

VOCAL LIVING

AUSTRALIA

**BYRON BAY
ESCAPE**
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back
to nature





It is clad by thousands of terracotta pots gridlocked into a façade of sandwiched sheets of steel reinforcement



SET HIGH ON A MOUNTAINSIDE THAT PRODUCES MOST OF THE COUNTRY'S CUT FLOWERS, THE HOUSE THAT JOOST BUILT IS A SUSTAINABLE TOUR DE FORCE THAT HAS TURNED THE PROSAIC FLOWERPOT OF HIS WORKING LIFE INTO A LIVING FAÇADE.

Joost is famous for drilling through the dictates of the design world with both the naivety and nagging persistence of a child

THE LIVING ROOM PAIRS A GRAPHIC LOOM RUG WITH FADED FURNISHINGS AND IS ENVELOPED IN PLYWOOD PANELS RECLAIMED FROM CATERPILLAR MACHINERY CRATES. THESE PANELS IMPART 'VISUAL' WARMTH AND CONCEAL THE HAY BALES IN THE CEILING AND FLOOR THAT RETAIN PHYSICAL WARMTH. CURTAINS MADE FROM HEAVY REMOVALISTS' FELT PROVIDE ADDITIONAL INSULATION. RIGHT: ALL THE KITCHEN'S WASTE IS CHANNELLED TO A WORM FARM.



AS THE CAR chugs up a hill on the fertile, far side of a Victorian mountain range that cultivates most of the country's cut flowers, a strange battlement startles with its derangement of horticulture and house. Is it a government subsidised science experiment, or perhaps a pot plant-veiled tourist trap styled to siphon off some of the Sunday scenic drivers? Or is it residential design pushed so far beyond the description of organic that it has become the very object of its influence; an organism?

"Yes," announces a gumbooted worker who emerges from one arm of the building that is clad on its entry side by weathered timber (later discovered to source back to Sydney's Woolloomooloo wharves) and on all others by thousands of terracotta pots gridlocked into a façade of sandwiched sheets of steel reinforcement. He continues: "This is the house that Joost built."

Sounding like the first line of the rhyme that tells the cumulative tale of Jack, this introduction to a family home brim full with sustainability smarts is apt, for its owner and designer Joost (a multi-disciplinary creative whose wild ways with flowers have shot him into single moniker celebrity) is famous for drilling through the dictates of the design world with both the naivety and nagging persistence of a child. Why can't you hang a road-side reject chair in the entry foyer and turn it into a light? Why can't you build with a stack of 1970s Besser bricks found dumped in a paddock? Why can't worms turn all your household waste into reusable fertiliser? You get the idea and thankfully so does Joost's "supportive" wife Jennie who, like her husband, stems from a long line of local flower growers.

"Why can't you put straw bales in a concrete slab?" he questioned the engineer, who refused to sign off on the home's application. "They don't need to go into the ground."

“My whole life has been about using
the stuff that people throw away”





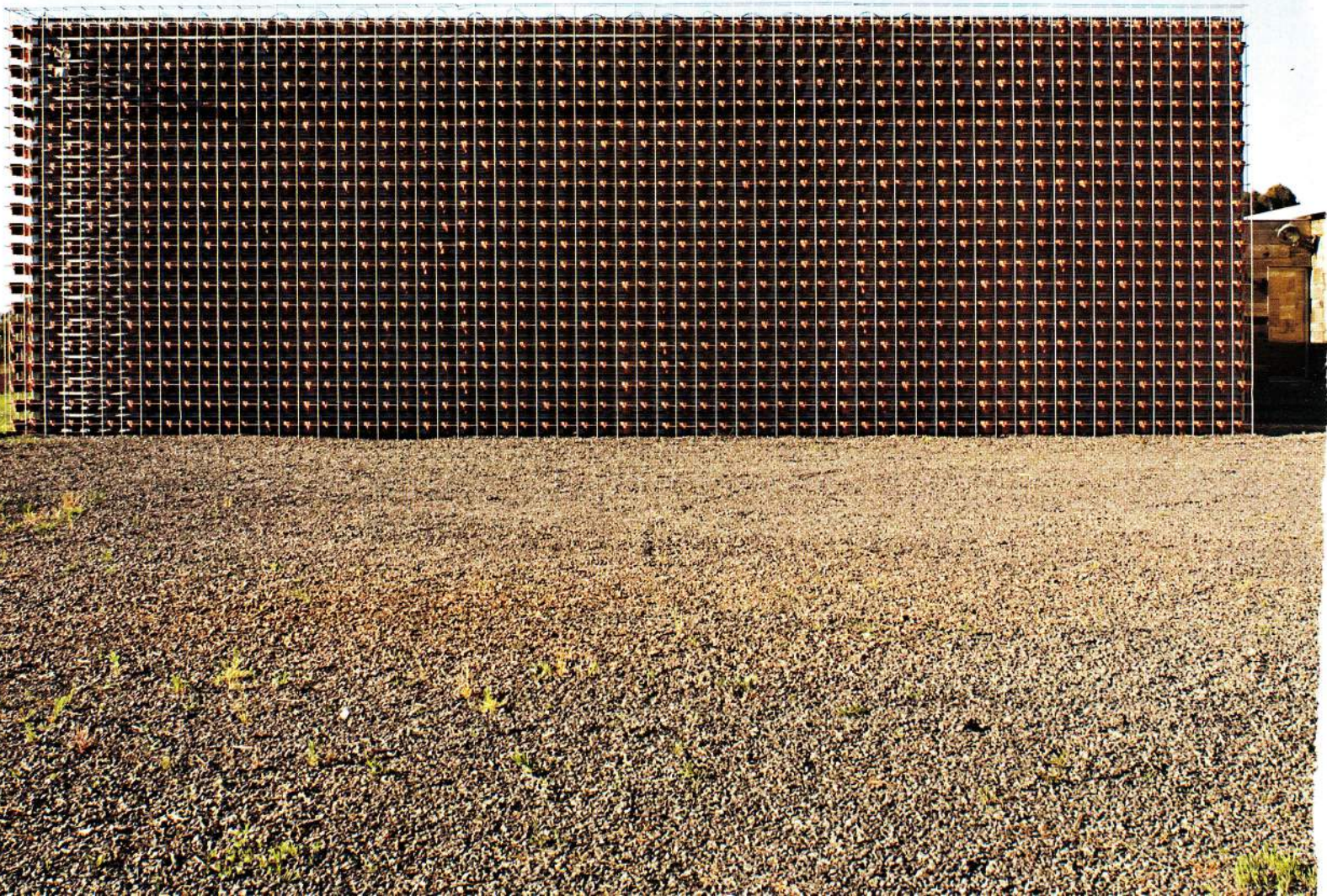
A LIGHT FITTING MADE FROM AN UPTURNED CHAIR BY THE LATE GEOFFREY MANCE ILLUMINATES THE ENTRY. THE INFORMAL DINING SPACE, **OPPOSITE**, UNITES THE DISCARD OF ANOTHER ERA WITH THE CREATIVITY OF CURRENT TIMES. LOW-KEY NEUTRALS MARRY PAINTINGS BY ARTIST AND FRIEND DIANA KERR, A 100-YEAR-OLD GOAT'S HAIR RUG FROM LOOM, A CHEESE TABLE FROM FRENCH STYLE AND 1890 THONET CHAIRS FROM THE NETHERLANDS PUB JOOST'S FATHER ONCE OWNED.

“You can have an insulated elevated slab and when the straw decomposes the concrete is totally recyclable.” It’s a benefit not afforded by foam blocks in the ubiquitous waffle slab.

Not willing to let industry’s fear of liability get in the way of his ingeniously simple idea, Joost – who ascribes his dogged determination to being born Dutch – enlisted the intelligence of the engineering maverick who readied global runways for the arrival of the hulking new Airbus A380. “I just emailed my idea to him and he responded within 12 hours, calling my guy and asking why he wasn’t approving it.”

It all sounds ridiculously simple. “Well, sometimes it is. But mostly it isn’t,” responds the wide-eyed creative who extols the virtues of his home’s hidden R7 thermal-rated straw bales (no need for heaters in winter or air-conditioning in summer) with the alarming statistic that nearly one million tons of rice straw (the unusable waste of threshed grain) is burned every year in California alone, producing more carbon monoxide than all the electric power-generating plants in the state combined. “Its use in construction not only makes sense in terms of reducing emissions but also in its potential to promote another income stream for farmers. But don’t worry,” he cautions, “I’m not going to start throwing around data on how I’m reducing my carbon footprint, it’s just that my whole life has been about using the stuff that people throw away.”

Guiding a tour through the interior decorated exclusively with said discard (plywood Caterpillar machinery crates reincarnated into shelves, rolls of chrysanthemum guiding steel re-styled into light shades, igloo plumbing pipes commandeered into curtain rods, worn Afghani rugs patchworked into new soft flooring, a neighbour’s fence paling installed into an entry foyer artwork), Joost likes to think that his life experiment in reworking waste might one day become a universal practise.



ON AN ENTRY WALL BUILT FROM FOUND BESSER BLOCKS, IS AN ARTWORK JOOST CONSTRUCTED FROM PALINGS OF A NEIGHBOUR'S FENCE. OPPOSITE PAGE: THE BUILDING IS VEILED BY SANDWICHED REO SHEETS (FOR CONCRETE REINFORCEMENT) INTO WHOSE GRID THOUSANDS OF TERRACOTTA POTS HAVE BEEN DROPPED. JOOST PLANS TO PLANT EITHER SEASONAL PRODUCE OR SEDUM TO TRANSFORM THE BUILDING INTO A LIVING, BREATHING STRUCTURE.





THE MAIN BEDROOM IS SIMPLY STYLED WITH "ONE OF THE FIRST" TWIG LIGHTS, HANDMADE BY THE LATE GEOFFREY MANCE, A VINTAGE FRENCH POSTER FROM HIS "BEST MATE" SAM, THE POSTER MAN, AND A BED BASE MADE FROM OLD PACKING CRATES BY "OUR BUILDER GARY IN JUST TWO DAYS". THE ENSUITE, OPPOSITE PAGE, OPENS ITS DOORS FOR PLEIN-AIR BATHING IN GOOD WEATHER. DETAILS, LAST PAGES.

But he won't blow his own trumpet in the eco salve, because there's no care for the public stare – save for instructing on how one man can make a difference.

And yet he constantly draws it in with his style. Indeed, there's not a Who's Who worth the A-list invite in Melbourne who hasn't secreted away his number for some guaranteed 'fabulousness' with foliage and secondhand material. And just occasionally it lands in the hands of an important itinerant, most recently French botanist Patrick Blanc who, having heard whispers of a wacky Dutchman making hay in Melbourne's far hills, made the pilgrimage to this place. Recalling the botanist's specimen search in a neighbouring wood, Joost laughs at the memory of the famously green coiffed and clad Frenchman camouflaging into complete disappearance until his squeals of joy at discovering a nigh extinct species helped find him. "Who would have thought?" Joost muses. "Pushing through these forest floors?"

He leverages the anecdote to explain that when we start worrying about the life cycle of materials as much as we do about aesthetics, then the threat to species will subside and "the world will truly be a richer place." **VZ**



SPANISH STAR CHEF JOSÉ ANDRÉS' ROJO Y BLANCA RESTAURANT IN SLS HOTEL AT BEVERLY HILLS. THE ENTIRE ESTABLISHMENT HAS BEEN STYLED IN A COLLABORATION BETWEEN ANDRÉS, PHILIPPE STARCK AND MURRAY MOSS. DETAILS, LAST PAGES.

