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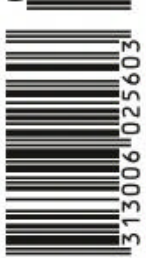
Real makeovers with style...
from minimal to the max

“Everything I love to cook”
by Neil Perry

KITCHEN APPLIANCE REPORT SUPER SMART & SUPER SIZED

\$8.80 NZ \$9.50 SEPT 2021

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CASA BLANCA


A former art gallery in NSW's Kangaroo Valley has been transformed into a whitewashed home away from home for its lucky guests

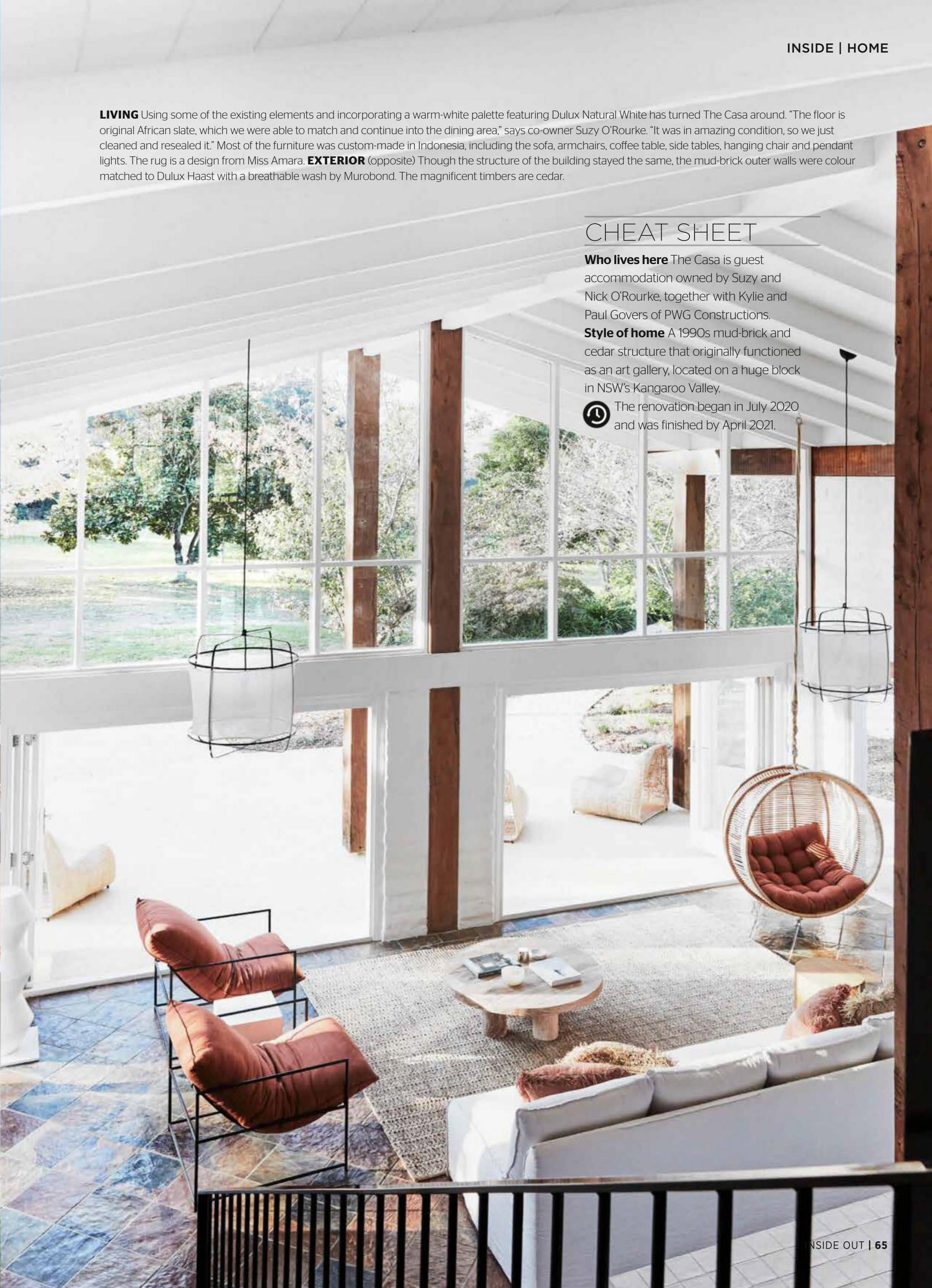
LIVING Using some of the existing elements and incorporating a warm-white palette featuring Dulux Natural White has turned The Casa around. "The floor is original African slate, which we were able to match and continue into the dining area," says co-owner Suzy O'Rourke. "It was in amazing condition, so we just cleaned and resealed it." Most of the furniture was custom-made in Indonesia, including the sofa, armchairs, coffee table, side tables, hanging chair and pendant lights. The rug is a design from Miss Amara. **EXTERIOR** (opposite) Though the structure of the building stayed the same, the mud-brick outer walls were colour matched to Dulux Haast with a breathable wash by Murobond. The magnificent timbers are cedar.

CHEAT SHEET

Who lives here The Casa is guest accommodation owned by Suzy and Nick O'Rourke, together with Kylie and Paul Govers of PWG Constructions.

Style of home A 1990s mud-brick and cedar structure that originally functioned as an art gallery, located on a huge block in NSW's Kangaroo Valley.

 The renovation began in July 2020 and was finished by April 2021.





There's no place like home is a phrase that evokes feelings of comfort and living in the moment surrounded by love and laughter. That was the sentiment driving all the design decisions for the renovation of a weary mud-brick art gallery and cottage in NSW's Kangaroo Valley, setting them on a journey to serene multi-function guest accommodation.

Surrounded by picturesque landscape and rugged escarpment, the old treasure became the dream project for co-owner Suzy O'Rourke, who, as an interior designer, artist and owner of guest accommodation The Shed in nearby Gerroa, knew exactly how to create that 'home away from home' feeling for The Casa.

The house began life in 1994 as Galeria Aniela Fine Art. It exhibited and hosted world-class artists, including John Olsen, John Perceval, Charles Blackman and Ningura Napurrula, as well as receiving a visit from Sir David Attenborough. "I first spotted Galeria Aniela in December 2018 and instantly fell for its six-metre ceilings, extensive glass, northern aspect, textured walls and peaceful grounds, but it would be 18 months before we actually bought the property," says Suzy, who already had a vision for what could be created there.

With design influences drawn from Mediterranean farmhouse-style homes and their paired-back simplicity, Suzy started the design process by creating a moodboard for the general look and feel, then narrowing down the specific elements to achieve her aesthetic. Working with the imperfect character of the home, she chose an earthy palette of organically shaped pieces in natural materials and raw textures, including stone, timber, brass, wicker, rattan, leather and linens, to evoke a relaxing environment for her guests.

Suzy and her husband, Nick O'Rourke, have built guest accommodation before and understood the risk and scope of work involved in taking on a renovation of this scale. As such,



 good news

The Casa's 25cm-thick walls have always had great thermal insulating properties, due to their mud-brick and cedar construction. Facing north warms the house in winter and breezes flow through it in summer. All the water comes from tanks on the property, and there's an Envirocycle septic system.



LIVING (above) Dulux Natural White paint is continued up into the roof area; it's a great foil for the slender black steel balustrade by Steel Edge Projects. Freestanding gas heater, Lopi Cypress GS2. All the furniture was made in Indonesia. **PARLOUR ROOM** (opposite) Suzy comes from a creative family and has painted some of The Casa's artworks, including the tonal one on the mantel of this chill-out space. Brass vessels, Cabana Jo's. Vase, H&M Home.



they partnered with Paul and Kylie Govers of PWG Constructions for their insight and building experience.

The renovation began with structural repairs, stripping the home to its bare bones and removing non-structural walls. The existing kitchen and bathroom were demolished and refitted, the timber floors were sanded back, the slate floor in the kitchen and dining area was restored and new sisal flooring was installed upstairs. To make three of the bedrooms, one of the large original gallery rooms was divided up. An archway feature was created between the dining and reading room, and the walkway from the reading room to the kitchen. New bifold doors were installed to create that essential indoor/outdoor connection.

Surprisingly, however, it was the paint work that was key to the transformation. “The painting took a lot longer and was much more expensive than expected,” Suzy explains. “Timber tannins started to leach through the three coats of paint, so we had to experiment with the best undercoat and, in some cases, a total of eight coats of paint were needed!” Once the renovation was complete, the next step was installing the furniture and styling the place. With her background in interiors, Suzy had planned all the furniture several months in advance and had most of it custom-made in Indonesia.

Due to its versatile design and modern-rustic aesthetic, The Casa has received a variety of bookings – from family gatherings, friends celebrating a milestone birthday and girlfriend getaways to wellness retreats and photoshoots – since opening earlier this year. “All our guests have loved the overall design and unique home-like getaway experience,” says Suzy. “It’s been wonderful to receive such positive feedback.” ¹⁰ The Casa is at thecasakangaroovalley.com and [@thecasa.kangaroovalley](https://www.instagram.com/thecasa.kangaroovalley). Suzy O’Rourke’s projects can be viewed at suzyorourke.com.au

DINING AREA (this page and opposite bottom) The arch feature was inspired by Mediterranean architecture. Above the dining table is an oil painting by Suzy's mum, Shirley Shapter, from about 1960. "I've been holding on and waiting for the right place to hang it – and it finally has a home," says Suzy. The lights are vintage Murano glass, relocated from another room. **KITCHEN** (opposite top) Sitting in the middle of the main building, the kitchen is perfectly placed for cooking and hanging out. The Portuguese tiles on the bar are from Barefoot Living. Tapware, Streamline Products. Appliances, Artusi and Smeg.

"The interior design was based on simplicity,
taking guests back to their roots and
the beauty of nature and its imperfections"

SUZY O'ROURKE, HOMEOWNER



ENSUITE (this page and opposite bottom) The deep bath, basins and even curtains were made in Indonesia. Tapware from Streamline Australia. Mirrors and pendant light, Ikea. Casa bath products, a collaboration with local wellness company Hart & Soul. **MAIN BEDROOM** (opposite top) Suzy and the team of owners wanted to imbue this huge space with a sense of luxury and escape, so she included a sunroom with views of the plunge pool and land beyond. The timber four-poster bed, side tables and pendant light are all custom. Bed linen, In Bed. Braided round jute rug, Miss Amara.

A large, freestanding copper bathtub is the central focus of the image. It sits on a light-colored tiled floor. Behind the tub is a large window with white curtains, through which green foliage is visible. A white paper lantern hangs from the ceiling above the tub. To the left, a black towel rack holds two beige towels. A black faucet is visible behind the tub. The room has a bright, airy feel with natural light coming through the window.

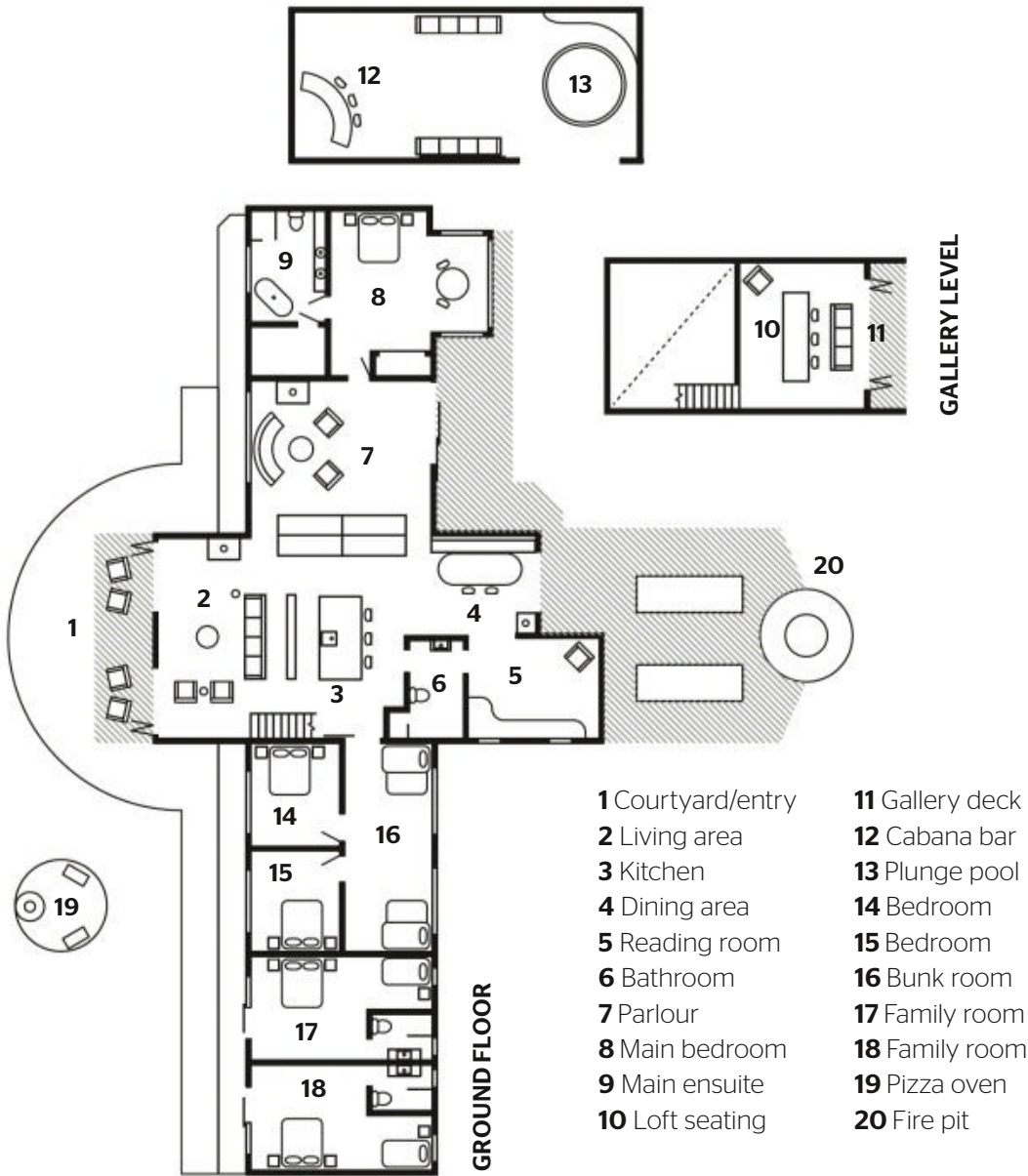
lessons learnt

“ONE OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES WAS SCALE”
SUZY O’ROURKE, OWNER

“At times, this project was overwhelming because of house’s size and its extensive grounds. Renovating an older home in a rural setting with a tight timeline and budget is a recipe for something to go wrong. We had contingencies for everything, but there are always things you didn’t consider. For example, we had to replace the entire septic system and do a lot of extra plumbing work, which we hadn’t budgeted for. Also, being based in Sydney, we weren’t on site all the time, so decisions were sometimes made by the trades without consulting us, which wasn’t ideal.”



bright idea
Sheer white curtains add instant whimsy and romance to a room. For a similar look, try the Tahiti Sheer S-fold curtains in Snow, priced from \$121 at Tuiss Blinds Online.





“Landscaping was no easy feat. We pulled back the overgrown garden, levelled some areas and laid tonnes of white pebbles. This has opened up the house to breathe and look out to the beautiful acreage” *suzy*

GREAT FINDS



CLOCKWISE (from top) Cotton **pendant**, \$295, St Barts. Lightly 'Vera' **vase** in Dusty Rose, \$130 for small, Aura Home. Nora braided jute **rug** (330cm x 240cm) in Natural Tan, \$842, Miss Amara. Coco Double **hanging chair**, \$890, Byron Bay Hanging Chairs. Vintage linen fringe **cushion** in Tobacco, \$59.95, Aura Home. Seagrass **cushion**, \$105, Salt & Sand. Tahiti Snow **curtain**, from \$33, Tuiss Blinds Online. Cypress GS2 freestanding **gas fireplace**, \$6199, Lopi. Jakarana slate **tiles**, \$65 per sq m, Natural Stone Tiles. Athena large face **pot**, \$70, Adairs. Jax **bar stool**, \$289, Hamptons At Home. Petite Valencia freestanding concrete **bath** in Oyster, \$5190, Concrete Nation. Paros cotton **bath set** in Natural, from \$24.95 for hand towel, Aura Home.

ADDITIONAL PRODUCT SOURCING: KATE LINCOLN



PLUNGE POOL/CABANA BAR (this page and opposite top) While Loco Landscape Design Studio worked on the garden, Suzy and the other owners converted the existing carport to a cabana bar. "We had a working bee with our partners and kids, where we stripped back the structure, did some painting and added the bamboo walls." The plunge pool was built by Allcast Precast Plunge Pools and the curved seat around it is made from CSR Hebel autoclaved aerated concrete, as is the seating around the pizza oven. Wall fence, ModularWalls. Balustrade fence, Steel Edge Projects. Tiki bar and bamboo chairs, bought through Facebook Marketplace. Suzy painted the mural. **WOODFIRED PIZZA OVEN** (opposite bottom) Out the front of The Casa is a pebbled area with a pizza oven by Buschbeck.

