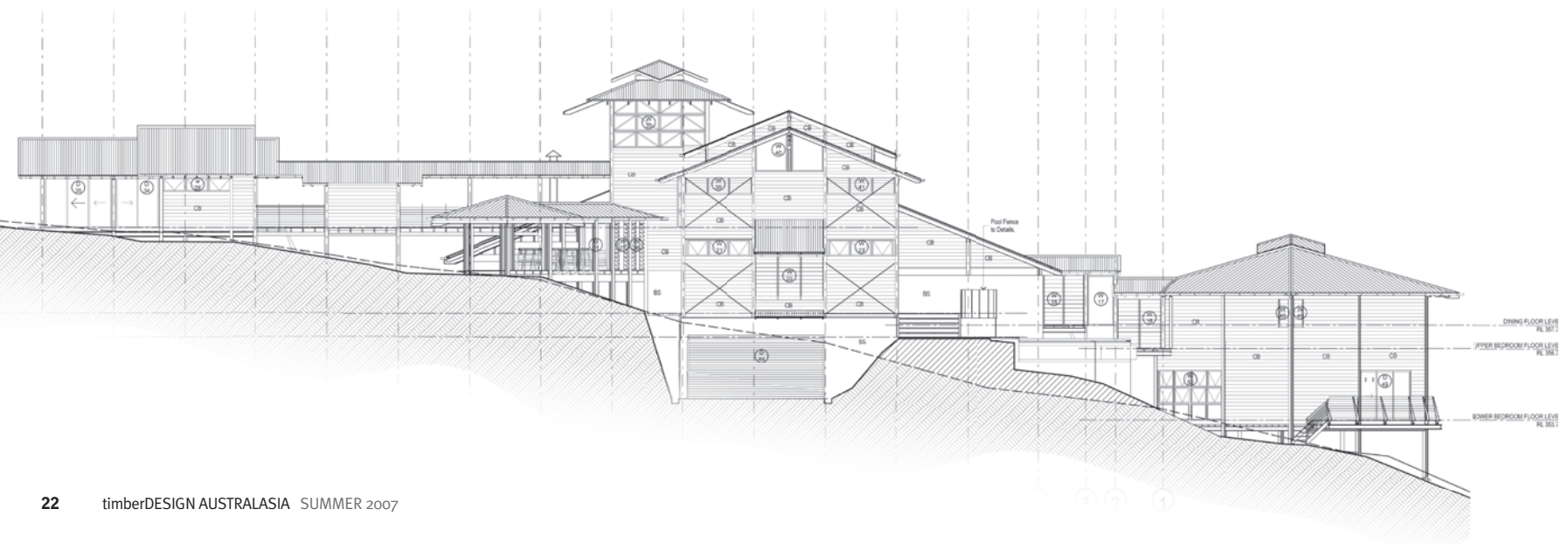




“ Located in an extreme bush-fire zone, early design concepts had to be revised and supply logistics negotiated to ensure the necessary resource and materials were available ... ”





FLOATING AMONG THE TREES

High above the south-east coast of Queensland, smack in the middle of an extreme bush-fire zone, ‘floats’ a unique new timber home built by a skilled craftsman for a client with a passion for design.

Transforming the client’s dream of “a home among the gum trees” into reality required lateral thinking, imagination and dedication by architects Tim Guymer and Miriam Warr, and builder David Charlton.

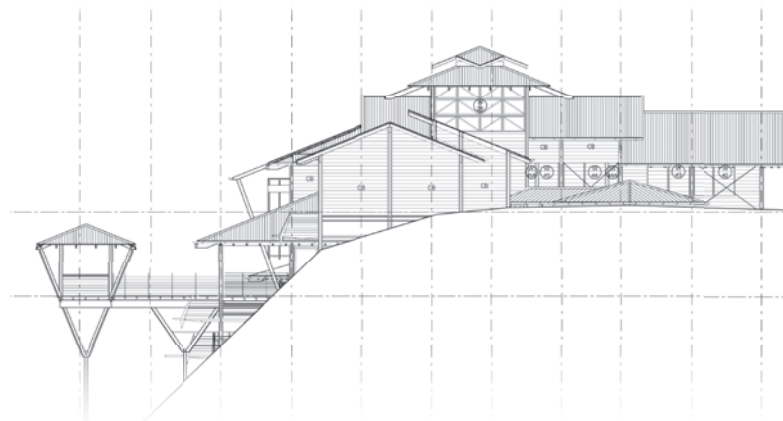
The job that was to take four years – two in design and documentation, and two in construction – began after a walk along a narrow foot track through trees on the Mapleton site. Finally, the architect gravitated to a rocky projection that would provide a grounding point. And from there the concept of a house ‘floating’ among the trees was developed.

“Through the framing of the views and integration with the bush

setting, we aimed to create a retreat which heightened the experience of the spectacular surroundings,” says Warr, who took over the project when Guymer retired.

The 1000 m², open-plan, four-bathroom, three-bedroom (classed as nine) house comprises three pavilions connected by walkways. The first, the main living room area, is linked by an open walkway to the art studio/guest area with self-contained kitchen, while a second enclosed walkway leads to the two-storey pavilion containing the master bedroom and en suite.

ABOVE
The nine-bedroom equivalent home on a 30-60 degree slope used 35 semi-trailer loads of appearance grade timber



“The building is a product of a client with a passion for design and a skilled builder who values craftsmanship and attention to detail. Both were committed throughout the entire process that the project would be of the highest quality possible,” says Warr.

At one stage, the build required 18 carpenters. To achieve the standard of finish he wanted Charlton paired the good guys with the better guys and was hands on for 80% of the time.

The quality of detail is reflected in the beautifully crafted quarter-laid floor in the master bedroom. Worked from the outside in, each piece of timber was re-engineered and regrooved by hand by the builder to achieve its final completion at the centre.

Technology required by the client was integrated so as not to detract from the simplicity of the spaces and natural beauty of the materials. Drop handrails were incorporated for uninterrupted views and steel plate connections were designed and shaped specifically for the job, adding interest and a new dimension to beam connections.

To maximise natural light and cross ventilation, the architect made extensive use of louvres and awning windows, and pop-up glazed roofs feature in the master bedroom and over the main stairwell.

Located in an extreme bush-fire zone, early design concepts had to be revised and supply logistics negotiated to ensure the necessary resource and materials were available to achieve the desired result and meet regulatory requirements.

It is a very large home, consuming 35 full semi-trailers of appearance-grade timber alone and committing Hyne Timber's hardwood glulam mill over four months.

The 30-60 degree slope, leading to the valley 140 m below, provided spectacular views and design opportunities, but also presented challenges that necessitated abandonment of the plan to use solid, locally grown spotted gum beams throughout. While they would have achieved the desired look and met the performance measures of the bush-fire code (AS 3959), the high structural requirements of the site forced a change to laminated beams and steel in the main supports and the substructure. These were then capped with spotted gum to maintain consistency of the timber theme. One spotted gum beam in the main lounge area is 15.5 m long.

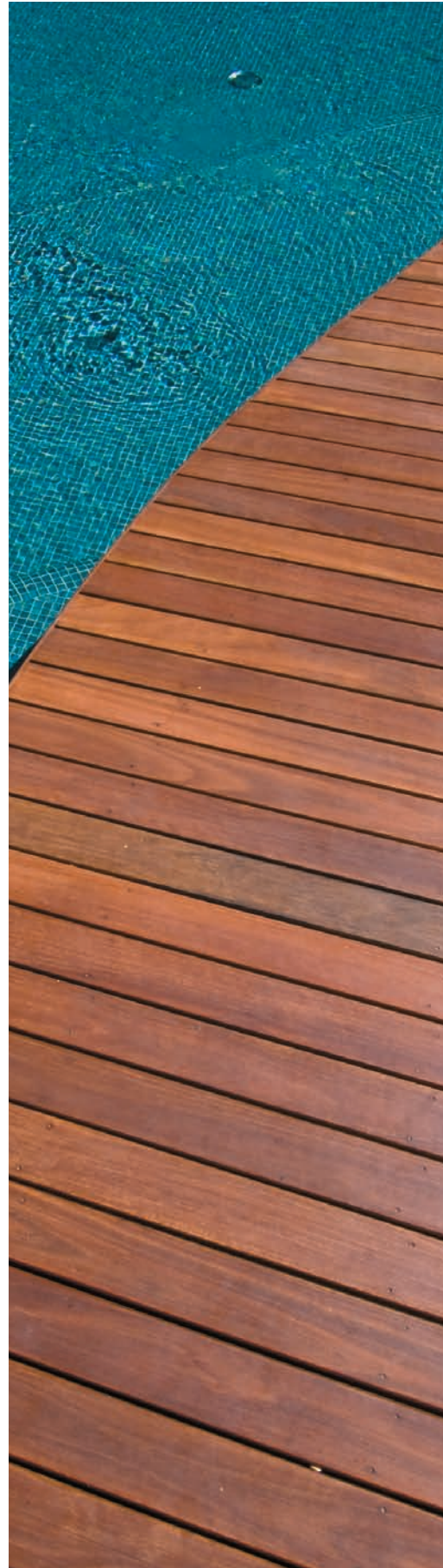
Compliance requirements also prompted other, less demanding design changes; a 2-m-wide clearance area around the house, toughened glazing for all glass areas, stainless steel mesh screens with a 1.3 mm gap on exterior opening doors and windows, and sub-joints covered in corrugated iron. No timber other than spotted gum was left exposed.

Environmental responsibility was a priority in the landscaping of the surrounding gardens and facilities, with the footprint of the building designed to achieve minimal environmental disturbance. All landscaping and watering for the house and the surrounding area, including the pool, is fed from five dams located on site and fed back to the dams. In the event of bush fires the dams are the sole water source.

Responsible and considerate landscaping included plant species drawn from the natural gene pool of the site and surrounds. “Locally quarried basalt stone was used to anchor the building and provide a contact with the spotted gum, and also within the structure to complement the timber,” says Warr.

Timber was used extensively throughout the project for its look and feel, for the way it reflected the house's relationship with the natural bush setting and as a textural contrast to the basalt stone and glass.

PENELOPE LAWRY



TOP LEFT
 Bushfire compliance included a 2m wide clear area around the house, toughen glass and steel mesh screens and sub-joints covered in corrugated iron

BOTTOM LEFT
 The 1000 sq m home includes four bathrooms

LEFT
 All watering, including for the pool, comes from five dams on the site

PROJECT
 Mapleton house, south-east Queensland

ARCHITECT
 Tim Guymer and Miriam Warr (Guymer Bailey)

WOOD PRODUCTS
 Extensive range of Hyne products including beams, rafters and floor joists, T2 blue framing, spotted gum chamferboard cladding, appearance t&g flooring and ceiling lining

PHOTOGRAPHY
 Agency Photographics