



back-country
BEAUTY

THIS STUNNING ARCHITECTURAL HOME DRAWS INSPIRATION
FROM ITS HINTERLAND SURROUNDS AND THE OWNERS'
NOSTALGIC MEMORIES OF THEIR RURAL ROOTS
STORY & STYLING KYLIE JACKES PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN DOWNS

ENVIABLE OUTLOOK Taking its cues from the surrounding landscape, the newly built Queensland Sunshine Coast home of tree-changers Brenda and Randy features acres of glass – all the better to take in the views – and a palette of warm timber, dotted with carefully chosen, timeless furnishings. In the dining room (opposite), copper pendants from About Space and classic Wishbone chairs around the dining table blend in beautifully. The table was one of the few furnishings the couple brought from their previous abode in Melbourne. “I’d always wanted an old French dining table and we needed something to fit the relatively narrow space, so when I found this one in an antiques store in Malvern, I knew it would be perfect,” says Brenda. The wet-edge pool that runs the length of the home’s second pavilion appears to float in line with the view. While timber and tiles were chosen to blend into the landscape, a bright Cosh Living chair provides a vivid colour pop. >





With an undulating access road almost a kilometre long, traversing creeks and winding past duck ponds and pockets of rainforest, it's a real journey to get to Randy and Brenda's home in the Sunshine Coast hinterland. Anticipation builds at every turn, before their striking architectural home, nestled on the side of an escarpment on the site of a former pineapple and citrus farm, is finally revealed. "When we pulled up at the front with the real estate agent, Brenda just got this look in her eyes and I thought, 'Uh oh, I'm done for now!'" recalls Randy. "It was a much larger block than we'd been looking for and it didn't have ocean views, it faced west. But just like Brenda, I could see it was really special."

So special, in fact, that the couple, who were living in Melbourne at the time, had to fly back to Queensland to have an interview with the owner of the block, who wanted to meet prospective buyers. "I think he wanted to make sure we'd be good custodians, and fortunately he agreed to the sale," says Randy. The area's rolling green hills reminded Randy of his homeland of Colorado in the US, while for Brenda, who grew up on a sheep and wheat farm on Queensland's Darling Downs, the prospect of moving north to build their dream home felt like a return to her rural roots.

"THERE'S A LOT OF GLASS IN THE HOUSE – EACH SPACE FRAMES DIFFERENT *vantage points*" ~ BRENDA

The couple were keen to build a home that would sit comfortably within the natural landscape, and enlisted local architect Dan Sparks of Sparks Architecture to tackle their challenging brief. "Randy and I are very different, so the house had to draw together a lot of ideas," explains Brenda. "Randy was keen for something very open, and I wanted something that resembled a shearing shed with lots of tactile elements. Amazingly, Dan just 'got' us, and the first mud map he drew up on site is pretty much what we went with."

The finished result, designed as two pavilions, is far more luxe than a sheep shed. A natural thread runs through the split-level home, with textural rammed-earth walls, wide spotted-gum floors and chunky timber beams, studded with industrial-style bolts. One pavilion hosts the guest quarters, overlooking a pool and a sea of trees, while Randy and Brenda spend most of their time in the lower pavilion, where a run of glass sliding doors gives the open living, kitchen and dining area unimpeded views across mountain ranges.

For the interiors, the couple found working with Martine Blair of Zooi Design invaluable. "We had a Federation house in Melbourne, so we basically started again with new furniture and pieces throughout," explains Brenda. "Martine was a wonderful mediator who brought together Randy's and my different ideas."

Now, almost two years since the house was completed, the couple have embraced a complete change of lifestyle. "We've both retired since moving here, and Randy has swapped his company car for a tractor," says Brenda. "We're regenerating vegetation where we can, and although the property is more work than we imagined, it's really satisfying. Living here really connects with something within me."

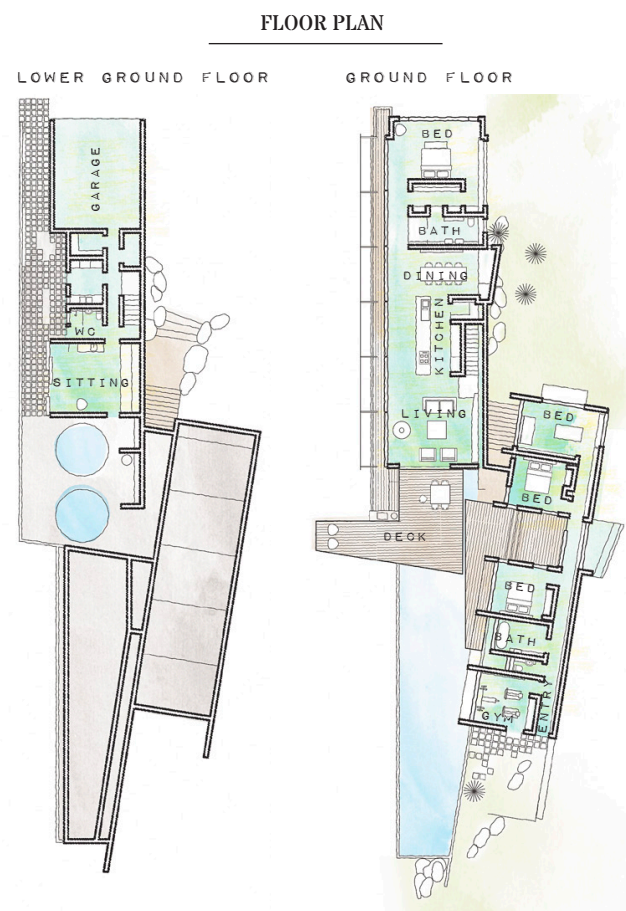
OUTDOORS To enhance the resort-like feel, basalt rock steppers softened with mounds of no-mow grass pave the way to the gym overlooking the pool (top left) and the front entrance (left). In keeping with the home's connection to the landscape, there's no front door as such. Instead, antique French doors, positioned below a glass ceiling, invite visitors to tread their way across steppers bordered by an internal garden and water feature. "You drive over two creeks to get here, so I always think of this as the final water crossing before arriving," says Brenda.



OPEN-PLAN LIVING The natural beauty of spotted gum is celebrated in all its forms throughout the home. "We used it as veneer for the cabinetry, the internal beams are laminated spotted gum and we wanted the floor to feel warm and evoke the look of a worn, woolshed floor, so we went with feature-grade timber boards to get the imperfections," explains Brenda, pictured in the kitchen with Randy. "For me, the tactile look and feel of old timber is intrinsically relaxing." In the living area, a Gyrofocus fireplace from Oblica rotates to provide wonderful warmth, whether curled up on the couch or dining outside at night. >



KITCHEN The galley kitchen (above left) commands a central position, with the five-metre-long island – with under-bench drawers clad in Leaf Green Formica (below) – running parallel to the view. To give the space a natural look, spotted-gum cabinetry was given a 2-pac matt finish to reduce shine, and charcoal porcelain was chosen to run across the benchtop. A Smeg downdraft rangehood pops out of the island bench when needed. “The ceiling was too high for a standard cylindrical rangehood, and we didn’t want anything which would impede the outlook, so a hidden one within the bench was a great solution,” explains Randy. Hay ‘About A Stool’ seats from Cult Design provide a comfy spot to sit. The pantry, cleverly squeezed in above the internal stairs, is glimpsed through an architectural feature of timber battens in the dining area (above right).



LIVING AREA
 Rammed-earth walls imbue the living area with warmth and a tactile patina. On the floor, a ‘Snowdrop’ rug by Easton Pearson for Designer Rugs picks up the ochre tones of the wall, as do armchairs from Boyd Blue. Arranged atop a Jardan ‘Nook’ four-seater sofa, Adairs ‘Malmo’ terracotta linen cushions and chunky knit charcoal cushions continue the colour theme. >

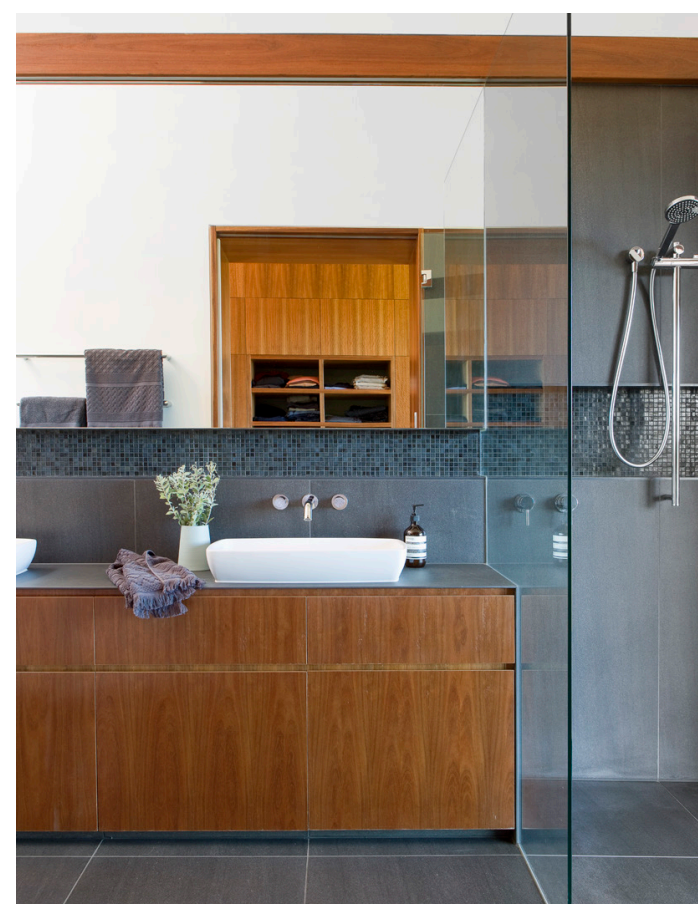




WE LOVE... *hidden details*

Streamlined design is the order of the day in this remarkable home. The bedsides are cleverly hidden, with touch-open tables keeping the joinery beautifully sleek. “We liked the idea of the pop-out table as for the most part it’s concealed, yet Brenda can use it when she has a cup of tea in the morning,” explains Randy. Timber pelmets screen automated blackout blinds, activated with the flick of a switch. For a wide range of blackout blinds, try Luxaflex, luxaflex.com.au.

MAIN BEDROOM A spotted-gum wall forms a rich backdrop for the floating timber bed, dressed in linen sheets, a throw from Bamboka and topped with Sparkk cushions. A suspended ‘Sphere’ pendant from Hub Furniture is ideal for bedtime reading and adds a sculptural element. “It does feel as if we’re up in the clouds at times,” says Brenda of the elevated view. “Some mornings you wake up and there’s a pillow of clouds on the lake, which get lifted up by the wind and float past the bedroom. It’s wonderful to watch.”



ENSUITE Mirrored cabinetry forms a seamless wall of glass above the vanity, clad in slender Laminam porcelain from Ace Stone & Tiles and topped with Reece AXA H10 basins (above left). Large charcoal floor tiles continue up the wall to a niche defined in ‘Sicis’ feature mosaics, all from Ceramica Senio. **GUEST BEDROOM** Randy wanted guests to feel like they were staying in a resort, and with a second well-appointed pavilion there’s no shortage of space to choose from. “Visitors dubbed one room the ‘pool view’ and the other ‘the garden view,’” says Brenda. In the ‘garden’ room (top right), an Adairs black wrought-iron bed is dressed with a quilted velvet throw (also from Adairs) and Sparkk cushions. **GUEST BATHROOM** Interior designer Martine Blair of Zooi Design was given free rein to create a sophisticated scheme in the guest bathroom (bottom right). “We said we wanted to create the feel you’re showering and bathing outdoors, and left the details up to Martine,” says Brenda, of the space, which features a Kado ‘Cirque’ bath from Reece. >





EXTERIOR
Honouring the landscape was top priority for the couple, who asked Marc Conlon of the Conlon Group to devise a garden scheme that would complement the home's design and natural surrounds. To keep the look soft, local native shrubs and ground covers were planted en masse, creating a floating, quilt-like effect, with large-scale textures in keeping with the home's proportions.

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MODERN COUNTRY



INSIDE STORY BRENDA & RANDY'S HOME

Who lives here?

Randy, a former commercial adviser, and Brenda, a former events executive.

What design aspect do you love most?

Randy: "The fact there are so many different spaces to enjoy the house, views and landscape. It's the ultimate in 'glamping'. In summer, I love being able to open up the doors and bring the outside in, and in winter it's cosy to be tucked up on the couch or in bed, looking out to early morning mist."

Which spot do you enjoy spending time?

Brenda: "It's pretty special to sit in bed watching the birds in the tree canopies."

Why is the house great for entertaining?

Brenda: "It's at its best when we have visiting friends and family. We make the most of all the spaces. We'll use the firepit at night, stay in the pool longer and cook outside on the deck."



ACTUAL PAINT COLOURS MAY VARY ON APPLICATION

1. Decking timbers finished in CD50 oil in Grey Mist, Cutek.
2. The couple on the deck above a green wall of climbing maidenhair fern, native sarsaparilla and climbing guinea flower.
3. Spotted-gum timber battens, try Timber & Rose.
4. Gloster 'Nomad' bistro chair, Cosh Living.
5. Rammed-earth wall, Rammed Earth Constructions.
6. For similar outdoor chairs, try 'Marillo' chairs, Eco Outdoor.
7. 'No-mow' grass (Zoysia tenuifolia) planted between the stepping stones.

