

# THE ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW



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A raw concrete house with balls in Ahmedabad  
Álvaro Siza builds at the Hombroich rocket base  
David Chipperfield's museum in Anchorage  
VIEW / 7/7 memorial in London / Outrage returns /  
Direct action architecture in Ethiopia / Zumthor





**1350**

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**David Chipperfield Architects**

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**Alberto Campo Baeza**

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Granada, Spain

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**Bark Design Architects**

Hastings Street Visitor  
Information Centre, Noosa Heads,  
Queensland, Australia

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**Finsterwalder**

Pavilion, Insel Hombroich Foundation,  
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**SeARCH bv**

The Forest Tower, Schovenhorst  
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**Matharoo Associates**

House with Balls, Ahmedabad, India

**Cover Edmund Sumner**

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## HASTINGS STREET VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE

LOCATION

NOOSA HEADS,  
QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA

ARCHITECT

BARK DESIGN ARCHITECTS

WRITER

ROB GREGORY

PHOTOGRAPHY

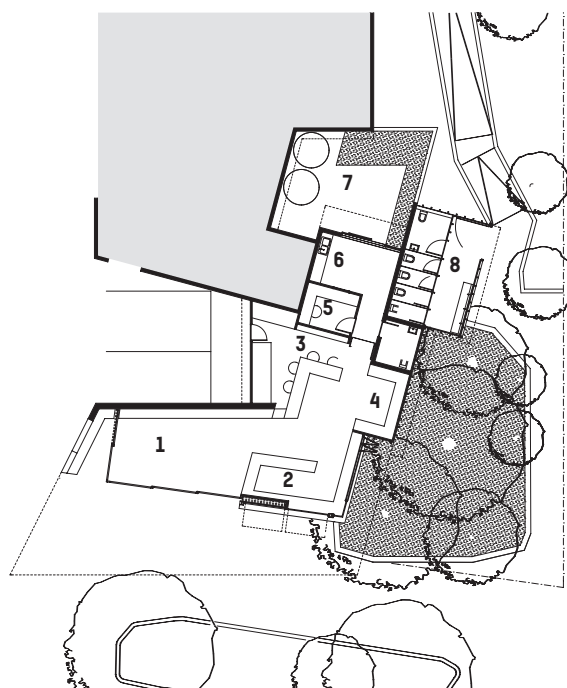
CHRISTOPHER FREDERICK  
JONES



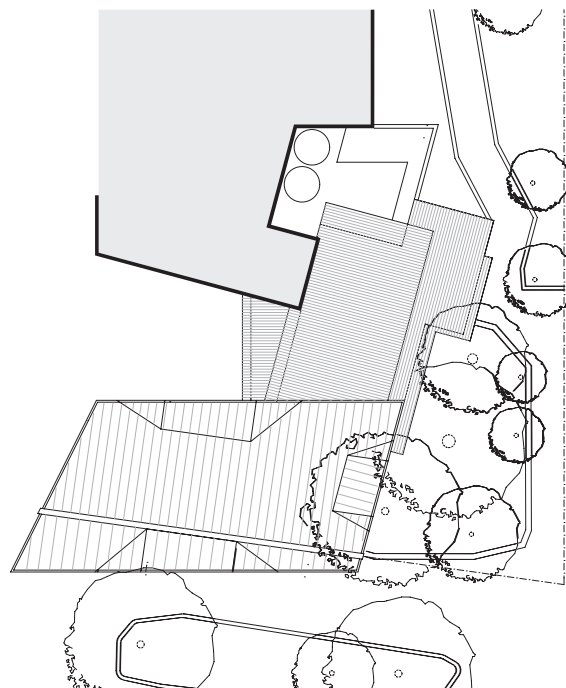


- 1 main information centre
- 2 external counter
- 3 internal counter
- 4 exhibition niche
- 5 manager's office
- 6 staff room
- 7 courtyard
- 8 public amenities

ground-floor plan



roof plan



Noosa Heads is the Carmel of Queensland's Sunshine Coast. With echoes of California's exclusive resort, low-rise holiday accommodation sets a high price for those who want to attract the region's wealthy second- and third-home owners. Hastings Street is the centre of attention, forming the resort's catwalk-cum-boutique strip, dominated by retail-fronted condominiums, jazzed up with stucco and water features. Nipping down narrow alleyways between adjacent fountains or competing bistros can provide moments of relief, north to the beach or south into residential pockets, where the inquisitive will be rewarded by the discovery of a fine housing scheme by Gabriel Poole, a shady oasis defined by stilted houses, where the region's distinctive architectural language helps remind visitors where in the world they are. Now, another authentic architectural anchor exists in the form of the Hastings

Street Visitor Information Centre, a generous and responsive contemporary work in a popular but otherwise anonymous streetscape, designed by local firm Bark Design Architects.

Bark is a husband and wife team which, despite its international consciousness and evident ambition, has purposefully decided to base its practice here in Noosa, 78 miles north of Brisbane; a place nicknamed 'the land of the long weekend'. Stephen Guthrie's former boss, John Mainwaring (AR April 1999), who works extensively in the region from his Brisbane office, teases the pair, saying: 'I'm not sure what you two are doing here, fiddling around in the bush.' In the decade since establishing their business here however, Guthrie and his wife Lindy Atkin have made the transition from the luxury private home market (which has dominated Australian architecture's thoughtful minds for too long) to public works,

commissioned on this occasion by the Sunshine Coast Regional Council (formerly Noosa Council), a significant professional leap that enables them not only to demonstrate an ability to deal with one of Noosa's trickiest urban sites, but more broadly to show how design can genuinely contribute to what is often referred to in contemporary Australian architectural practice as a 'positive urban outcome'.

Situated at the east end of the strip, this modest 134m<sup>2</sup> structure throws a welcoming shelter over the street, yielding to existing trees and distorting to negotiate the awkward corner site. The visitor information centre occupies a pocket of residual space on what Guthrie calls 'the wrong side' of Noosa Heads Surf Club, sitting as it does in the shadow of the three-storey structure. Before Bark was appointed, John Mainwaring had drawn up proposals for a completely new surf centre, but these were scrapped in —

Previous page\_ The centre's architecture blends regional tectonic tradition with echoes of British high-tech  
Opposite\_ The east elevation expresses the profile of the cross section, with the external counter at low level and split pitch roof above



**THE ROOF CANOPY EXTENDS  
OVER THE PUBLIC FOOTPATH,  
INVITING PASSERS-BY TO PAUSE  
IN THE SHADE, WHERE THEY  
CAN ENGAGE WITH THE CENTRE'S  
EXHIBITION-LIKE DISPLAY**



favour of a less holistic (but more sustainable) plan to refurbish the existing buildings. As such, Bark took the opportunity to allow the centre to act as a foil to the rather bulky backside of the surf club. In doing so, it also created a new frontage to Hastings Street, shaping the building in such a way as to direct visitors around the side of the surf club towards the beach. Through an easement, the architects were also able to extend the roof canopy over the public footpath to the south, inviting passers-by to pause in the shade, where they can briefly engage with the centre's exhibition-like display.

In plan, the building is a distorted L-shape; situated at its knuckle are two customer service points: an external counter that operates through hatch-like windows that pop up on gas struts and a more conventional internal desk for lengthier travel agency transactions. Beyond this space is the manager's

office, staff room and an all-important courtyard fitted, naturally, with obligatory barbecue for use by the predominantly volunteer staff. The plan also neatly conceals two discreet car parking spaces, again for staff use.

From the street, the principal space provides a shopfront for the resort, with a generous double-height space formed by a split-pitch cross-section that reaches up to the sky's northerly sun path, addressing the issue of being overshadowed by the surf club. The generosity of the roof not only helps elevate the public status of the building, but also, through its exuberant expression, makes the integration of public art and essential branding devices more palatable. So the ubiquitous yellow and blue italicised 'i' symbol, which is considered essential by Tourism Queensland in order to give the resort's 200,000 visitors confidence that this is an approved and reliable place to seek advice, does not

dominate the building's identity. In addition, art installations in the form of screen printing to the clerestory windows and pod-like pendant lamps both amplify qualities of light and air within the principal volume.

While Gabriel Poole's delightful housing scheme is typical of the Queensland school, with fibro-cement boarding, elevated verandas and corrugated tin roofs, the emerging architecture of Bark represents a curious but pleasing blend. Taking on home-grown regional sensibilities – blurring internal and external boundaries, dynamic fenestration and generous overhanging eaves – they also feature hints of British high-tech, following perhaps inevitably from extended periods of time spent by Atkin in the offices of both Nicholas Grimshaw and Richard Rogers. Clearly capable of doing much more than luxury homes, we await with anticipation larger-scale work by this committed, hard-working young practice. 

Above right\_ The pavement of Hastings Street runs directly into the information centre's shopfront  
Right\_ Sunlight streams into the space through the northerly clerestory



**ARCHITECT**  
Bark Design Architects,  
Noosa Heads, Australia

**ARTISTS**  
Kevin McMahon ,  
Wendy Brooks



section through entrance



section through courtyard, staff room and public counters



section through main volume