AUSTRALIAN

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HOUSE & GARDEN

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CONTEMPORARY COUNTRY LIVING

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THE *curated* COTTAGE

A farmer with a passion for design and his artist wife turned their derelict old cottage into a moody and magical country retreat.

STORY *Georgia Madden* | STYLING *Williams Burton Leopardi* | PHOTOGRAPHY *Caroline Cameron*

EXTERIOR Located in the Barossa Valley, this respectfully renovated cottage's gorgeous new outdoor area features a vine-covered pergola and offers uninterrupted views into the paddocks and neighbouring vineyards and land beyond. The architect removed the more recent additions to the cottage to return it back to its original footprint, while the plaster finish on the exterior walls was stripped back to reveal the original ballast stone walls – a discovery that clinched the homeowners' decision to renovate rather than demolish.

The little circa-1850 settler's cottage on Rob and Marnie's farm in the Barossa Valley, SA, had stood empty and untouched since they bought the property eight years prior. But when the couple decided to embark on an extensive renovation of the main residence, which they share with their two children, aged 12 and 15, they began to explore the idea of turning the cottage into a comfortable home that would see them through a year or two of construction, and later rent it out as an Airbnb.

Initially, the near-derelict state of the three-bedroom, one-bathroom cottage made them question if it was even worth it. "It had no running water and was barely habitable – we had to decide whether to push it over or renovate," says Rob. The discovery of beautiful and historical ballast stone walls, hidden beneath layers of plaster render, helped sway them towards the decision to restore and remodel.

Rather than a hasty patch job, farmer and 20th-century design aficionado Rob and professional artist Marnie, decided to pool their creative talents and make something beautiful that would endure. The pair reached out to architect David Burton and interior designer Sophia Leopardi at Williams Burton Leopardi to help them realise their vision for a simple, honest and thoughtfully designed home – one that would also make the most of its picturesque views towards a neighbouring vineyard and paddocks filled with horses, sheep and the occasional grazing kangaroo.

"We were keen to maintain the simplicity of the cottage – we didn't want to make it something it wasn't," says Rob. "Function needed to be the focus, with robust, natural materials that are easy to look after. We didn't want anything that might look great, but had surfaces that were hard to clean or doors that didn't open properly. David and Sophia understood what we were after straight away," he says.

"With its big, thick stone walls, the cottage had a wonderful sense of solidity," says David. "We wanted to echo that in the new design, while at the same time introduce softness to make it feel cosy and calm."

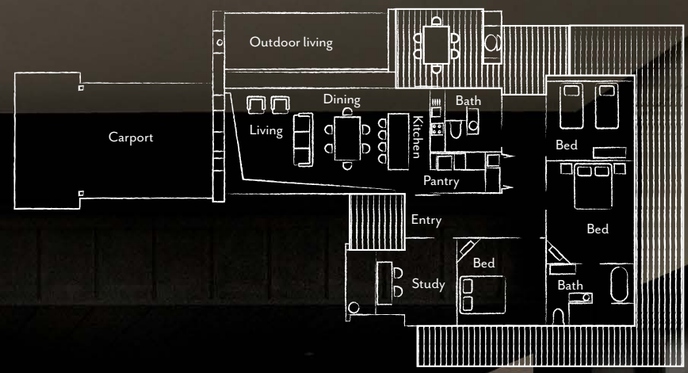
The original L-shape cottage was retained, while a poorly constructed later addition housing a kitchen and living room was replaced with a new kitchen/living/dining pavilion (plus an extra bathroom), with floor-to-ceiling glazing on both sides to capture the light and views. A new outdoor entertaining area was also created.

The existing rear verandah corridor was enclosed and now marks the transition point between the old and new ▶

LIVING *This page* The main living area is housed in the new, modern pavilion. *Bread* artwork by Pam Tippett, Australian Galleries. Rear wall rendered in Murobond Barkala. Concrete plinth. Skantherm Shaker wood-burning heater, Oblica. Vintage Hagenauer brass pendant light, Geoffrey Hatty Applied Arts. Custom shelves designed by Williams Burton Leopardi. TV and speakers, Bang & Olufsen. Mustard chairs, Borge Mogensen vintage leather sofa and cushions, all owners' own. **ENTRY** *Opposite top* The original side entry now serves as the home's main entry. Tavella Cotto Terracotta stone tiles, Eco Outdoor. Vertical timber cladding (on left), Shadowclad ply stained black, CHH Ply. Vintage Australian chair and 1950s French floor lamp, both owners' own. **VIEW TO HALLWAY** *Opposite bottom* Credenza and Reverse table lamp, both Aptos Cruz Galleries. Black and white 1970s line drawing of the Barossa, artist unknown. Two small oil paintings by Euan Heng, Australian Galleries.

KITCHEN/DINING Artwork by Juan Ford, This is No Fantasy. Lip pull handles in Bronze, Designer Doorware. Vertical timber cladding, CHH Ply. Blue Moon granite benchtops, CDK Stone. Mirrored glass splashback, B&M Glass. Hanging rails, Southern Stainless Steel. Astra Walker 'Icon' kitchen mixer, Estilo Bathware & Ceramics. Diiva swivel stools, Grazia & Co. Dining table, dining chairs, vases and tabletop items, all owners' own. Custom sheer curtains in Christian Fischbacher 'Tramontana' fabric, Heritage Window Treatments. ▶

THE LAYOUT



parts of the home, its characterful, terracotta-tiled floor a playful riff on the idea of stepping outside to use the bathroom, and its walls acting as a rotating gallery for Marnie's artworks and the couple's personal art collection.

"Rob is an avid collector of 20th-century design pieces and has the most wonderful array of furniture and lighting; the cottage presented the perfect opportunity to use many of these, which was another way to tell their story," says David.

Rich, moody tones and textured surfaces in the new pavilion set an intimate, reflective ambience, and provide the perfect backdrop for the couple's art and collected pieces. When the sheer curtains are opened, the space is filled with light and the focus is turned to the beautiful landscape.

"The colours were inspired by a close-up photograph of one of the gum trees on the property with its mix of different muted greens, grey, black, brown, russet and gold, as well as the tones of a rusty tin shed at the back of the cottage – it's a truly Australian palette," says David.

Roughened timber exterior cladding, stained black, was used for the cabinetry, ceiling and walls of the kitchen, adding a modern-rustic feel to the space, while referencing the rich ballast stone walls outside. In contrast, the three small bedrooms are lighter in tone, with layers of soft, muddied neutrals across the walls, floors and bedlinen, which helps to maximise the natural light and sense of space.

"While there's quite a lot going on inside the cottage, it's all very carefully curated and considered," says David. "The first thing you notice when you step inside is the sense of calm – it almost seems to hug you."

The couple's Airbnb plan is on hold for now as they are temporarily renting the cottage to a couple of friends who were badly affected by the Murray River floods. But they are hoping to kick things off in 2024. "We can't wait to have people around – I think they're going to be really taken with the cottage," says Rob. "Personally, we're thrilled with it."

And it seems the design industry agrees, with the property recently winning Best of State for Residential Design at the Australian Interior Design Awards 2023. ▶

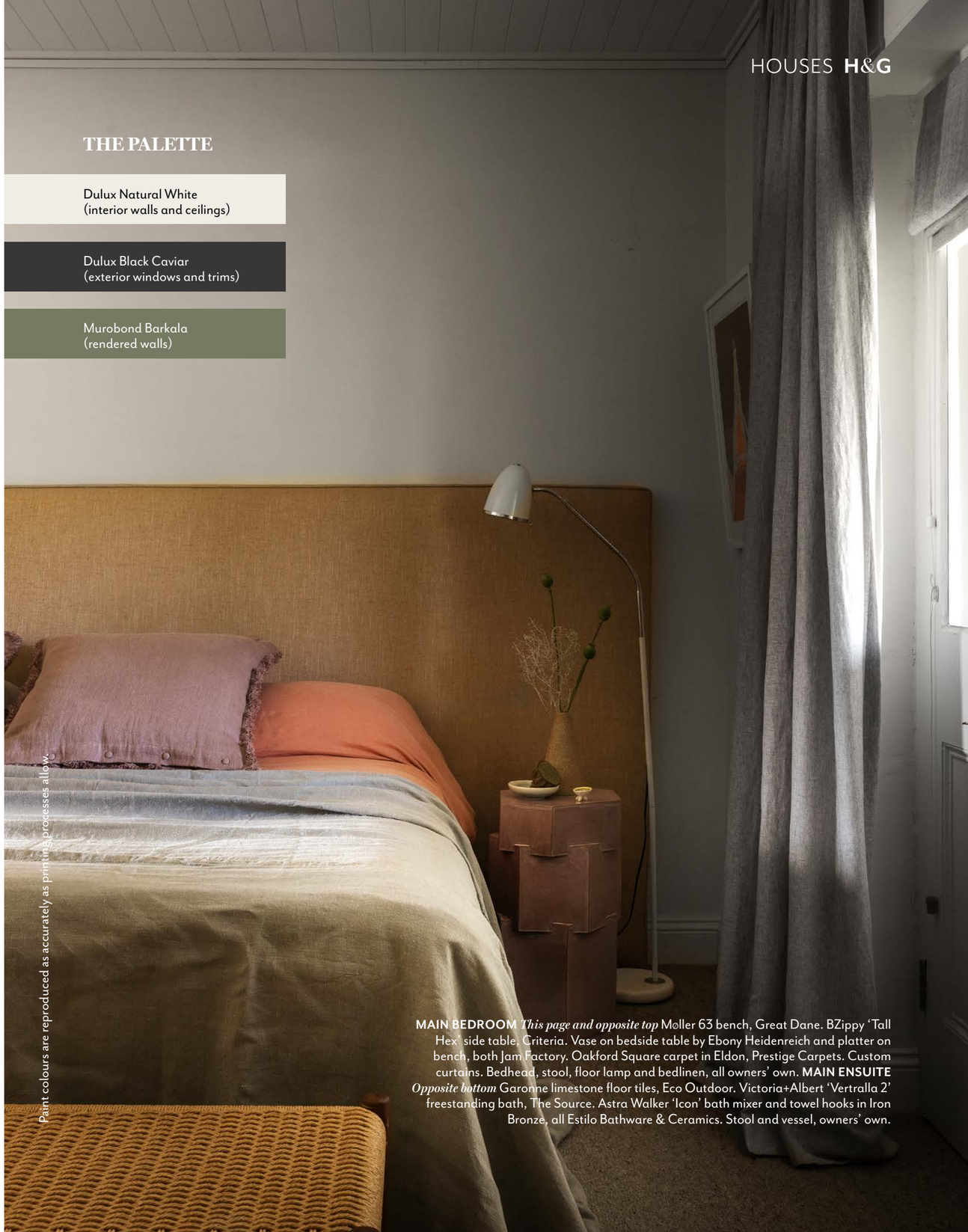
***Williams Burton Leopardi**, Adelaide, SA; designbywbl.com.au. **Bower Construction and Design**, Adelaide, SA; bowerconstruction.com.au. Oxigen, Adelaide, SA; oxigen.net.au. **Gap Joinery**, Salisbury South, SA; gapjoinery.com.au. **Southern Stainless Steel**, Caringbah, NSW; southernstainless.com.au. **Marnie Wark**, Barossa Valley, SA; marniewark.com.*

THE PALETTE

Dulux Natural White
(interior walls and ceilings)

Dulux Black Caviar
(exterior windows and trims)

Murobond Barkala
(rendered walls)



Paint colours are reproduced as accurately as printing processes allow.

MAIN BEDROOM *This page and opposite top* Moller 63 bench, Great Dane. BZippy 'Tall Hex' side table, Criteria. Vase on bedside table by Ebony Heidenreich and platter on bench, both Jam Factory. Oakford Square carpet in Eldon, Prestige Carpets. Custom curtains. Bedhead, stool, floor lamp and bedlinen, all owners' own. **MAIN ENSUITE** *Opposite bottom* Garonne limestone floor tiles, Eco Outdoor. Victoria+Albert 'Vertralla 2' freestanding bath, The Source. Astra Walker 'Icon' bath mixer and towel hooks in Iron Bronze, all Estilo Bathware & Ceramics. Stool and vessel, owners' own.

EXTERIOR Draped in flourishing glory vines, the new outdoor entertaining area connects to the dining, living and kitchen, forming part of the new pavilion. Masonry rendered in Murobond Barkala. Outdoor table and chairs, Cotswold InOut Furniture. ▶

THIS IS THE LIFE
During their two years in the cottage, Rob, Marnie and their children made the most of the new outdoor area, with its vine-covered pergola and seamless view into the paddocks and beyond, thanks to construction of a sunken wall at the end of the garden. "We'd often eat and entertain out here, the kids would kick a ball and we'd light up the fire on cold nights – it was great," says Rob.

EXTERIOR A welcoming view extends from the back door on the south side of the addition, looking west to the farm shed, which is used to house farming equipment. Bluestone pavers by landscape design firm, Oxigen.

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THE SOURCE

Connoisseurs of the 20th-century modern aesthetic can't go past these beautifully honest designs.

Produced by Antonietta Panuccio.

1 Aerin 'Agnes' **pendant light,** $869, The Montauk Lighting Co. **2** Flos 'Tab' **floor lamp,** $1076, Living Edge. **3** No.B9 Le Corbusier **chair,** $590, Thonet. **4** BM0253 Configuration 1 **storage unit,** from $9910, Cult Design. **5** Australian House & Garden 'Lighthouse' waffle **cushion,** $69.95, Myer. **6** White textured stoneware **vase** by April Johnston, $914.60, 1stDibs. **7** Lawson mangowood **stool,** $149.95, Provincial Home Living. **8** Elysian floor-mounted **bath filler,** $949.90, ABI Interiors. **9** Atelier **bed,** from $4195, Coco Republic. **10** Hex triple-tier **side table,** $7150, Criteria. **11** Gareth Ashton 'Byron' **freestanding bath,** $5039, Harvey Norman. *For Where to Buy, see page 192.* H&G