

# HOME

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# coastal fusion

Asian and Pacific influences combine forces  
in a fresh take on the classic 50s bach.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ANDREW COFFEY TEXT: JOËLLE THOMSON

Day beds upholstered  
in a bright red Chinese  
brocade accommodate  
guests when they come  
to stay. The maple table  
is by Sam Haughton of  
Katalog and the ceramics  
are by John Parker. A  
Richard McWhannell  
painting hangs on the wall.







Sarah enjoys the view (this page). The artwork on the wall is by Gavin Chilcott. A triptych by Luise Fong, *Anchor*, hangs above day beds in the lowered living space (opposite, top left). The upstairs hallway (top right) features a crimson wall. Sarah found the tiles for the bathroom (bottom left) before the house was built. A 50s dining table came from a previous home (right).



"MY DESIGN PHILOSOPHY IS THAT AESTHETIC DETAILS ARE ALIGNED

Sarah Smuts-Kennedy says designing a house is like making a film – "You have a vision of what it's going to be like and you work backwards to get there." The actress/artist was true to her words when designing her west coast home with architect Graeme Burgess. The first thing she bought for her take on the classic 50s New Zealand bach was a set of green tiles she found in a sale – "I had no idea where I was going to use them but I loved the mix of colours."

On the narrow piece of land she'd purchased, Sarah was determined to create what she'd always dreamt of – a house where you can lie in the sun, hear the sea and be

surrounded by trees. But despite its north-facing aspect and stunning sea views, the site demanded some serious outside-the-square thinking. Not only was it steep, but a significant portion of the land couldn't be built on at all. Happily, solving these challenges (read near-impossible-construction-limitations) led to some of the finished home's most spectacular features.

Burgess and Sandra Fay worked on the project with Sarah from the initial design to finishing touches. Burgess knew the neighbourhood well – he designed the house next door several years ago. "The building limitations made it a real challenge to create a sense of space," he says.

TO FUNCTION. PURPOSEFUL THINGS CAN AND SHOULD LOOK GOOD"

One of the first things the design trio decided was that the house would be a collection of boxes. The upstairs level overlaps the downstairs level in a careful balancing act, providing shelter for a walkway over paved river stones leading to the entrance.

Construction was done on a tight budget using a simple palette of materials. Cedar weatherboards and plywood are the stalwarts, with copper capping on the corners. Aluminium joinery forms larger-than-usual sliding doors.

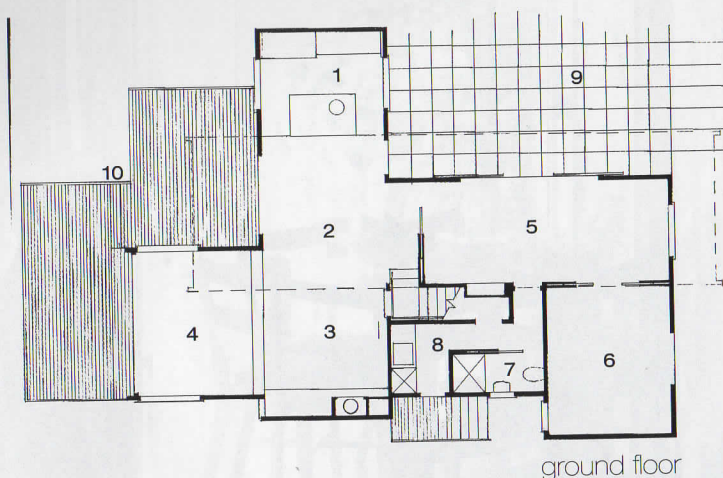
The garden room, one of three possible entrances to the house, is described by Sarah as "a place where people can gather and be messy if they want to".

A study/workshop, downstairs bathroom, laundry and the main living area lead off from the garden room and can be neatly shut away behind unobtrusive cavity sliding doors. Three comfortable day beds are the coup de grace in the living area that spans two levels, before flowing onto a sizeable deck protected by pohutukawas, through which you can glimpse the expanse of the Tasman Sea.

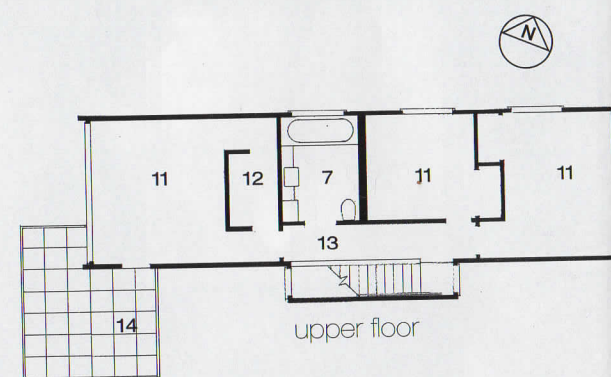
"The entire house is designed around how I want to live," says Sarah, "It's classic, unostentatious and has been created with entertaining in mind. It feels as comfortable in these rooms alone as it does with 12."

The bach has also been finished with some unbelievable





ground floor



upper floor

legend

- |                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 1. kitchen        | 8. laundry       |
| 2. dining         | 9. courtyard     |
| 3. living         | 10. deck         |
| 4. lowered living | 11. bedroom      |
| 5. garden room    | 12. dressing     |
| 6. study/workshop | 13. hall/gallery |
| 7. bathroom       | 14. roof terrace |

## "THE ENTIRE HOUSE IS DESIGNED AROUND THE WAY I WANT TO LIVE."

bargains. The tiles were one. Another is the tongue-in-groove matai flooring. "When Graeme told me a wooden floor just wasn't in the budget, I had to find a way around that and went to an auction."

It paid off. Natural wooden floors and grey walls (Aalto Country Colours 'Memphis') are constant throughout the living area. Symmetry is important to Sarah, too – or rather a complete lack of it. Which is why the plaster fireplace is slightly askew.

"We pondered for ages over where it would go," she says, "But I can't stand things that are exactly in the centre and you can achieve balance without symmetry."

Fundamental to Sarah's design philosophy is that aesthetic details are aligned to function. And opposite the fireplace is the kitchen. A mix of stainless steel, concrete, ply, rimu and Eucalyptus fastigata, it was the hardest part of the house to design. "We had at least four different designs," says Sarah. "I wanted a kitchen that had the same qualities as the rest of the house rather than something that looks like it's just been slotted in."

Rimu frames around the ply kitchen cupboards echo the cantilevers on the outside of the house. "A subtle design extension," says Graeme "it carries the house's theme inside without dominating the simplicity that's there."



The house is stained black in a reference to 50s creosoted bachs (this page). The simple, functional kitchen (opposite left) doubles as a serving bar when entertaining. The polished concrete island inlaid with stones (opposite right) was made by Sarah with the help of friends.

## IT'S UNOSTENTATIOUS AND HAS BEEN CREATED FOR ENTERTAINING"

The centrepiece of the kitchen is the polished concrete island inlaid with stones, which was built by Sarah and a couple of friends and finished by a cutter and polisher.

The stones in the island's surface are not uniform, because "we ran out". But like everything else in this stylish seaside home, the island has been planned to the nth degree. Drawers, cupboards (with Sarah's own SSK handles) and dishwasher are tucked discreetly into two sides while a niche provides display space on the outside.

Personal touches may seem minimal but the house emanates warmth. Polynesian art hangs in the crimson-coloured upstairs hallway, half a dozen candlesticks

squeeze onto the shelf at the end of bath and books are strewn about the garden room, evidence of lazy weekend afternoons spent reading.

Although the house is not large, it feels spacious and includes Sarah's study/workshop. From here she designs her range of jewellery, handles and other decorative functional items, and co-ordinates their distribution to stores throughout New Zealand.

The close proximity of neighbours is easily forgotten in this calm coastal retreat which has been designed, like the best films, by a small group of talented editors working to keep the finished product as simple as possible. H&E