarding thing about this home is that the owners really love it and enjoy living there. That’s always the most rewarding outcome.”

Visit vk.com.au and jila.net.au

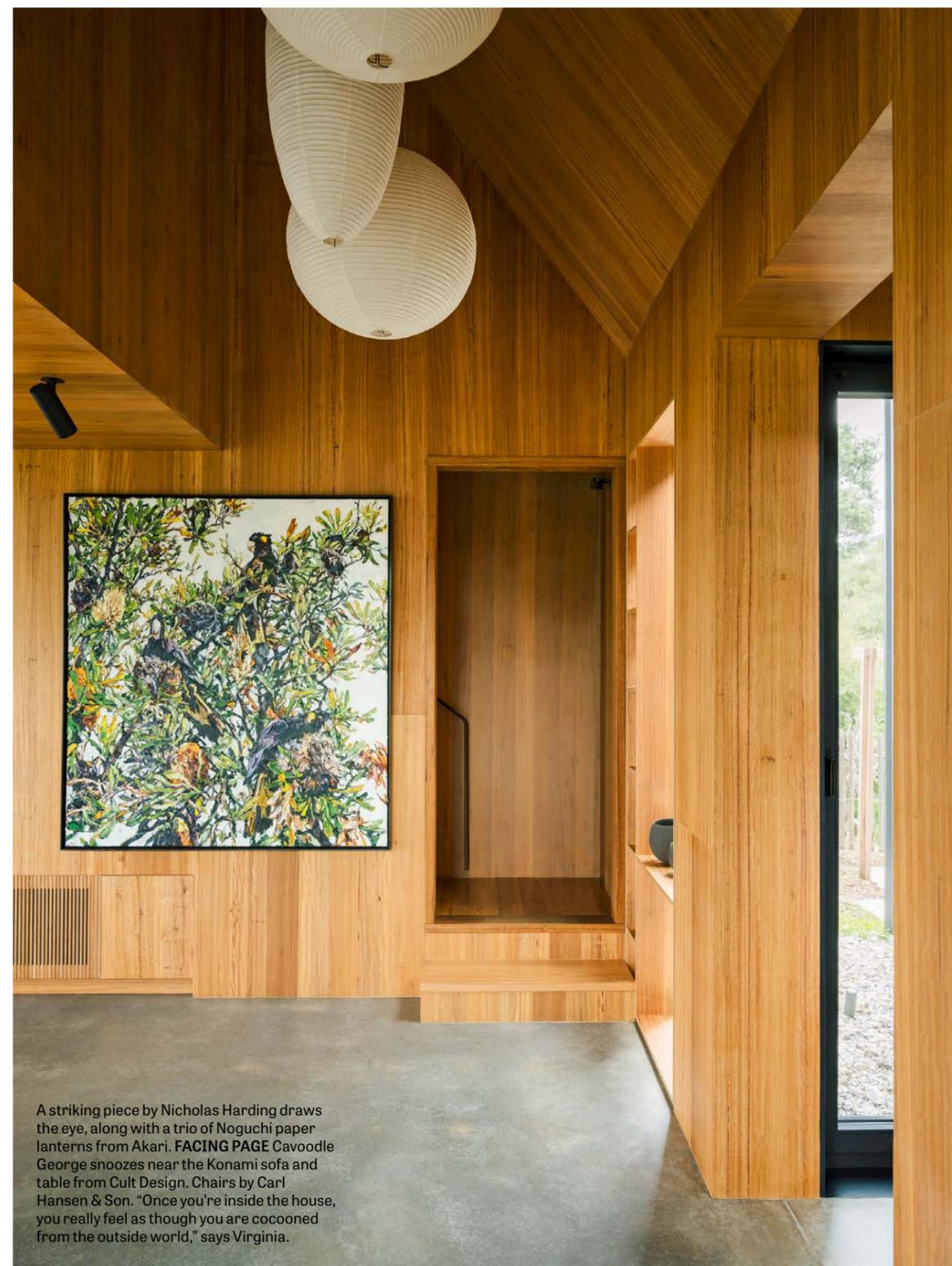
For more beautiful homes, head to homestolove.com.au

“The house is nestled into its site, so from the beach it is hardly visible. This sense of restraint gives the house the feeling of being a getaway.”



Floor-to-ceiling windows and doors usher natural light inside. **FACING PAGE, FROM TOP** The living area features artwork by Nicholas Harding; the studio boasts ample work space, ambient lighting and garden views.

“The most rewarding thing about this home is that the owners really love it and enjoy living there. That’s always the most rewarding outcome.”



A striking piece by Nicholas Harding draws the eye, along with a trio of Noguchi paper lanterns from Akari. **FACING PAGE** Cavoodle George snoozes near the Konami sofa and table from Cult Design. Chairs by Carl Hansen & Son. “Once you’re inside the house, you really feel as though you are cocooned from the outside world,” says Virginia.



Durable, long-lasting Permalite aluminium was chosen for the exterior. "I worked with Davin Nurimba from my studio on the architecture and interiors, and Jane Irwin for the landscaped areas," says Virginia. **FACING PAGE, CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT** Greenery adds softness at the entrance; "As an architect, I create buildings that are site-responsive and integrated with the surrounding environment, with usable outside areas that have a connection with the inside," says Virginia; the owners enjoy uninterrupted coastal views.

