



on the beach

Perched on the dunes at Bundeena, just south of Sydney, this contemporary interpretation of a beach shack connects the owner to the surf, sun and bush. Sam Crawford Architects has created an efficient design that really takes advantage of the spectacular surrounds.

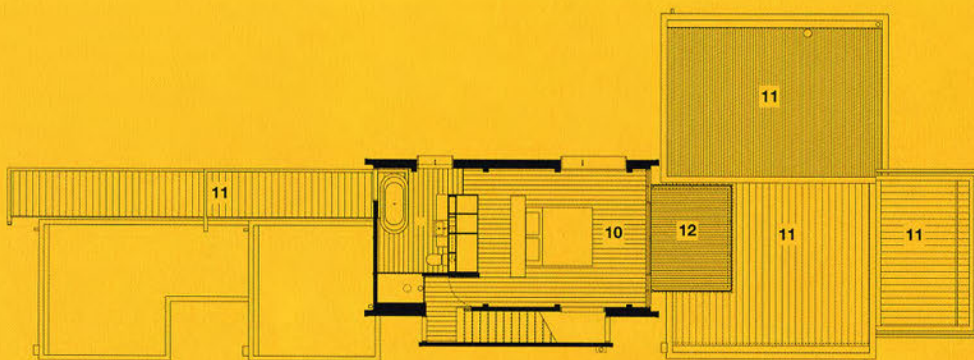


- 1 Breezeway
- 2 Dining
- 3 Laundry
- 4 Lobby
- 5 Bedroom

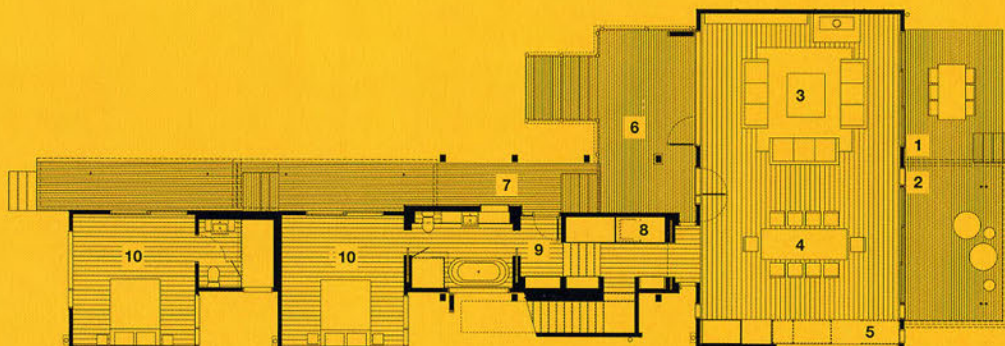


Section

0 1m 5m



First floor



Ground floor



0 1 5m

- | | |
|--------------|---------------|
| 1 Front deck | 7 Verandah |
| 2 Breezeway | 8 Laundry |
| 3 Living | 9 Lobby |
| 4 Dining | 10 Bedroom |
| 5 Kitchen | 11 Roof |
| 6 Rear deck | 12 Upper deck |

PREVIOUS PAGES, LEFT: Approaching the house, visitors enter a sheltered garden space with tantalizing glimpses of the water beyond. RIGHT: The main bedroom and bathroom sit neatly atop the dwelling, blending the best of the site's bushland surrounds with ocean views.
THESE PAGES, OPPOSITE: The exterior appears as a series of interconnected timber boxes, accented with angular Zincolume cladding on the upstairs level.



I FIRST NOTICED THE BOLD TECTONICS of this house from a nearby jetty as it neared completion in 2004. Even from afar, it was clear that this was a well-considered piece of architecture. More than a year later, I had the privilege of visiting the house with the client, and architect Sam Crawford. It was only then that the true level of design consideration became apparent.

Bundeena is a small village, an hour south of Sydney. Its appeal lies in the isolation, peace and quiet afforded by the national park to the south and west, and the Pacific Ocean to the north and east. The local housing stock is typically eclectic: predominantly 1970s brick veneer homes and pastel McMansions sprinkled with a few remaining 1950s shacks and the occasional architectural gem. You can imagine Sam Crawford's excitement when given the opportunity to design a new beachfront residence in such an idyllic location.

The client's brief was straightforward – a simple house with a strong connection to the outdoors. The site presented its own peculiarities, and it is the response to these peculiarities that is the key to this project's success. Despite the apparent tranquility of its setting, Bundeena's local climate can be harsh. In summer, the north-easterly breeze kicks in around noon and the water's edge can become an uncomfortable place to be. In winter, chilly south-westerly winds whip along the valley floor and across the site, making outdoor living quite a challenge. Crawford's design strategy demonstrates a deft handling of the site's climate, topography and adjacent built forms.

Entry to the site is through a robust timber fence on the western boundary. The space has an almost tropical Asian quality, although there are no literal references to any particular culture. A series of black-stained plywood boxes defines the southern edge of the site, bound by a hardwood deck and canopy signalling the entry. From here, there are but glimpses of the water beyond. The plywood boxes each contain a bedroom and bathroom, and occupants are encouraged to experience the elements by using the deck to access the main living space. The garden, designed in association with landscape architects 360 Degrees, offers a shaded retreat from blustery "nor'-easters".

From the elevated decks, the house appears porous – sliding doors offer a variety of entry points, with the front door barely distinguished. The living and dining pavilion sits half a level above the bedrooms, following the crest of the sand dune below. From here, the expansive views of nearby Port Hacking and the Pacific Ocean become evident. A modest kitchen runs along the southern wall, while two separate outdoor spaces have been created to the east: one bound by operable timber screens that offer privacy from the glare of the morning sun and

the gaze of passing beach-goers. A second, more open deck provides an alternative outdoor space.

On the upper level, the main bedroom and bathroom showcase the site's exceptional vista. The client describes the joy of waking up in the bedroom each day, just before the sun pops over the horizon. Less obvious, and in some ways more interesting, is the journey to and from this space. The stairs accessing the upper level provide an axial view over the hamlet to the treetops beyond. It is one of the elements that the architect deems most successful.

The building's structural systems demonstrate a strong physical connection to their context. The architect praises the local council's Development Control Plan, which requires that all new houses be set 600 mm above ground to retain beach access for fauna and assist with drainage. The house rests on a grid of steel posts driven into the sand. The posts and bracing enable the surge of the swell to be felt within the house from time to time, accentuating the idea of living on the edge.

A limited palette of materials is used throughout. Internally, a mix of timber floors, plywood ceilings and white walls provides a neutral backdrop for art and the house's views. From the garden, the battened stained timber "boxes" read like a series of packing crates recently unloaded from a barge on the beach. These are offset by the playful lines of the Zinalume cladding of the main bedroom hovering above. The beach elevation shows a clever manipulation of scales, where the upper bedroom is just visible and the verandah spaces sit comfortably alongside their single-storey neighbours.

Beyond its response to the immediate environment, the design demonstrates a commitment to the environment at large. Issues such as cross-ventilation, shading and rainwater collection are successfully incorporated, and much research has gone into sourcing recycled and plantation materials. The architect jokes that most recycled structural members seem to come from Victorian rail bridges, although the ones for this project came from Mudgee. Sam concedes that further environmental considerations could have been accommodated, but some items were abandoned because of budget restrictions and site suitability (sand base, site size and proximity to the bay).

It would be easy to be overwhelmed by a site like this, but Sam Crawford and his team have taken time to look beyond the view. The underlying design philosophy could be comfortably applied in inner-city and suburban house designs. Crawford and his team are currently working pro bono on a social health project in Malawi. We look forward to seeing how these philosophies translate in a larger public project in an equally challenging environment. **JOHN DE MANINCOR**

THESE PAGES, OPPOSITE ABOVE: Two outdoor spaces face the beach: an open deck providing uninterrupted views and a louvred breezeway offering shelter and privacy. **BELOW:** Combining timber floors, plywood ceilings and clean white walls, the interior of the house recalls the casual familiarity of a beach shack.





ARCHITECT

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PRACTICE PROFILE

Small practice specializing in
bespoke residential projects.

PROJECT TEAM

Sam Crawford, Jonathan Moore,
Jane Slock, Jolyon Sykes

BUILDER

Premier

CONSULTANTS

Engineer O'Hearn Consulting
Landscaping 360 Degrees
Interiors Sam Crawford
Architects with David Forbes
Lighting Sam Crawford
Architects

PRODUCTS

Roofing Zincalume Custom Orb;
polyester insulation batts
External walls Woodlogic
Shadowclad, painted Resene
'Black' **Internal walls** Hoop pine
plywood finished in tung oil;
plasterboard, painted Dulux
'White Opal' **Windows** G James
Series 675 anodized al windows;
Windoor WRC windows with
Breezway louvers **Doors** G
James Series 675 anodized al
doors; Windoor WRC doors
Flooring Recycled blackbutt and
ironbark finished with tung oil
Lighting Internal – Inlight; External
– Hunza; Lumascape **Kitchen**
St George oven and fridge;
ss/hoop pine plywood bench and
shelving; Rogerseller tapware
Bathroom Rogerseller fittings and
tapware; ss checkerplate
surfaces; recycled ironbark
floors; WRC shower tray;
galvanized flat sheet and Lysaght
Mini Orb walls **Heating** Natural
ventilation; WRC venetian blinds;
nature reed awnings **External
elements** Kwila decking; loose
sandstone stepping stone and
retaining walls **Other** Custom
joinery by Sam Crawford
Architects

TIME SCHEDULE

Design, documentation
15 months
Construction 9 months

SITE SIZE

795 m²

PHOTOGRAPHY

Brett Boardman

LEFT: The house evinces a
careful consideration of the
site's topography.