

STEEL

SWANEY DRAPER PTY LTD ARCHITECTS

Photography by Earl Carter

TWO KILNS BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE

This unusual house in North Eastern Victoria sits at the foot of Mount Buffalo, about 240km from Melbourne. The property was once used for Tobacco growing, and the kilns used for drying the crop are a feature of the design. The owners, Clare and Jim, had intended to use the kilns in some form, and found Swaney Draper Architects were keen to incorporate the two kilns into a new contemporary home.

However, when the galvanised corrugated iron was removed from the timber structures, the frames were dry and powdery. 'We didn't abandon the idea of using the kilns, but we had to rethink our strategy,' says Draper, who peeled away the iron. 'All the different sheets were laid out on the grass and each piece was coded with a number,' says Draper.

While the kilns appear entirely original, they were completely rebuilt. They are now used as two living areas in the new house, one for Clare and Jim, the other for their three children. 'The spaces in the kilns need to be experienced. It's not just the ceiling heights, but the sense of walking through history,' says Clare. 'Jim grew up in Bright, so he has a particular affinity to the area and its history,' she adds.





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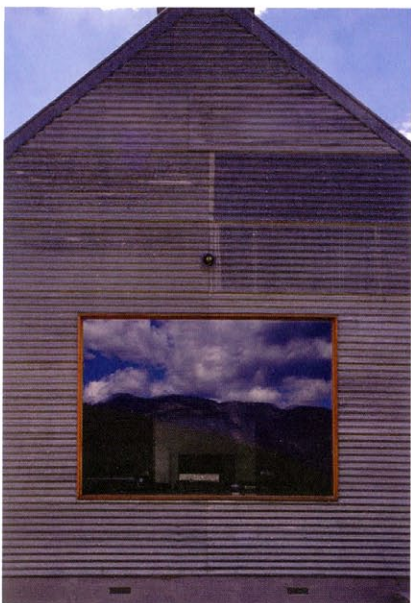
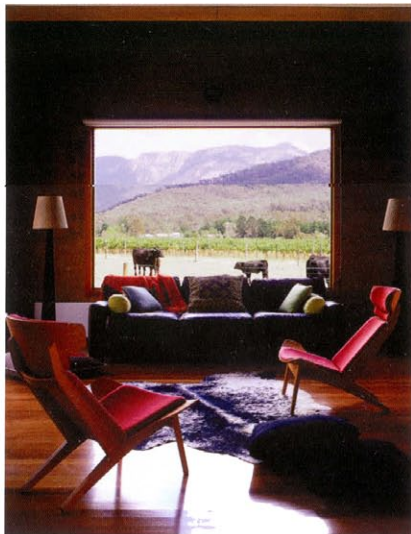


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- 1 The living area and deck have direct views to the Mount Buffalo Ranges.
- 2 The high kilns have proportions similar to rural churches, with their high ceilings and exposed beams.
- 3 The kilns, originally used for tobacco drying, had to be rebuilt to the old design.
- 4 The kilns are used as two living areas, one for the parents and one for their children.
- 5 The outdoor area is protected from extremes of weather.

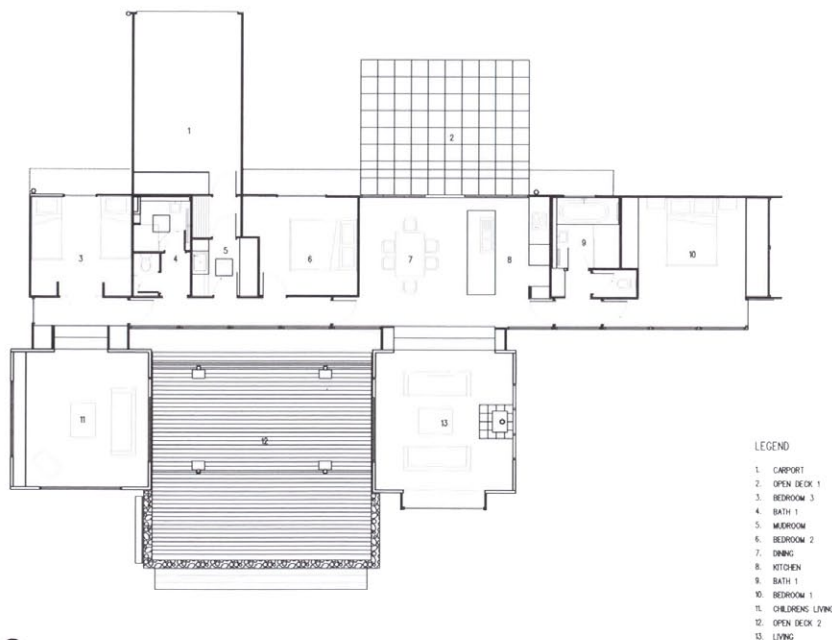


The two kilns were positioned either side of a large timber deck accessed via glass doors. 'We wanted to create an area that was protected. It can be scorching in summer and freezing in winter,' says Draper, who linked the kilns with a timber pergola. 'Eventually the pergola will be covered with vines,' she adds.

To create the family retreat, Draper included an elongated pavilion that steps away from the two kilns. Constructed of masonry, the new wing is separated from the two kilns by an enclosed breezeway, with glass walls and louvred windows. 'We thought about the design and came up with the concept of a veranda. You feel as though you're walking through the landscape,' says Draper. And with cattle roaming freely up to the house, the experience is as close as one could hope for.

The new wing includes three bedrooms and bathrooms, with the parent's bedroom a few steps away from the formal lounge. The two children's bedrooms are also strategically placed near 'their' kiln. And in the centre of the new wing is the kitchen and dining areas that leads to an open deck.

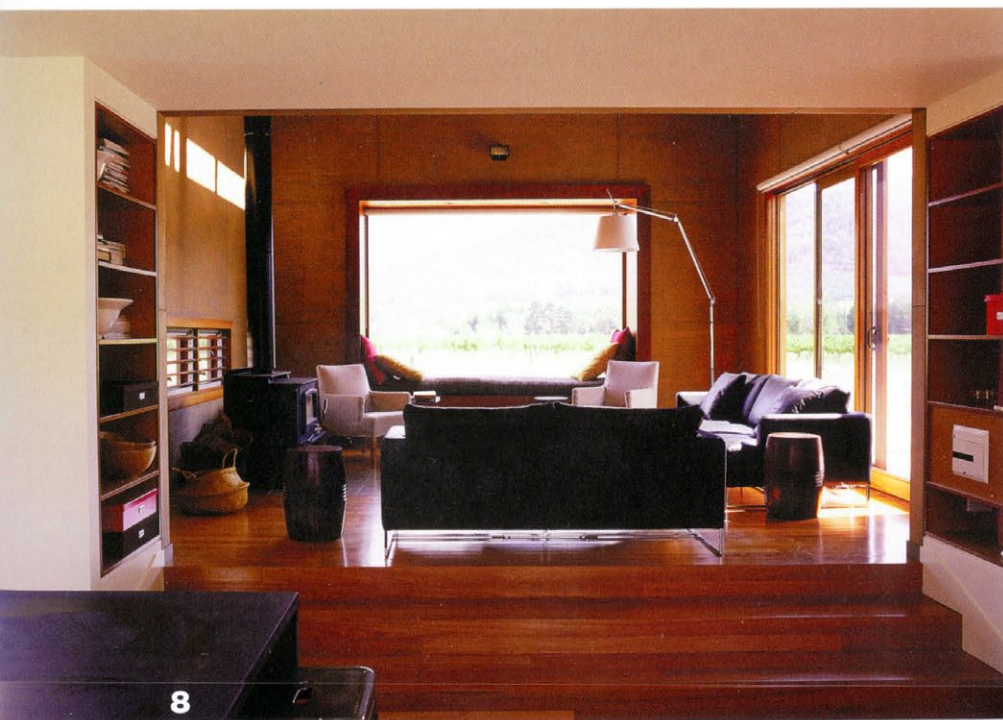
To maximise the views of grazing cattle as well as the impressive mountain ranges, Draper created picture windows in the kilns. A large box bay window was inserted into the formal lounge and timber louvred windows appear in both kilns. 'We wanted to get in as much light as possible. But we were also mindful of the extreme weather conditions up here,' says Draper.



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A few other kilns that still remain on the property, providing an important context for the new house. As Draper says, "it feels quite monastic. It's not a church, but the same proportions as in some of the rural churches can be seen."

- 6 Plan showing the separation of the kilns from the new wing of the house.
- 7 Vines on the pergola will shade the deck in summer.
- 8 Inside the parents kiln living area.