

Jeremy Wolveridge of Wolveridge Architects divided the north-facing outdoor expanse of this Blairgowrie beach house into an entry path and a 'play' quadrangle separated by a sequence of road-screening, rammed-earth pillars. According to the architect, these pillars provide arriving guests with a measured glimpse of the beach house while preserving the residents' privacy from the road. **Details, last pages.**

# SHADOW PLAY

THE VIVID EFFECTS OF LIGHT AND REFLECTION CREATE A DRAMATIC ODE TO NATURAL PHENOMENA IN THIS ATMOSPHERIC HOME ON THE MORNINGTON PENINSULA.

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On sunny days, the pergola structure casts busy patterns that negate the need for more decorative props inside. A Hermon & Hermon Coast II teak double dining table and benches, a Jordan sofa and a painting by Emily Pwerle keep the scheme grounded. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** the external living area is part-wrapped in steel, the laser-cut breeze-block pattern of which alludes to the mid-century style of local holiday homes and surf sheds.

**O**n the back of Jeremy Wolveridge's assertion that his architecture is always informed by its wider 'context', it's safe to thumb-sketch his new structure near Blairgowrie back beach — a stretch of sheltered cove on the Bass Strait-facing fingertip of Victoria's Mornington Peninsula — as rugged and raw. "Not unlike your good self," I say to the artfully scruffy architect, who presides over a boutique office in the upstairs space of a former boot factory in Melbourne. "You're not a suit-and-tie kinda guy, are you?"

The 40-something drops his beard-framed face down to unremarkable jeans and shirt and declares that he is "pretty dressed-up today". His clothes convey little affinity with the hipster culture that encircles his Collingwood office and tells that context is not a holistic carry-through for him. But a quick scan of the detail in his design engine-room does reveal that this 'bloke' mixes primitive spirit and pure line in a crude materiality crafted by a caring hand, and is very adept at swinging his sympathies between the modern masters (specifically the Los Angeles sub-set steered by Rudolph Schindler et al) and the bush mechanics.

It's a natural swing, born of long practice (Wolveridge hung out his shingle in 2000 and now oversees offices in Melbourne and Port Douglas), a love of 'natural' place (he commutes from country Victoria) and a little design DNA (his father Michael Wolveridge partnered with five times British Open winner, Peter Thomson, and Ross Perrett to build some of the world's great golf courses).

So was this a hole in one, I ask, after seeing the dramatic picture-proof that he condensed the high cliffs, sheltered coves, rocky platforms, Modernist shacks and surf-club sheds of wider Blairgowrie into a rugged residence of rammed earth wall, weathered timber and patinated steel, all perched halfway up a sand dune on a sloping site dotted with native vegetation. What about local planning? What about the client? Were they prescriptive? "It was a joy; they were outstanding and they just wanted something divorced from city life," Wolveridge replies. "The client grew up in an Alistair Knox house in Eltham, and I think his parents had one of the few Knox-designed beach houses on the peninsula."

Stitching these memories of Knox's mud-brick bush idealism, to the 'language' of local context, the kick-about needs of the clients' two young children, the requirements of planning and all studies of the site, Wolveridge worked up a square plan, connecting spaces in a race-track circuit that could take the tricycle ride. >

Forcing an appreciation of the wider landscape, the architect compressed space in the public living area and painted its ceiling in an edge-confounding Dulux black — a customised mix that Wolveridge says always works for his schemes. Recalling the resourcefulness of the local mid-century shack, he detailed the island bench as open-shelf cabinets and clad walls in recycled plywood packing crates stained in Black Ash timber stain by Cutek. The Hermon & Hermon Coast II dining table is flanked by Eames 'Moulded Plastic' armchairs from Living Edge, while Erik Buch oak bar stools from Great Dane continue the mid-century theme.

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< This plan he split into four modules — two living zones (public and private) separated by a central service area (kitchen, laundry and bathrooms) located directly above a lower-level rumpus room. The fourth module he identifies as the external living room — a north-facing deck with a wrap-around permeable skin of laser-cut steel, the breeze-block pattern of which is both a conduit to the client's holiday memories and a controller of harsh sun. So decorative is the shadow play from this sharp pergola that the addition of pattern in any adjacent space might have constituted overkill. But no, Wolveridge chose instead to riff on the structure's primordial palette of weathered steel, timber and compressed earth in interior spaces that summon the sensation of standing on a forest floor — fire-scorched trees (black-stained wall cladding of recycled packing crates), lit by the last rays of leaf-filtered sun (laser-cut steel panels screening overhead skylights) as a night sky encroaches (ceiling painted charcoal to both cocoon and confound space edge). The bathrooms were made equally atmospheric with cave-like constructs of heat-treated steel that amplify an 'experience' but never at the expense of maintenance (less tiles equal less cleaning).

"Restricted budgets can force innovation," adds Wolveridge of a mirrored kitchen splashback made up of random sections separated by fine timber battens. "I wanted to reflect the wider landscape inside, but the cost and complexity of installing a large sheet of mirror required a different solution." This 'different solution' now ricochets light and reflection such that the perception of room edge shifts and space assumes a largesse that it doesn't really have.

"The client reports that, come Monday morning, his mood has noticeably lifted and he sheds a tear at having to leave the house," says Wolveridge, visibly chuffed to hear that his spatial compression and expansion tricks have such psyche-salving effect. "This is the real stuff of an architect's reward." **VL**

The master bedroom is a timber-lined cocoon in which silver linen curtains from Next Home Furnishings filter morning light. Sunny yellow is the single concession to colour in the form of an 'Angle' table lamp by New Zealand's Workroom Design and a cushion from Mark Tuckey. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** an asymmetric arrangement of double laminated Formply boxes serve as sculptural shelving units in the master bedroom. A Hans Wegner 'Wishbone' chair from Great Dane is another hint at the mid-century design language of the locale. **Details, last pages.**

