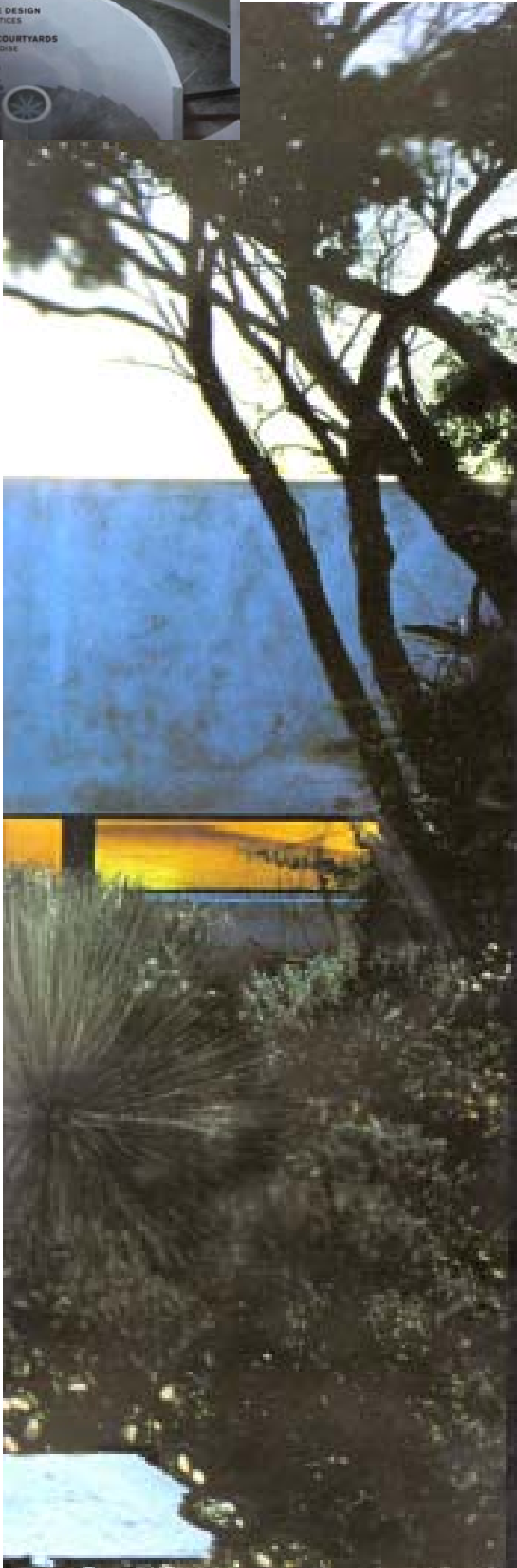




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DIALOGUE OF THE SURFERS

SPIRIT OF PLACE IS ONE THING, BUT PREVELLY PARK AT MARGARET RIVER ON WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S SOUTH-WEST COAST IS SOMETHING SPECIAL, PARTLY BECAUSE IT IS A MECCA FOR SURFERS. **ROMESH GOONEWARDENE** DISCOVERS A BEACH HOUSE BORN OF A SHARED LOVE OF SURFING, BUT ONE WHICH BRINGS A CINEMATIC SENSIBILITY – THE NARRATIVE, THE FRAME AND THE EDIT – TO AN OTHERWISE OVERWHELMINGLY BEAUTIFUL SITE. PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ASHLEY JONES-EVANS**



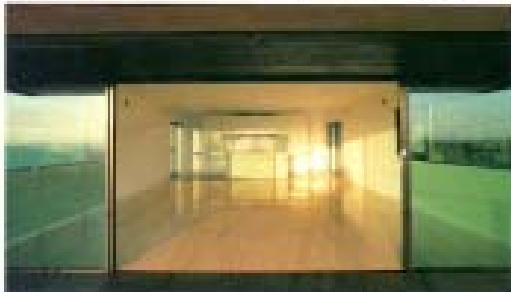
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SECTION 110: BELOW, VIEWS OF THE KITCHENVIEWING FROM OPPOSITE TOP: VIEW TO OCEAN FROM BALCONY; MIDDLE: ENTRY; BOTTOM: CORNER OF OULT AVENUE



- 1 SWP
- 2 ENTRY
- 3 GARAGE
- 4 BEDROOM
- 5 KITCHEN
- 6 OVERLOOKING
- 7 DECK
- 8 TERRACE
- 9 COURT

IN THE CITY, PRIVATE HOUSES are usually required to express their identity and resist something of the conventions of the genre – not to say, the architect. But the beach shack and bush retreat have always been an opportunity to escape from these wearying responsibilities, to show living that commutes more with nature and less with neighbours.

This can be difficult when the bush and the beach become so popular that hundreds of people flock there, want to live there, and build their retreats there, as is the case in Pinery Park, near Margaret River on the south-west coast of Western Australia. How do you maintain that sense of retreat, the communion with nature, while remaining polite to an (unwanted) emerging suburban context? Somehow Dale Jones-Evans has managed to do so in this house at Pinery.

The house has three external points of reference: the sea to the west, incorporating those reef breaks (one of which – ‘The barrel’ – is among the best surfing spots in the world), the rising spine of the sand-covered dune ridge to the south, and the whitewashed Greek chapel on the adjacent block to the north. Jones-Evans has visually engaged these in an organised sequence of arriving, entering and moving through the house. There is a fourth reference that is engaged by careful avoidance – the suburban cluster which has come to characterize much of the residential development in the Margaret River area. It is increasingly difficult in Pinery Park to feel alone that work created by private time, or interrupted by other houses.

This house is experienced as a dramatic narrative, a sequence of ambulated shots. The spatial navigation anthropomorphizes a series of movements, a ritual almost, which sets up encounters with selected elements of the site. Jones-Evans has not isolated the house (beyond



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or figuratively) into competition with the beauty of the nature that surrounds it.

Arrival is from a small narrow courtyard at the back of the site. The house sits a little way down the hill and doesn't break the sweep of the vista — the hills, the beach, the church on the right are all part of one panning shot. You descend to the house, a Breuer-esque wall anchors it to the site and locks you into a dead cone where the view disappears, the wind drops and becomes quiet, nature vanishes, and a number of cascading steps delivers you to the front door. You cross a simple threshold into the lobby which Jones-Evans calls the cave. Here, where the views and light are suppressed, you are faced with a screen wall that has a long slit through which you can see into the front room, nearly a half level lower. The slit doesn't yield a view of the sea, but a promise of light beyond. A few steps lead up to sleeping areas on the left and the right.

Descending the steps towards the front room you have to turn 90 degrees to one side or another, through large sliding glass doors to look out towards either gulfport of the church belfry popping over the scrub on one side, or the massive swell of the dune range on the other. Turning into the front room your gaze is suddenly released to the dunes, the microscope view to the reef and the pounding break two kilometres away. The breadth of field is expanded by the refracting of the glass around the first mass of each front corner. The glazing surprisingly blocks out the noise. The placement of solid panels of wall obscures the view to the freshwater development on a distant dune. Compared to the solidity and implied mass of the cave spaces, the front room flows out to the balcony, suspended three metres above the hill.

The windows in the bedrooms are arranged at eye level from mattress





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ABOVE: VIEW OF SOUTH-WESTERN FACADE. BELOW TOP: VIEW FROM BALCONY TO NORTH. BELOW BOTTOM: VIEW FROM EASTERN TOWNACE.

height. The view from the bedrooms affords a voyeuristic glimpse back into the front room – these are not simply places of solitude and retreat; they expect guests, society.

The view from the balcony of the hill up towards the house is modest. The form is of a solid bunker anchored low and close to the site. There is an awning floating out over the fall of the hill which encloses the front room. But the mass of this element is not evident from anywhere within the house, except the balcony. The modern vocabulary complements the subdued presence of the house in the landscape.

Dale Jones-Evans denies interest in construction technology as a generator of outcomes, seeing them rather as servants of the real purpose of the house, which is to set up contemplation of the place. The finishes are minimal and unflashy, except for the use of bamboo on the floor of the front room, which emphasises its lightness, compared with the ground-back concrete in the cave. It suggests simple, seaside living. The slab is heated for Margaret River's cold winter nights and also collects heat from the northern sun. The awning is clad in lapped sheets of copper which are already beginning to dip green. The client, a sailor, looks forward to the slow change from penny brown to marine-green as a promise of many long years of sailing the bayside. The bunker is rendered brickwork, painted grey, not quite like the grey sand where the bush has been lightly scraped away to accommodate the house.

The client says he's going to miss his old shack and says he might even keep it after he has moved into this house. He tells a story of an old man who lives in a tipped-over water tank on the other side of the hill. Somehow his house has some of that austerity.

