

CALL

OF

THIS PAGE in the living room of this Mornington Peninsula home, Frames lounge chair and foot stool by Jaime Hayón for Expormim from Ke-zu; Willi Willi tables from Agostino & Brown; Casablanca sofa by Paola Navone for Baxter from Criteria; CC-tapis New Classic Cinquecento rug from Loom; The Frame QLED Smart TV from Samsung with a display of *Flowers and a Japanese Print* by Paul Gauguin. *Details, last pages.*

Architectural powerhouse Kennedy Nolan looked to preserve the charm of a mid-century treasure with a nature-integrated take on the beach house.

By ANNEMARIE KIELY Photographed by DEREK SWALWELL

THE

LAND





THESE PAGES, FROM LEFT in the foyer, wall in Western red cedar diamond cladding from Cedar Sales. Larrakitj **memorial poles** from Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre. In the living and dining area, Belt sofa by Patricia Urquiola for Moroso, enquiries to Mobilia.



Australian style has long been a sun-bronzed euphemism for endless summers on free-for-all beaches where the nation's differences wash away, but Melbourne architectural firm Kennedy Nolan found its fictional foundations crumbling away on a cliff face outside the Victorian coastal township of Flinders.

"If you close your eyes and think of our beach houses, the sun is out, you see sand and it's always summertime," says Rachel Nolan of the global perception that life is a beach in Oz. "But Victorian beach houses aren't about that — they are more responsive to a cold climate, and if privileged enough to have a view, defer to watching the weather."

"But why the national preoccupation with 'What is Australian?'" she asks in admonishment of an identity 'nuanced' by the bloke-and-babe likes of Paul Hogan and Lara Bingle. "Professionally we, and certainly our peers, are more interested in what it is to be Australian; interrogating the question of 'What is country?' and 'What country are we on?'"

Calling for meanings over superficial manifestations, Nolan expounds on the First Nations' definition of Country as the lands, waters and skies to which one connects ancestrally, classifying this continent as an amalgam of hundreds of countries that pre-date western civilisation and push the understanding of 'Australian' back 60,000 years. "Always Was, Always Will Be," she says in part cite of Uncle William Bates's challenge to sovereignty and the subtext underpinning the Always House seen here; Kennedy Nolan's rebuild and redress of a mid-century beach house designed by Melbourne's feted organic modernists Chancellor and Patrick.

"The Bonurong people were the original inhabitants of this land," she says, unfurling a map of Flinders and siting her client's land on a section of coastline battered by erosion. "The existing house was basically falling into the sea." >>

THIS PAGE in the kitchen and dining area, blackwood **dining table** from Mark Tuckey; Huma **dining chairs** by Expormim from Ke-zu; Hotaru Marker **pendant lights** by Barber Osgerby for Twentytwentyone from Space Furniture. **OPPOSITE PAGE** in the living area, vintage French cane **chair** from Angelucci; Ivy **coffee table** in Red Travertine from Grazia&co; Classic Oushak **rug** from Loom; **flooring** in Surf Green slate from RMS Natural Stone; custom coloured render **fireplace** with cedar veneer; **artwork** by Nonggirnga Marawili from Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre.





THESE PAGES, FROM LEFT in the main ensuite, Kaldewei Classic Duo bath from Bathe; penny round wall tiles from Academy Tiles; floor tiles from Signorino; Dioscuri wall sconce from Artemide. In the main bedroom, custom Nook bed frame from Jardim upholstered in James Malone Khafra fabric; bed linen from In Bed; custom cabinetry in Western red cedar; The Society Inc Banks lantern from The Hub General Store; 9602 floor lamp by Paavo Tynell for Gubi from In Good Company; curtains in Nya Nordiska Ubundu fabric produced by Colleve; Tjanpi basket (on left); vessel from Stockroom; basket by Mary Banbalmiya Bindingal.



« Nolan recalls a precarious 1950s structure standing as testament to Chancellor and Patrick's repertoire of horizontal roof lines, living rooms opening to terraces, ceremonial entry sequences, walkways flanked by stone walls, and materials mimicking site conditions.

“It was just a lovely, crafty piece of modernism with big eaves,” she says of a building that blew off the last vestiges of British empire. But while Kennedy Nolan would seek to preserve, restore and riff on the design precepts of collectable architecture, the instability of the site required that its fraught foundations be shored up with 15-metre pilings. “Basically, the old building had to go,” says Nolan, typifying the commissioning client as a 60-year-old philanthropist who wanted her weekend to one day be a permanent residence. “There were things about the existing house that she loved and she asked to rebuild around a sense of them.”

As did local council, who made it a condition of the new structure that it match the Chancellor and Patrick precedent. “Our approach was to remember the house,” says Patrick Kennedy, “largely reconstructing its form and arrangement, augmented by a perpendicular element, which provides additional accommodation and solved the problems of vehicular and pedestrian access.” This ‘perpendicular element’ — two levels of sleep and service areas lined with an “intense materiality” of blackbutt, earthy render, cedar battens and mossy slate colluding to create what Kennedy calls “an interior chiaroscuro” — caps with a roof greened by Kennedy Nolan's landscape collaborator, horticulturist Amanda Oliver. Likened by the design firm to a “promontory” planted with a prehistoric contra-post of native poa grasses and pigface — reducing stormwater run-off, cooling rooms below and calling out to the thornbills — it hides human habitation from the roadside while pushing sight and spirit out to sea.

Beachside, the promontory presents as a seamless add to Kennedy Nolan's memory of the original residence; its base notes of blackbutt and cedar lyrically blowing through a linear sequence of ground-floor spaces framing Western Port Bay.

Where remnant Coldstream stone walls provided planning cues for the entry sequence — deceleration down pathways dotted with pause points to drink in the drama of carved-out courtyards — internally, their sedimentary variegations coloured soft furnishings and dialled down the outer glare.

“Each introduced element — lighting, curtains and furniture — has been selected to build an overall sense of quietude and a visual relationship to the natural world,” says Kennedy of the house-wide homage to Chancellor and Patrick's organic holism and the client's collection of Indigenous art; one testifying to the talents of Yolngu women artists in north-east Arnhem Land. Nolan is sensitive to any perception that a privileged white woman has appropriated sacred signifiers as decorative touchpoints and informs that the client enjoys deep friendships with First Nations peoples: “She does a huge amount of work with makers, performers and artists like Jake Nash, the head of design at Bangarra who designed the front door.”

Yes, Kennedy Nolan concedes that what it is putting back on Country is still a fiction of the past — “which is about where Australia is up to in terms of what was originally here” — but its architecture analogously tackles the shaky base of ‘constructed fact’ while mining memory for a revised meaning. “We're still working on the concept of Country and what it is to be Australian,” says Nolan with more than a passing nod to American writer James Baldwin. “Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.” [VL kennedynolan.com.au](http://VL.kennedynolan.com.au)



THIS PAGE in the guest bedroom, vintage Ilona sofa by Arne Norell from Grandfather's Axe; vintage French cane table from Angelucci; rug from Loom; *Card Players* artwork by Pasquale Giardino. **OPPOSITE PAGE** in the bathroom, vanity in Carrara marble; penny round wall tiles from Academy Tiles; Montecarlo Terrazzo floor tiles from Signorino Tiles; artwork (in hallway) by Kelly-Ann Drill.



THESE PAGES, FROM LEFT in the guesthouse, **bed linen** from In Bed; **clothing rack** from House of Orange; **curtains** produced by Colleve in James Malone fabric from The Textile Company; Hotaru Double **pendant light** by Barber Osgerby for Twentytwentyone from Space Furniture; Turkish kilim **rug** from Loom. A view of the roof facing the The Nobbies and Phillip Island.



THIS PAGE in the guest bedroom, **bed frame** by Mark Tuckey; **bed linen** from In Bed; **line table lamp** from Snelling Studio; **Rustic Granite Sisal carpet** from Floorspace; **artwork** by David Larwill. **OPPOSITE PAGE** a view of the entry bridge down to the guest bedroom on the ground floor, **blackbutt cladding**; **PVDF aluminium roofing** from Archclad. *Details, last pages.*