



Northern exposure

The beach houses of Queensland's Sunshine Coast are worth a closer look.



THE BEACH SHACK – that very Australian symbol of summer holidays – is a dying species. Over the past 35 years or so, it has been replaced, on most parts of the coast, by wildly inappropriate housing – from brick-veneer numbers to massive air-conditioned palaces.

From the '70s on, as the rest of the country was demolishing these humble dwellings, the Sunshine Coast of south-east Queensland was celebrating them, in philosophical terms at least. While attention was on big-city architecture, something profound was quietly happening north of Brisbane.

And, after previous tours in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, it's that part of the world we will be focusing on in June for the fourth one-day *Belle/AAA* tour, visiting several houses – some new, others 20 years old or more; some by established architects, others by emerging practitioners – plus the University of the Sunshine Coast, a relatively new campus which, in parts, epitomises the design ethos of the region. "The AAA [Australian Architecture Association] is committed to showcasing good design, and such a range of good, award-winning

architecture has come out of the Noosa area," says AAA founding director Annette Dearing. "One of the beauties of the tours is making architecture accessible to the public – literally opening a door to it, letting people see inside buildings and talk to the architects, and sometimes the owners, about how those houses work and what it's like to live in them."

"If there's a particular style to Sunshine Coast architecture, it's really about a way of thinking, and a way of doing things rather than a look," says Lindsay Clare, director of Architectus, who lived and worked on the coast with wife, Kerry, for more than 20 years – winning many awards along the way, including the national RIAA Robin Boyd Award twice – before moving to Sydney a few years ago. "It was a way of exploring simplicity in the true sense of the word, not in terms of minimalism. Gabriel Poole, a major architect in the region and who many of us worked for before setting up our own practices, used to compare the quality of a space to sitting under a mango tree. If it was more comfortable to sit under the tree, the space must be wrong." The language of beach shacks and traditional



Belle/AAA Sunshine Coast tour highlights: interior, with Stefan Dunlop painting (far left), and exterior (right) of the Noosa Hinterland House by Bark Design Architects, which lies next door to Bark Design Studio (above left), also by the architects; Thrupp and Summers House (this picture) by Clare Design, now Architectus.



OPEN HOUSE

THE AAA membership of which is open to all, was set up by a number of top architects, including Glenn Murcutt and Richard Johnson. It aims to promote contemporary architecture to as many people as possible – in part through tours, and it will be holding 190 of them throughout the year. For more information, visit www.architecture.org.au.

✦ The Belle/AAA Sunshine Coast tour will be held on June 28, and costs \$150 for AAA members – \$175 for non-members – and includes bus transport and lunch. For bookings, phone (02) 8297 7283.

Queensland houses comes into play in much of the architecture; the idea of extending the house into the landscape, of softening the edges and minimising the sense of enclosure are fundamental to the ethos.

The Clares, whose house we will visit, among others, attribute the development of a south-east Queensland style of architecture to a rare convergence of forces. First, a generation of architects who were drawn to the area largely through the influence of Gabriel Poole. "Then, an unusual clientele, many from Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra, who were receptive to an environmental, ethical approach, were more engaged artistically, and wanted to explore various ways of living in the subtropics. Plus, the ingenious carpenters and other tradesmen, many from the surfing industry where they were being incredibly innovative – they wanted to do unusual things in their building work as well."

As well, the clients' aspirations, and budgets, says Lindsay, were modest: "They didn't want air-conditioning and swimming pools and three-car garages – they wanted a healthy lifestyle and to make the most of their environment." As Annette Dearing puts it: "It's an approach that's more relevant than ever today."

The Belle/AAA Sunshine Coast tour also takes in these Viridian first- and second-stage homes (pictured here and bottom far left) in Noosa by JMA Architects.

