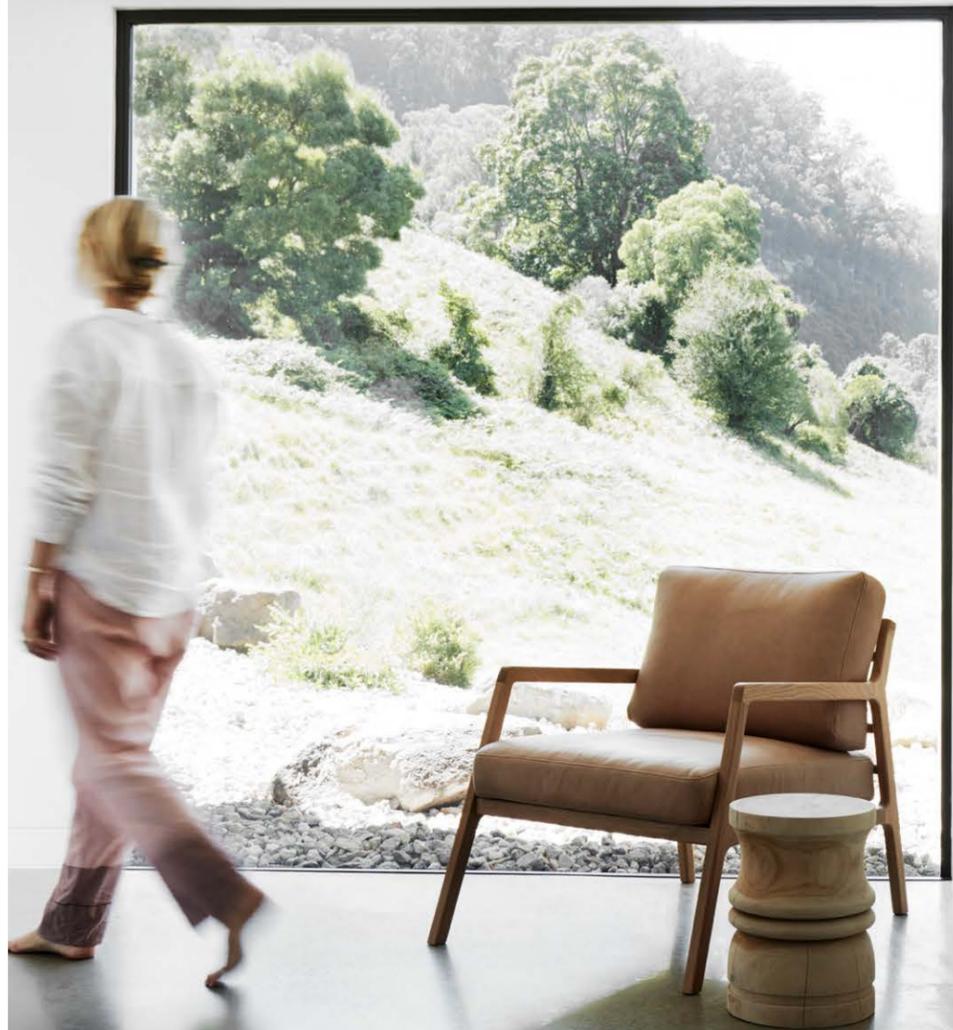


IN THE



STICKS

A Sydney-based couple found a secluded parcel of land in NSW's Kangaroo Valley and set about building a weekender that blends seamlessly with its peaceful bush location

WORDS DAN F STAPLETON PHOTOGRAPHY PRUE RUSCOE

ENTRANCE Timber walls shelter this corner of the front garden from the elements while allowing the local wildlife to roam freely. **HALLWAY** (opposite) A large picture window and Sketch 'Nysse' occasional chair from GlobeWest have created a reading nook in this transitional area. Wooden stool/table, also GlobeWest.

CHEAT SHEET

Who lives here A city-based couple and their teenage daughter, who use it as a holiday house and rent it out to others when they are back in Sydney.

Style of home A five-bedroom new build on a 10-hectare block in Kangaroo Valley, NSW.

🕒 The couple bought the land in 2018 and enlisted an architecture firm straightaway. Construction began in early 2019 and finished in early 2020.



LIVING Planked off-form concrete surrounds the fire. Felix Chubby chair, Anja occasional chair, Sketch 'Nysse' occasional chair and Sketch 'Pensive' sofa, all from GlobeWest. **KITCHEN** (opposite) The custom island is topped with polished concrete that was poured in situ. Sketch 'Odd' oak stools, GlobeWest. MFL By Masson 'Fléming' pendant light, Beacon Lighting. In the foreground, rough-sawn Victorian-ash cladding adds texture.



The owner of this spectacular home says he's dreamed about living deep in the bush since he was a teenager. "I always liked the idea of being hidden away," he says. Then life took him in a different direction. He and his partner met, got married and started a family in Sydney. The couple currently own a handsome terrace in the eastern suburbs and work in busy jobs. Their teenage daughter attends high school nearby. It wasn't until a few years ago that they realised they could potentially buy a second house to serve as a weekend getaway.

"We wanted to find something relatively close to Sydney, so we could jump in the car and head down on a Friday after work," says the owner. However, it needed to feel well and truly removed from the Big Smoke. "My hope was that, one day, it could be a place for us to settle down," he explains.

Finding seclusion within two hours of the city proved tricky. After several research trips, the family concluded that the nearby coastal areas were too densely populated. So they turned their attention inland. When he was younger, the owner had spent some time in Kangaroo Valley, a lush region about 150 kilometres south of Sydney. "It gets a lot of rain and is usually quite green, plus it's a really friendly area," he says. "It almost feels like the English countryside. Something kept drawing me back there." Sure enough, the first property they inspected was a perfect fit: 10 hectares of gently rolling hills and

mature bushland, with a grassy clearing where a house could be built. They submitted a purchase application immediately.

Having secured the property, the couple wasted no time hiring local firm iarchitecture to design a home on it. To facilitate social gatherings, they opted for five bedrooms. "That made the house considerably bigger, because we decided there should be no 'bad' bedroom and that everyone should have an ensuite," says the owner. "We're in our forties, and I'm too old to be sharing a bathroom with six other people."

The residence is divided into two wings, with the bedrooms split between them. When the family has no guests, one wing can remain shut, saving on heating and cooling. The living area is positioned where the two wings meet, creating a focal point. Large east-facing windows capture the morning sun and frame views of distant tablelands.

By the time interior designer Romaine (Romy) Alwill came on board, the couple had already spent most of their budget, not only on the build but also on an impressive collection of contemporary Aboriginal art. "We knew we were going to end up with a house that had lots of big white walls," says the owner, "so we didn't hold back."

Romy was tasked with hanging the collection, which includes works by highly respected painters Gloria Petyarre, Polly Ngale and Belinda Golder Kngwarreye. "Every bedroom got a painting," reveals the owner. "Romy picked colours out

DINING The owners admit that the handsome LEDlux 'Bolton' pendant from Beacon Lighting is mostly ornamental: the dining area is usually flooded with daylight or bathed in ambient light from the surrounding living spaces. The Duke armchairs from GlobeWest are perfect for lazy lunches.

LIVING (opposite) A custom circular silk rug from The Rug Establishment helps pull together this area. On the far wall, a bold painting by Natalie Purvis echoes the greenery outside.



GREAT FINDS



FROM TOP MFL By Masson 'Fleming' dimmable **pendant light** in Black, \$795, Beacon Lighting. Anja **occasional chair** in Ebony/Natural, \$1330, GlobeWest. Brokis 'Muffin H346' solid-oak **table lamp** in Clear Glass, \$2010, Huset. Caroma 'Elvire' freestanding **bath**, \$4059, Harvey Norman. Luminare **rug** (240cm) in Moss, \$2015, The Rug Establishment. Sketch 'Nysse' **occasional chair** in Camel/Light Oak, \$2750, GlobeWest. Elle Block square **side table** in Natural Travertine, \$2020, GlobeWest. J'ai Soif **carafe** and **glass** in Amber, \$89, Maison Balzac. Dante brass **bowls**, from \$99 for small, Papaya. Felix Block four-seater **sofa** in Coal, \$5880, GlobeWest. Home Republic 'Aries' **cushion** in Deep Forest, \$59.99, Adairs. Southport Diablo **stool**, \$750, GlobeWest. Serge Mouille 'Lampe Tripode' **table lamp**, \$6210, Cult Design. Jagger **bedside table**, \$1130, GlobeWest.

ADDITIONAL PRODUCT SOURCING: KATE HASSETT



of the works and created a unique palette for each of the rooms." Her top-level brief for the communal areas was to select materials that were affordable but did justice to the sophisticated architecture and incredible location.

"We had to be pretty clever," Romy says with a chuckle. "We went for laminates where we could, but they were beautifully detailed ones." She chose dark timber and tan leather for their longevity, and wove grainy tones throughout the home to enhance its connection to the surrounding scrubland. "Working with a tight budget took me out of my comfort zone," she says, "but it pushed me to be creative, and I think the outcome speaks for itself."

The final component was the landscaping. Local horticulturalist Warren Walker, who operates Wariapendi Nursery, was the natural choice. "It was so important to us to respect the flora and fauna that was already in the area," says the owner. Warren's top priority was to plant the right sorts of trees and shrubs to bring back all the local wildlife, including the birds that had been dispersed by the construction. The landscaping has done exactly that – almost too successfully. "The animals eat the garden now!" says the co-owner. "It's totally worth it, though. In the evening, you can sit out on the deck with a glass of wine and watch the kangaroos come all the way up to the house."

Since the build wrapped up, the couple and their daughter have been spending as much time as possible at the property, keeping it tidy and exploring its secret nooks. "We'll spend the entire day outdoors," says the owner of his family's routine. "We're exhausted by the end of the day, but it's a good kind of exhaustion. It doesn't really feel like work." **LD**
Romy Alwill's work can be viewed at alwill.com.au or [@alwillinteriors](https://www.instagram.com/alwillinteriors). iarchitecture is at iarch.com.au or [@iarchitecture_southcoast](https://www.instagram.com/iarchitecture_southcoast). See more of the home at offthesticks.com.au or [@offthestickskangaroovalley](https://www.instagram.com/offthestickskangaroovalley)

EXTERIOR Local horticulturalist Warren Walker established Wariapendi Nursery in the 1980s, before it was common to use Australian plants in domestic settings. With experience consulting for State Forestry, he was expertly qualified to create a garden that would blend with the surrounding bushland. The white cladding on the home is fibre cement.

good news

With a spine wall clad in vertical hardwood battens, the architecture house is known as The Sticks. It was built by Djokic Constructions and recently shortlisted for the Grand Designs Australia Magazine House Of The Year Awards 2021/22.



lessons learnt

“BEING HANDS-OFF COMES AT A PRICE” OWNER

“If I did a project like this again, I would get a bit more involved with the decision-making. Leaving everything in the hands of the contractors delivered a great result, but cost us more than we had anticipated.”

BEDROOM An angled bed can make a bedroom feel cramped, but this home's generous footprint allows for it. Simple furnishings, including an antique Japanese bench sourced from Edo Arts, enhance the Zen vibe. Blinds, Verosol. Rug, armchair and bedhead, GlobeWest. Throw, Bemboka.

BATHROOM (opposite) The five ensuite bathrooms were expertly situated to allow for large windows without compromising privacy. Bathtub, Forme. Tapware, Phoenix.