



Generating MEMORIES

Beach houses are a *typology* all of their own. But *Jane Burton Taylor* discovers one by husband-and-wife team, *Rachael Bourne* and *Shane Blue* which turns the whole genre literally inside-out.

Text
Jane Burton Taylor

Photography
Simon Whitbread

scenario

seal rocks — NSW, australia

BOURNE BLUE ARCHITECTURE



02

Architects, Rachael Bourne and Shane Blue were well prepared to build a house in Seal Rocks (about three hours' drive north of Sydney), having already designed a house there. Still, after buying a block there themselves, it took them years to get around to actually designing it. They had to wait for their financial stars to align and to also finish the renovation of their home in Newcastle.

When they finally did design the house, it was serendipity. They woke up one summer morning and Shane did a sketch of exactly what Rachael had been thinking about.

"It was a real collaboration, we were both thinking about it in a very similar way," Rachael recalls. "Usually we design quite separately (but we both decided) that it would be a courtyard house. Because the block doesn't have the ocean views, it was more about protection and being able to experience what was beyond the site – but not be totally open to it."

One block back from the beach in a relaxed Eucalypt-dotted street, the house presents a polite, but poker face to the public.

A breezeway with a timber front door forms the entrance and a breezeway with a roller door the back. Once inside, you are in the private domain – a partially decked courtyard enclosed on every side by rooms.

"There are sliding doors in the living area and all the other spaces have roller doors onto the courtyard," Rachael explains. "The children's bunk room door is about three metres long and all the bunks have mosquito nets, so you can sleep with the roller doors up and look out at the night sky. It is really like very luxurious camping."

As well as giving the house its essentially cosy and quirky character, the "donut shape", as Rachael calls it, was utilised for several reasons. Firstly, because the site was not on the beachfront and because bush fire legislation meant they couldn't use the last ten metres of their land, it made sense to design a home with an internal vista. The second reason had to do with their children.

The first house they had designed in Seal Rocks, which took out a RAIA Blakett Commendation Award in 1998, is on a beachfront block and is made up of series of pavilions connected by decks.

"The kids were always a little freaked out there. They thought there were goblins that lived between the pavilions," Rachael says. "So we wanted to give them a sense of security. Having the feel of enclosure, with the rear roller door down and the front timber screen door closed, they feel completely secure here."

"You've got these scattered pavilions and you've got these amorphous spaces that anyone can walk through..."

— SHANE

01 The deck comes directly off the living room and kitchen.

02 The austere façade clad in concrete fibre cement with a timber front door.

03 The children's favourite spot on the hammocks in the breezeway.

