

FOURTH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

\$7.50 incl. GST

Edition Twenty Four

Hunter Lifestyle

Magazine

Life in the Hunter region of New South Wales

Unearth Broken

A Modern Classic

The Classroom of Hunter Skies

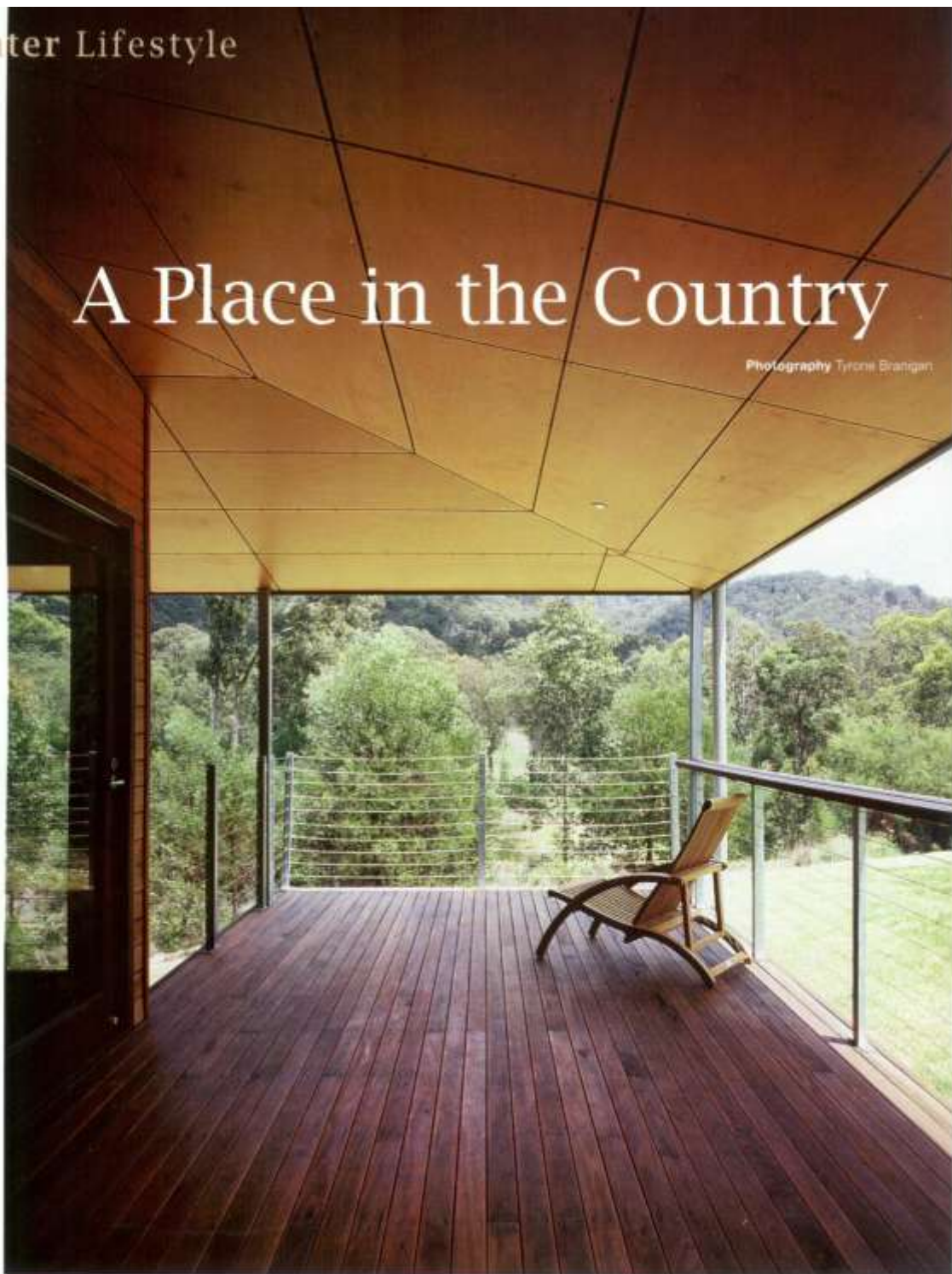
Living in the Lap of Luxury



7 771447 998069

A Place in the Country

Photography Tyrone Branigan



Over recent years, the Hunter Region has seen increasing interest from Sydneysiders who are investing in property, especially around the Pokolbin district, where they look forward to adopting a lifestyle change, either in the immediate future or when they retire.

Greg and Kerrie Minchin are typical of these new investors. They acquired a wedge-shaped vacant parcel of land almost ten years ago, planning to eventually make the move to the district.

Currently based in the city, they are now content to see their project evolve into a self-sufficient income earner, increasing in value as time passes.

Twelve months went into the planning and design and, another twelve months into building the dream.

"The Vintry", as the property is known, is set against the backdrop of the stunning Brokenback Ranges.

The couple has planted a small two-acre vineyard with Hunter Valley Shiraz and a number of rows of the Rhone Valley white variety Vignier, and developed the property into a unique luxury, self-contained country guesthouse with separate living space for themselves, or so they originally planned. >



The Vintry has become a viable enterprise offering the perfect lifestyle for relaxation and entertaining for up to eight guests at a time.

Due to the overwhelming demand, there's hardly been any available time for the owners to spend their leisure hours on the property unless they prebook "time out - reserve our date".

The architect for the project was David Rose, principal of Suters Architects, an established Newcastle firm with a long involvement in the development of the Hunter Valley's wine estates.

The client's brief was for a luxury four-bedroom house with an emphasis on entertaining, so the project became a nostalgic flashback to the architect's childhood spent living on country properties.

"I remembered my grandfather's house. He built it himself and it had a big breezeway through the middle. It had a service section on one side and the living quarters on the other, so I thought these were aspects of that house which can be applied in this design," said David.

The resultant house is a building that has three zones with a strong axis towards the mountains. The structure is set out in a simple grid system, recalling the efficiency of farming structures.

David wanted to retain the rural character of the property, which was to be designed to cater for city people wanting to escape the hustle and bustle of urban life.

The main entertaining area enjoys the maximum impact of the view; a main bedroom wing affords privacy as well as an outlook for the owner, while another section contains the remaining three bedrooms, each with its own bathroom and deck.

Heavy masonry walls bisect the house, separating the owners' rooms from the spaces used by the guests.

The architect positioned guest bedrooms with bathroom "pods" dividing the verandahs, giving each room a private outlook across the bush so the guests have their own spaces.

The main skillion roof unites the building and echoes the feel of a rural shed, whilst timber boxes, which will grey with time, add a modern slant.

Radially sawn timber, sourced from hardwood plantations, was used for cladding and the main wall is simply rendered concrete block with a stone-effect paint finish.

The materials were also chosen to be raw so that they would weather into a patina that would allow the house to blend with the surrounding landscape. >



Inside the house, a section of timber flooring can be raised, revealing a hidden stairway leading down to the cellar below, obviously a place where the owners can indulge in their love of wine.

Internally, the house echoes openness afforded by spotted gum floorboards and timber and glass doors from the kitchen and lounge rooms opening to the wide timber decks, bringing the outside landscape indoors.

Light spills in from all sides, infiltrating the bedrooms and bathrooms, aided by low-voltage and concealed fluorescent perimeter lighting at night.

The house has adopted a strong, ecologically sustainable design, due to the lack of connection to town water or sewer, so environmental systems are an important aspect of this house.

Large concrete water tanks under the house collect roof water, and a recycling septic system can be used on the garden. The building's masonry walls and high louvres afford adequate passive control, both in summer and winter.

The Vintry has been architecturally designed to be part of the landscape, echoing the feel of a traditional bush retreat yet far from 'roughing it'.

All the expected creature comforts are afforded - all within easy distance of the major wineries and restaurants in the Pokolbin region.

