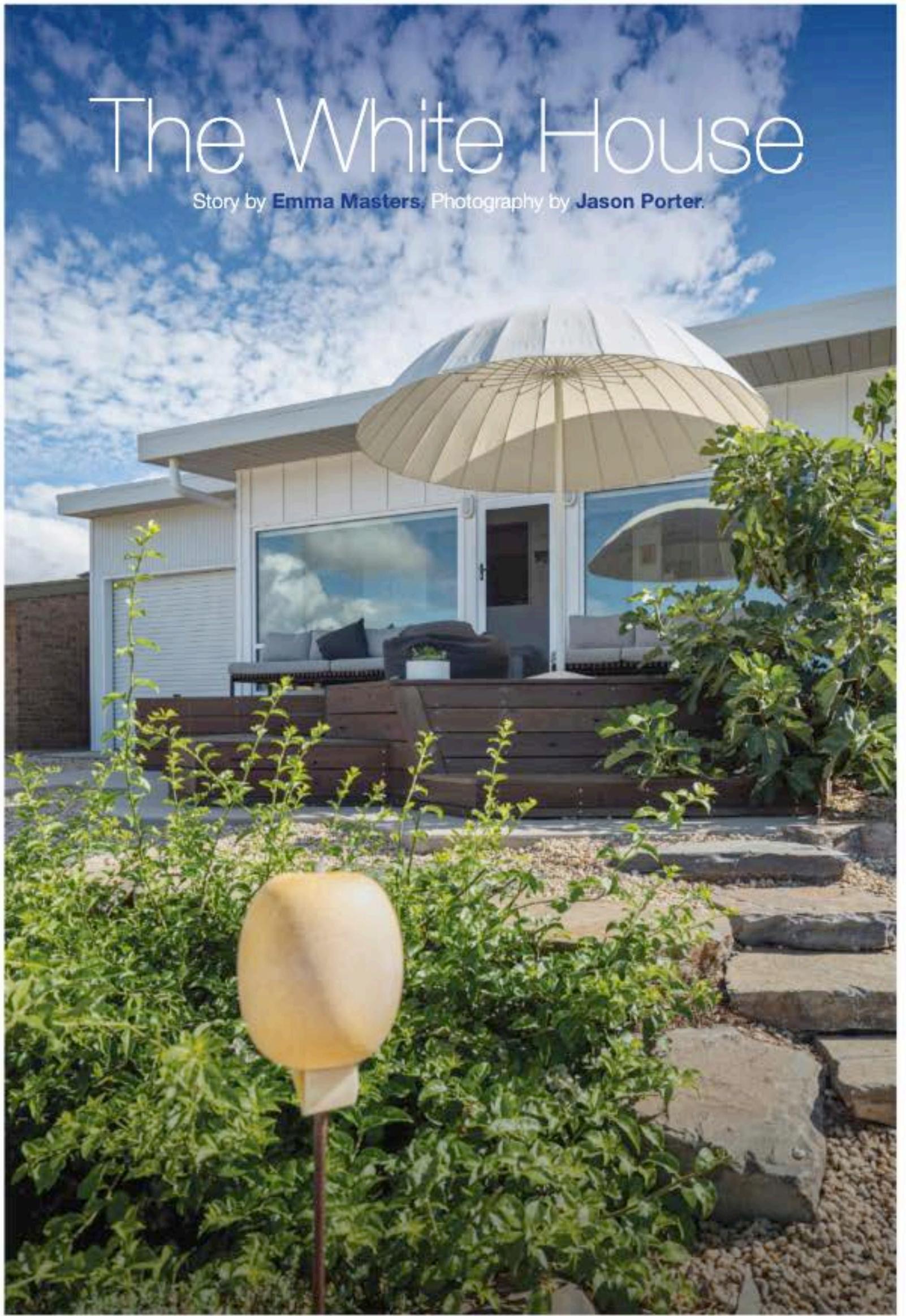


The White House

Story by **Emma Masters**. Photography by **Jason Porter**.



Page left: The Fleurieu White House. Above: Inside the house has many levels, with art, design and artefacts carefully selected. A great place to take advantage of the view of the beautiful bay below.

When you spot the Fleurieu White House from across the rugged bay it calls home, it's obvious how it got its name. Cradled by the sweep of the surrounding hills, you could be forgiven for thinking it's a traditional Aussie beach shack that's had a fresh coat of white paint and a new deck built to take advantage of its idyllic, waterfront view. But step inside and you realise there's so much more behind the bright, modest facade.

Anne Taylor and Michael Buchtmann, the architectural duo behind Taylor Buchtmann tasked with converting the rustic seaside getaway into a beautiful contemporary home, say that's part of its unique charm. 'Our brief was to keep a shack quality, but connect the house to the whole block,' says Michael. 'It was originally a two-bedroom shack at the front with a retaining wall, and that's how it still reads from the street, but it's actually more than doubled in size.'

Redesigned and rebuilt over two years and completed in 2019, the result is an innovative five-bedroom home that expands back to two storeys, and includes a separate art studio that hugs the back corner of the hillside block.

From the front door, visitors are welcomed into an open living space, where wide picture windows put the stunning postcard location on full display. The owners say the front windows remind them of a Brett Whiteley painting that's continually on the move. 'We've been holidaying here since the kids were babies,' the owner says. 'The bay

itself has got this lovely aspect to it that lets kids play on the sand, and then as they grow up they learn to surf and go out on boats and go fishing. We can observe them and watch them play without being there all the time.'

The home retains the intimacy of the original shack, but there's also room to allow large groups of people to gather and retreat, which the owners say was exactly what they asked for. 'We wanted to be able to have lots of family, friends and their families stay and not feel on top of each other.'

'You know, you've got kids in the lounge room and we can be in the kitchen or they can go upstairs but still be with us,' they continue. 'We didn't want to lose that relaxed feel about it, where you've got dogs coming through and kids with sandy feet, and we didn't ever want to build something that lost its connection to its place, because it's part of that shack history.' >



Top: Custom-made tiles depicting local weather patterns and *Moby Dick* were designed and made for the kitchen and bathroom. Bottom: The bedrooms are designed to accommodate many guests with style but *Why DO We Have To Clean Before the Cleaners come?* River stones and green bottle glass scattered throughout the concrete slab prior to polishing catch the light and add dimension.

Moving through the wooden-panelled hall, it's evident the downstairs area is dedicated to hosting families. Two of the three cosy, beach-style rooms come complete with built-in bunks, and the layout is serviced by a bathroom area formed by function but designed with flair. 'We separated the different bathroom areas, so one person can be in the shower, another the toilet and two cleaning their teeth,' says Michael.

There's also a distinctive outdoor shower to rinse off the day's sand and salt, comprising a wall of bent copper pipe that absorbs the sun's rays for heating and cleverly depicts a graph of twelve months of rainfall. 'It's a subtle reminder, because they're not on mains water

here, it's whatever they collect off the roof, so preservation of water is important,' adds Anne.

The landscape plan was developed by Taylor Buchtmann as part of a fully integrated indoor and outdoor architectural design. Anne says, 'It's one of the things that distinguishes our projects – addressing the whole – building, interiors, landscape, outdoor shower, tank locations and soakage trenches.'

When it came to plantings, the owners wanted to be as water and energy efficient as possible, choosing to work with their long-time collaborator and friend Greg from Marshall Garden Restoration. Greg was intricately involved in the selections and planting as well as the



Top left: The outdoor shower designed and made by architect Michael Buchtmann depicts a stylised annual rainfall chart of the local area. Top right: The limestone retaining wall has been carefully planted with water-wise plants. Bottom: Across the bridge to the second floor, with a view through to the bay.

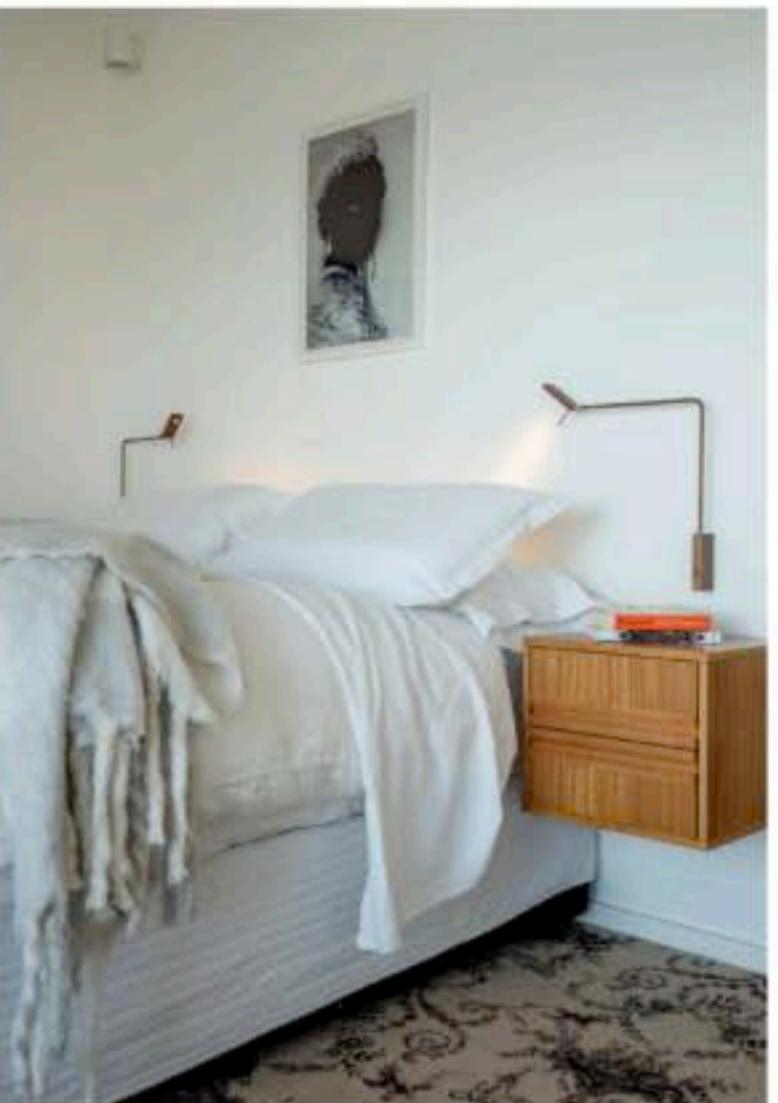
ongoing development of the garden as a water-wise landscape. The owners love it, saying, 'It's the garden design as a whole returning friends are in awe of. Our delight is we don't know what is planted in there ... but love the surprises as they flower.' The garden is indeed the centrepiece. The rocks, the bridge and the outdoor shower transform an under utilised space into a dynamic and super functional design.

Anne and Michael worked hard to ensure efficiencies throughout, saying, 'The building is highly insulated, double-glazed with good cross ventilation. Its orientation to the north makes it ideal for harnessing the sun in winter, and excluding it in summer, and this

has been further exploited with overhangs and concrete floors to radiate the heat on winter evenings.'

Set back from the front of the house, the upstairs level features a double bedroom, sitting room and balcony, and an adjoining master bedroom with retro-inspired ensuite. It's a space that offers refuge and welcomes a variety of perspectives, from broad views of the remote bay among the Fleurieu hills to a novel, hatch-door window that allows a view from front to back.

A wooden bridge from this upper level offers another access point and view to the landscaped garden, where a retaining wall has been created using large limestone rocks transported from the owners' >



Page left top: Functional spaces throughout echo the owners desire for a very functional but stylish outcome. Page left bottom: The Murphy bed is cleverly concealed – just pull on the axe in the head of the painting and you can rest at ease in the studio. This page: A bridge from the upper level offers another access point to the studio and view to the beautifully landscaped garden.

farm. 'I love watching people come through the front room and then they get into the kitchen, go through that little tiny corridor and go, "Oh my god, there's still more",' the owners say. 'From the front to the back, you get these lovely little pockets or insights that just remind you to be present and enjoy what's around.'

Enjoying life is part of the ethos of this home – where you can slow down and unplug, where phones are switched off and music is enjoyed on a record player. It's also a home where art is celebrated, not only on the walls but in the very fabric of the house and garden. Collaborating with a printmaker friend, custom-made tiles were designed and made for the kitchen and bathroom. 'We wanted to weave in local history, and being farmers and with our son obsessed with fishing, we're always watching weather patterns, so that went into the design,' the owner says. 'We also used typography to reflect some of the things we've shouted out here, like "shut the door", "can you flip a record", or "put a hat on".'

Other creative features include a plasma-cut steel fence depicting underwater swimmers, and small items, such as dice or a Christmas

bonbon toy, set in resin and dotted around the recycled wooden decking. 'We've got so many talented, fabulous friends and we've had so much fun here over the years,' the owner laughs. 'Everyone gave something that was connected to their time here.'

The architects also utilised brass pipe that had personal significance to the family. 'My dad always used his hands and recycled materials and they were salvaged back in the eighties,' the owner explains. 'I still touch the brass handrail as I go upstairs and it just reminds me of him, so it's just that little bit of connection again.'

The outcome of this collaborative approach to the redesign and build is evident not only in the one-of-a-kind result, but in the ongoing relationship between the architects and the owners. 'The way we work is to be very responsive to the client and the location – and we enjoy projects that have strong stories about our clients within them,' says Anne. 'There's also joy in seeing them move in and make the space their own. They talk about it being like an heirloom – as something they will come to for the rest of their lives and for their kids to keep coming to.'