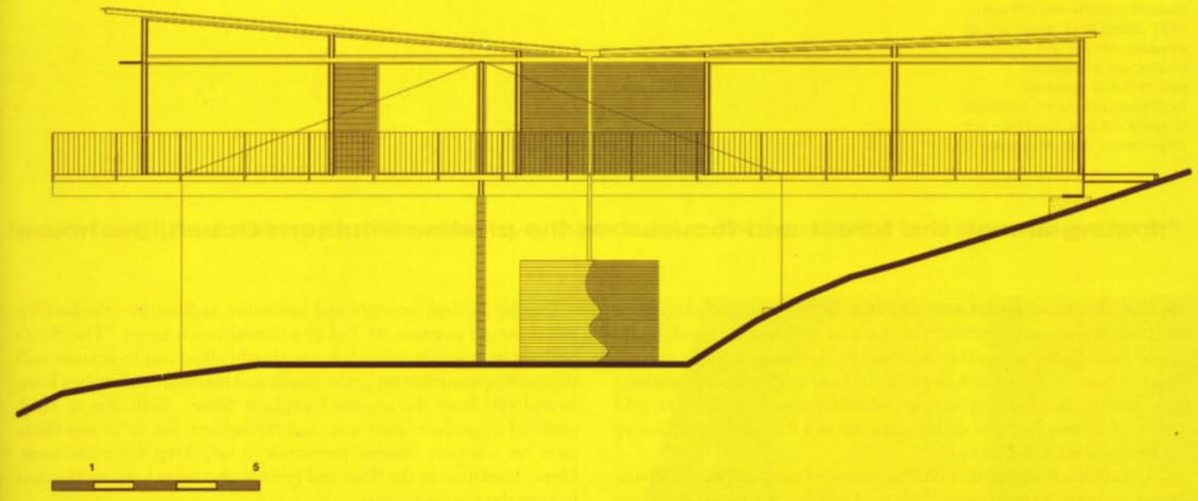
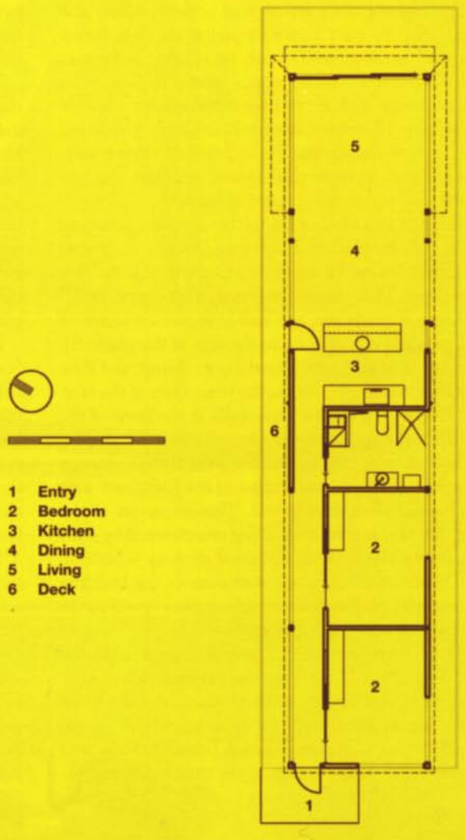
flying high

There are cantilevers, and then there are *cantilevers*. This steel-and-glass coastal dwelling by Stuart Tanner Architects has one that is ten metres long, an elegant suspended structure that reaches out to the ocean.







1 Entry
2 Bedroom
3 Kitchen
4 Dining
5 Living
6 Deck

OPENING PAGES: The kitchen and living section of the house appears to float above the forest. The splendid kitchen bench is made from blackwood. PREVIOUS PAGES: From the front entrance, a glazed walkway takes the eye straight through to the views. THIS PAGE, TOP: The exterior features shiplapped blackwood cladding. BELOW: This elevation shows the severity of the cantilever, and the siting of the water tank underneath.

"floating among the forest and focused on the pristine Southern Ocean, the house has a tangible contemplative quality enhanced by its proximity to untamed nature"

SLEEK STEEL-AND-GLASS BOXES are becoming so ubiquitous in Australian domestic architecture that a new Tasmanian beach house could have been just another addition to that unremarkable cohort. But this house at Eaglehawk Neck on the Tasman Peninsula is anything but ordinary. Set on a steep wooded hillside overlooking the wide, wild sweep of Pirates Bay, this daring structure is a thoughtful addition to its spectacular natural setting.

"The client's brief for this building was very basic," explains Hobart-based architect Stuart Tanner. "All that was specified was how many rooms there were to be, and the wish to be able to park a vehicle under the house using the existing driveway." Given free rein to be able to interpret the site, Stuart spent time absorbing its natural ambience of forest and ocean before formulating his design.

The structure that emerged was a pavilion that projects lightly out from the hillside, appearing to float above its young eucalypt forest setting. The building touches the ground in only two places: at the rear where footings anchor it, and across its centre where it rests on a narrow concrete block fulcrum wall. From here it reaches out towards the sea with a gravity-defying 10-metre suspended cantilever. The house is built on a steel frame, which has allowed the architect to achieve such a large span, and the structure is completed in timber and glass with just four stiffening rods and steel straps for additional support.

"The building is intended as a kind of bridge between the intimate, enclosed, forested part of the land and the grand ocean vista that opens out below," explains Stuart. "I was trying to show how the two environments are connected. The building itself makes the connection."

Approaching the house from below, the visitor mounts a series of masterfully crafted stone steps that lead up to the rear of the platform. There are no steps on the platform itself – nothing to disturb the flow of the layout from back to front. Entering via the main door at the rear, one instantly takes in the views from the glass walls at the front of the house, more than 22 metres away.

The interior layout is simple: two bedrooms with sliding interior walls lead off the glazed entrance passage. Adjacent is a bathroom with timber joinery and a frosted glass shower wall. The remainder of the space is open: a simple kitchen and a roomy living area, framed by glass walls and the ever-changing ocean views. External decking – high up among the treetops – wraps around the seaward sides of the building and, when the weather allows, sliding floor-to-ceiling glass opens out to make the decking an extension of the living space.

Detailed joinery gives the whole house the look of crafted furniture. Shiplapped blackwood cladding is used on the exterior, while satin smooth blackwood makes up the kitchen and bathroom cabinets. Deep red myrtle screw plugs are featured both in the interior and on the exterior. The interior floors are of a pink-blushed Tasmanian oak, and rich brown hardwood exterior decking adds to the earthy timber feel.

Despite its sleek interiors and innovative architecture, the building was designed to retain the feel of a coastal beach house. "The client's philosophy was that a beach house should allow one to connect with the exterior environment both visually and thermally rather than being 'sealed off' from the outside," explains Stuart. With this in mind, untinted single-layer glass was used throughout, but in 10 mm sheets so it has adequate thermal properties to help keep the home warm. Heavy insulation in the floor and ceilings also helps keep radiant heat in once the sun goes down.

"I set out to prove that, thermally, you can have a single skin coastal building in Tasmania that works really well," says Stuart. "It has very quick solar gain, but it also retains heat well. Even on cold nights, it stays warm." On rare hot summer days, western red cedar louvres in the main living space open fully to let in ocean breezes. Timber sunscreens are also arranged below the clerestory windows, shading the interior from too much harsh light in summer.

This thermal efficiency certainly boosts the building's environmental credentials. Limited electric heating and energy-efficient appliances are designed to minimise the overall current draw and to be suitable for a beach house that will see only intermittent use. Gas cooking and water heating do likewise. Fresh water for the household's needs is collected as run-off from the large cantilevered butterfly roof and stored in tanks under the house. Grey water recycling and sewerage are also dealt with on site. Perched on a single concrete wall, the house has a negligible environmental footprint and as the steel substructure was fabricated off-site, on-site works have only caused slight disturbance to the surrounding eucalypt forest.

Floating among the eucalypt forest, and focused on the pristine Southern Ocean, the house has a tangible contemplative quality enhanced by its proximity to untamed nature. On calm days there's the mesmerising rolling of Southern Ocean surf in Pirates Bay below. On stormy nights, waves thunder and salt spray swirls through the surrounding forest. At dawn, the interior is bathed in molten gold as a fiery sun heaves itself above the ocean horizon. And from the back of the house, one can lie privately in bed and watch blue-tailed finches flitting through the gentle forest scene.

Incised on a slab of sandstone as one approaches the stone steps to the house are the words 'Tesso Vertigo', the building's name and a reference to the tessellated pavement, a natural seashore wonder and landmark nearby. But vertigo is really the word that suits this building, not only to describe its physical form, but to capture what it represents – a peak architectural achievement. Intended as a simple beach house in a wild, natural setting, the house meets its brief very well and shows great empathy with its site. Recently, Stuart's peers also recognised the building's significance by awarding it a commendation in the 2005 RAIA Tasmanian Architecture Awards. **GABI MOCATTA**







ARCHITECT
Stuart Tanner Architects
16 Gregory Street
Sandy Bay Tasmania 7005
Tel: (03) 6224 4377
Fax: (03) 6224 5778
Email: info@stuarttanner architects.com.au

PRACTICE PROFILE
A four-person practice focusing on contemporary sustainable design. Projects include residential, medium-scale commercial and tourism.

PROJECT TEAM
Stuart Tanner (principal architect), Julia Jago, Brad Fenton, Mike Potter (assistants)

BUILDER
Southern Living Pty Ltd

CONSULTANTS
Engineer Gandy Roberts Pty Ltd
Landscaping Land Solutions
Interiors Stuart Tanner Architects and Raoul Harper
Lighting Case Mondé Pty Ltd

PRODUCTS
Roofing Trimdeck Hi-Ten in gal finish; R 3.5 glass wool insulation **External walls** 10 mm toughened glass; shiplapped solid blackwood cladding **Internal walls** Plasterboard, painted **Windows** Commercial aluminium frames, clear anodised finish; Madinoz hardware **Doors** Internal doors custom timber frame, paint finish **Flooring** Steel floor structure; Tasmanian oak overlay, lined and insulated under **Lighting** Case Mondé (Tas) Zenta light fittings **Kitchen** Solid blackwood joinery; stainless steel bench top; Abey Gessie kitchen tap **Bathrooms** Solid blackwood joinery; Rogerseller tiles; Accent Intamix Borma tap; Villeroy & Boch suites **Heating/cooling** Ceiling foil heat system; Nobo panel; Breezway cedar louvres **External elements** Dolerite stonemasonry by Peter McFarlane **Furniture** Internal furniture by Craig Rosevear; deck recliner by Gerald Easden

TIME SCHEDULE
Design, documentation 18 months, including approvals
Construction 9 months

PHOTOGRAPHY
Brett Boardman

LEFT: This detail shows the building's expressed structure, including a slender diagonal flat that helps anchor the house to the site.