

inside

interior design review

Stepping into luxury

ISSUE #102 | CELEBRATING 21 YEARS OF REVIEWING INTERIOR DESIGN

#102 | JULY-AUGUST 2018
AUD\$15.95



PROJECT

practice—Liminal Studio | project—Freycinet
Lodge | location—Freycinet National Park, Coles
Bay, Tasmania, Australia | text—Jan Henderson |
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Natural wonder

A new hospitality project in Tasmania from Liminal Studio is a revelation in both beauty and site specific design for the Apple Isle. *inside* co-editor Jan Henderson discovers a world where nature and luxury co-exist and the result is simply beautiful.



Beauty, as they say, is in the eye of the beholder; however, any visitor to Freycinet Lodge, located in the Freycinet National Park on the east coast of Tasmania, knows what real beauty can be. It is nature at her best with spectacular rocky landscapes, abundant wildlife and endless blue sky combining to present a spectacular wilderness. Add to this extraordinary location bespoke and luxurious accommodation purpose-designed to complement the surroundings and then perhaps this is heaven?

The project brief from RACT Destinations (Royal Automobile Club of Tasmania) was to design and deliver nine new accommodation pavilions that would expand the offering of Freycinet Lodge and create a point of difference to the existing 60 cabins already on-site. The commission was awarded to local multidisciplinary architecture and design practice Liminal Studio with joint directors Peta Heffernan and Elvio Brianese leading the project. For this commission Liminal has reinvented luxury accommodation 'Freycinet style', delivering an outstanding and inspirational design that is sympathetic to its surrounds yet creatively robust to make a spectacular design statement.

Liminal has been making a name for itself not only in Tasmania, but around the world with its eclectic portfolio of completed commissions that range from public, institutional and residential through to theatre and installation projects. And so it was perfectly placed, as the architecture and design practice of choice, to sensitively interpret this important brief.

On first viewing from afar, the pavilions appear as a new species of vegetation nestled within the craggy stone outcrops of their waterfront location. And, as the curved double-glazed windows absorb and reflect the sun, water and earth, the pods simply merge into the surrounding landscape. On closer inspection, the elegant curves of the structures take on a presence of their own and, in keeping with the landscape, the undulations within the architecture appear to imitate the silhouette of the surrounding coastal granite formations.

The exterior cladding of durable hardwood has been charred, Shou Sugi Ban style, not only to preserve the timber against the elements and 'ember proof' the structures, but also to blend with the vegetation. Once inside, however, the splendid appointment of facilities, furnishings and fittings confirm that this is indeed a five-star accommodation offering without peer.

The footprint of each pavilion is a C-shape with outside deck and open-air bathtub placed within the hollow. Tasmanian timbers are the star material and have been used almost exclusively throughout. Off-cuts of Tasmanian oak, blackwood and locally manufactured plywood clad the walls, ceilings and floors, and the rich colour variations of the timbers exude warmth and add texture.

A timber-clad corridor joins the two rounded ends that contain the sleeping quarters on one side and the entertaining space and stunning black





previous—Overview of the corridor, which features differing thicknesses of stained Tasmanian oak that clads the walls and adds texture and warmth. **above**—The pavilions are at home within the landscape and the curved glass walls imitate the surrounding coastal granite formations

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Left—The bathroom includes cabinetry of blackwood veneer that contains all amenity and ensures there is minimal clutter on benchtops. **opposite**—Custom-designed furnishings by Liminal Studio include the stunning Pebble sofa suite that can be reconfigured to suit every occasion and an occasional table with a beautiful woven basket at the side designed by Vicki West





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stone tiled bathroom at the other. Cabinetry of blackwood veneer is discreet with all amenity, such as the music system and bathroom accoutrements, hidden behind doors to ensure there is minimal clutter and a smooth open flow to the interior. Furnishings have been custom designed by Liminal and manufactured in Tasmania, and the Pebble sofa suite and accompanying side tables and stools sit perfectly within the space - the forms referencing the curves of the landscape and the architecture. The sofa suite consists of a chaise, a single seat and an ottoman, and the pieces can be reconfigured to suit every occasion. Special mention must be given to the occasional table in the honeymoon pavilion, which is a collaboration between Liminal and Vicki West, a local Indigenous artist, and incorporates a very beautiful woven basket at the side of the table top.

Wherever possible Liminal has ensured that the positioning of the pods and each of the 'rooms' within the structures takes full advantage of the outstanding views. The undulating glass walls guarantee that the exterior landscape is framed and captured at every turn to exploit the experience of living within the natural environment. Block out and semi-sheer curtaining have also been included in the bedroom to dull the light when required, and a lovely addition to the outside deck is the netted hammock-like balustrades that provide safety and the opportunity to relax in style.

The budget for this project was modest but, with careful and creative design, Liminal has achieved a million-dollar result. Using timber off-cuts, as opposed to continuous boards, was one solution in helping to stretch finances with no compromise to design. Challenges such as the differing thicknesses of the stained Tasmanian oak that clads the walls became a sensational textural inclusion and, to maximise light and complement the low-energy light fittings, a skylight was included at the heart of the pods. With deference to location Tasmanian products, manufacturers, builders and workers were employed throughout the process and the project can truly be called a Tasmanian venture.

In the design of the pavilions at Freycinet Lodge respect for the spiritual heritage of the location was paramount. The area was historically home to the Oyster Bay tribe and there is a deep connectivity with the land and, accordingly, consultation with Indigenous elders helped set the design agenda for the project. There was also a need for sensitivity when positioning the pavilions within the landscape and Liminal can proudly report that there was minimal disturbance throughout construction, no land was cleared and even the decks were built around the vegetation.

There is no doubt that the new pavilions at Freycinet Lodge will become a must-visit destination for overseas travellers, visitors from Australia's mainland and the local population. The project is an excellent representation of thoughtful and creative design and Liminal has proved once again that it can deliver world-class, Australian-centric design that makes its mark.

above—The bedroom has been designed with luxury in mind and the curved glass walls afford outstanding views of the landscape and water