FOSSIL COVE HIDEAWAY

While a hideout at Fossil Cove sounds like the stuff of a boys' own adventure, the reality is a serene coastal...
RARE ARE THE PEOPLE WHO do not wish they had just a few more dollars to spend in the construction of their dream home. However, adherence to budgetary constraints can also be a challenge which inspires creative results. Luss Architecture's Fossil Cove House is a peripatetic example of how an eye for economy has engineered an aesthetically inspiring and deeply functional family residence.

Daniel Luss explains that numerous design aspects of the house emerged from the need to seek ways to stick to a tight budget. He points out that standard gutters, fixtures and finishes have been used in most instances, while the striking Tasmanian oak shiplapped timberboards feature only in selected locations. And yet the levels of detailing and organisational rigour applied to this dwelling (designed by Daniel for his brother) allow it a sense of luxury that belies its budget. The contrast of materials has resulted in timber being used with elegant restraint, providing a subtle balance to the solid presence of primary materials. Internally, the use of simple and understated fittings enhances the overall streamlined effect, allowing attention to be drawn away from the smooth grey and white surfaces toward the warm use of timber at all entrance points, and the lush gardens enjoyed through all windows.

Set on five acres of bushland 20 minutes drive south of Hobart, in the increasingly popular region of Sandy Bay, the Fossil Cove House is blessed with a distant but divine view of the Derwent River. Daniel says that the north-facing, house couldn't be more perfect. However, amid a plethora of extravagant but conservative design features, the Fossil Cove House has plenty to show as an integrating house which blends with the landscape. "We wanted the house to naturally follow the topography of the land," Daniel notes.

By relating construction to the existing land form, the cut into the madrone tree base was kept to a minimum, as was the need for retaining walls. The structural layout of the timber framing permitted large horizontal windows to be featured on the northern side of the house without requiring large lintels.

From the roadside, very little is revealed. The south-facing walls were designed to create a barrier that camouflages the house, and the use of narrow windows was kept to a minimum. For the visitor, a timber nailed wall leading to the front door hides at what lies inside.

The palette continues boldly as one enters, by passing through a glass sidelight and thereby establishing an initial merging of indoors and outdoors. As one approaches the main living area, this sense of being both inside and outside at the same time becomes even stronger.

A striking aspect of the lounge room is the suspended ceiling, which is supported by three masts across the far wall. Daniel explains that this "very simple" feature was made possible by the way the timber frame was organised. He also notes that, "the window height was specifically designed so you can sit on the couch and enjoy the view."

Daniel has allowed a provisional space for sliding doors to separate the lounge room if the clients' needs change in the future. "They have built this house with the thought of having children. They wanted the living area to separate from the bedrooms, with a two-level sleeping area split from the main level of the building so as to create a closer connection between the two."

Daniel further explains that, having grown up in a two-storey house, he and his brother always considered downstairs to be "too far away."

With the split from the main level the number of stairs from the living area to any bedroom is lessened.

The link to the bedrooms is a hallway which runs past an enclosed toilet and bathroom area, separated from the living area by a very large industrial-style sliding door in dark grey with exposed rail tracking. Rather than having a pair of closed doors cleverly off the hallway to hide the bathroom and toilet, an entire above area has been created.

The bathroom offers a surprisingly large window looking out to the decking, through careful location of the bathtub and shower. Privacy can still be maintained.

In keeping with the open feel of the house, a narrow floor-to-ceiling window on the eastern side of the hallway encourages natural light and gives the occupants a sense of walking towards green bushland.

Utensils, a main bedroom, ensuite and study are grouped together to suit the clients' current needs. Upstairs and downstairs, the bedrooms feature north-facing windows to capture the views and light. Downstairs is a carbon copy of upstairs, with space under the stairs used as a games area, while extra space directly under the main bedroom is occupied by a compact laundry with an external door.

Outside, simple landscaping has been employed as a transition space between the house and the natural landscape of the property. Material from the excavation has been used as fill, ensuring a cost effective and environmentally efficient use of materials. An important aspect of the project was that the building would have a minimal impact on the land. In this carefully-honed building, Daniel has shown that good design can achieve much more than a limited budget would suggest. The jury for the recent RAMA Architecture Awards (Tasmania) thought so too, giving it an Honorable Mention in the New Residential category. 
This page shows how the house can be read as two distinct wings, the living section to the right and the two-level bedroom pavilion to the left. (Opposite) In the main living area, floor surfaces have been used to demarcate different areas - carpet for the lounge area, and timber for the dining and kitchen spaces.

**PRODUCTS**
- Roofing: Talents F16
- Cladding: Slate Charcoal External walls
- Windows: Capital 220
- Doors: Windows Capital 220
- Screening: Woodcarvings, glass, steel

**TIMETABLE**
- Design, documentation: 6 months
- Construction: 12 months

**SIZE**
- 225 m²
- 1750 m²

**PROJECT COST**
- $970,000

**PHOTOGRAPHY**
- Richard Szklarz