

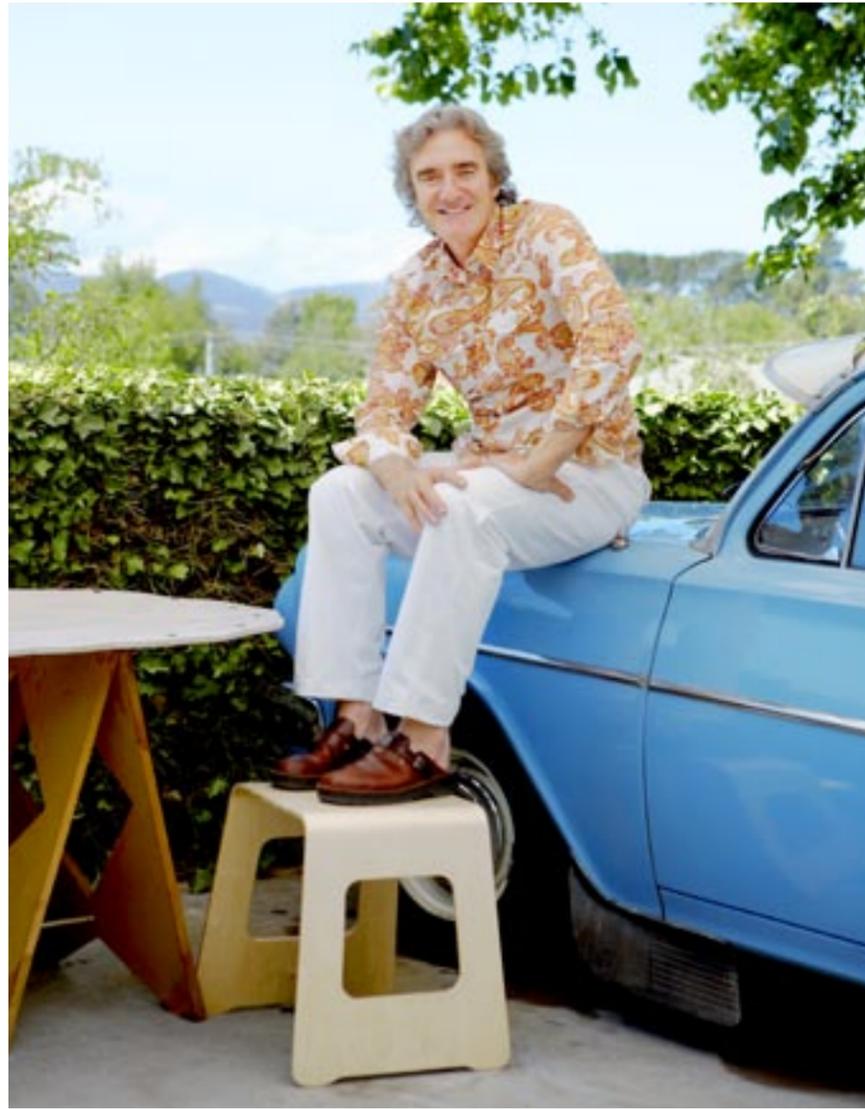


# WELCOME TO MY WORLD

This eccentric Hobart building does double-duty as a home and B&B – all with a touch of cool.

STORY AMANDA DUCKER | PHOTOGRAPHY NICK WATT

The fortress-like facade of The Last Villa is made of local sandstone. The entrance of the former garage has been filled in with hand-glazed Spanish ceramics. Tiles from City Tiler. **For Where to Buy, see page 202.**



**'I could have ripped the guts out of the building, but that wouldn't have been in the original spirit of the place. I feel I am a custodian for the future.'**

STEVEN LAST



**Great form**

Formply – a laminated plywood material – is most commonly seen as formwork for concrete. At The Last Villa, however, it's been used extensively to build kitchen cabinetry, bedheads and frames, shelves and even walls. 'It's easy to work with,' says homeowner-architect Steven Last, who admires the material's strength, cost-effectiveness and minimalist, industrial effect.



**N**ow we are going to Barcelona," says Steven Last, leading the way from the Parisian-style penthouse of his multi-level residence to an apartment on the third floor. "This is my private retreat when I think I'd like to live in Spain," he explains, opening the door to a bright, warm space that reveals a splash of Catalan enchantment in harbourside Hobart.

Such eclectic richness is typical of The Last Villa, the unique building in which this architect lives, works and offers a stylish sideline in boutique accommodation. He has just completed a 10-year restoration of the local landmark, which now comprises six studio-style apartments over six levels, each with a different theme. Steven may choose to live in any of these on any particular day, depending on his whims and current guest list.

The house dates from the 1940s and Steven believes it was inspired by the work of the highly individual Spanish architect Antoni Gaudi. Ostensibly built as a garage, to get around postwar building restrictions, it was constructed mainly from reclaimed materials.

"The man who built it, Taffee Patterson, was very creative," says Steven. "This is a classic early example of recycling and adaptive re-use. Brass bedframes >

**ABOVE** Steven Last with his classic 1962 EJ Holden. Stool from Ikea.

**OPPOSITE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** The penthouse kitchen features modern appliances alongside original joinery. Many pieces for the 'Barcelona' apartment were bought at auction. An untitled print by Kate Davidson hangs above a timber sculpture. Native blooms from Salamanca Market. This velvet and chrome chair dates from the 1960s. **For Where to Buy, see page 202.**



### Living small

The owner runs his practice, The Last Architects, from a reclaimed shed on the lowest level (pictured right). Although just 28m<sup>2</sup> it's a fully equipped living space, with built-in storage and a fold-out bed. "It's my eco-office," says Steven, "but it could also be a module for a low-cost coastal retreat". This secluded space and its adjoining deck sometimes morph into a party zone. "At night, it can feel like a little Cuban bar on the beach."

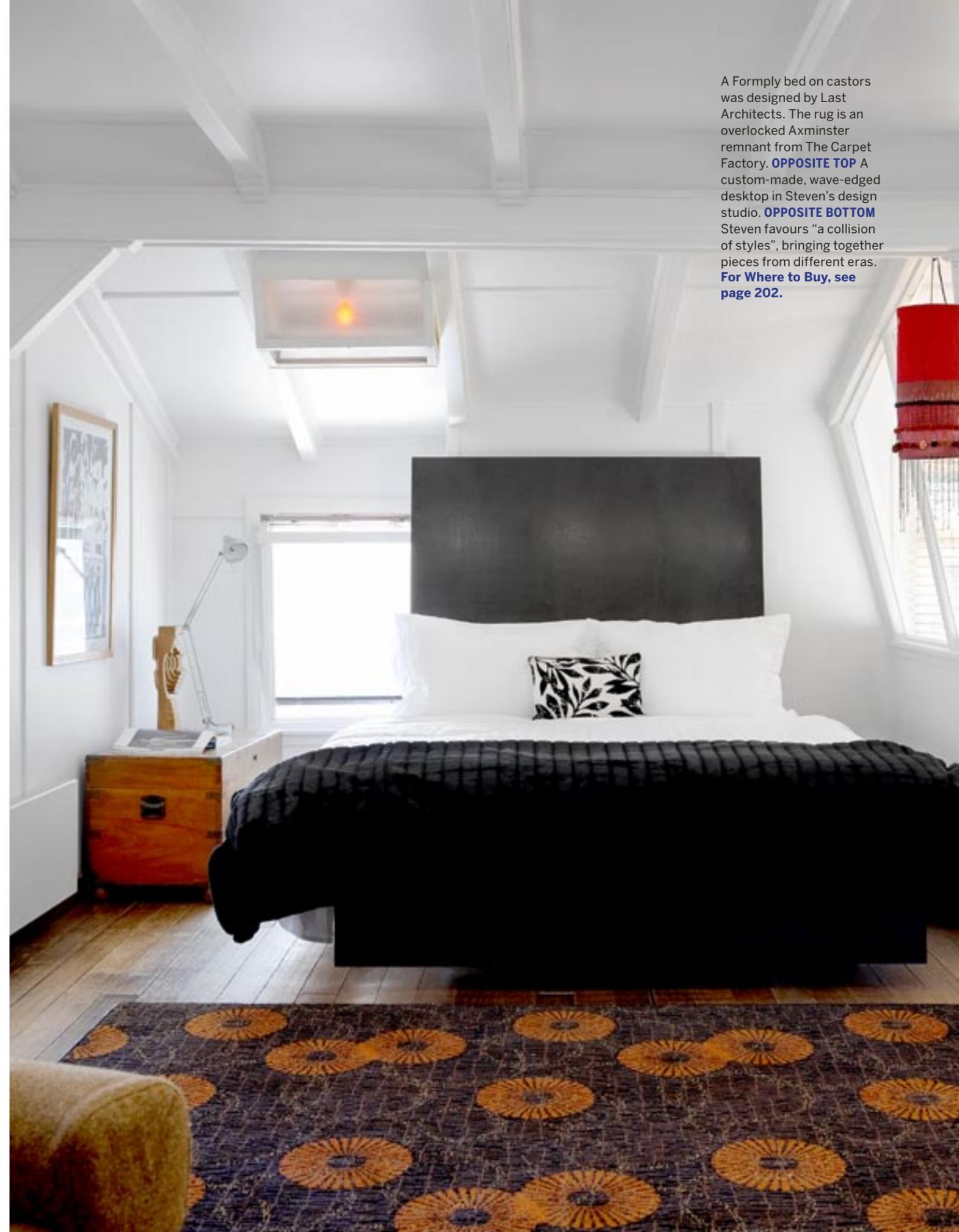


### 'I knew small spaces would be the way of the future.' STEVEN LAST

< were used as reinforcement, for example. External columns are sewer pipes filled with concrete to become the main structural support. So inventive."

The Last Villa reveals little from the street but promises much - its ziggurat-style facade and the eye-catching glazed tiles inspire great curiosity. For decades passers-by have asked, "What's behind the wall?". Steven did the same when he first saw it, at the age of 18. Many years later, when he saw a newspaper ad offering an "unusual apartment" for lease, he knew it would have to be this address. He rented the penthouse for less than a year before buying the whole building.

The decade-long renovation has included full rewiring, plumbing upgrades, and new fittings and fixtures throughout. The kitchens and bathrooms retain selected original components, kept for their character. Some of the north-facing windows, which overlook the Derwent River, were replaced by french doors and Juliet >



A Formply bed on castors was designed by Last Architects. The rug is an overlooked Axminster remnant from The Carpet Factory. **OPPOSITE TOP** A custom-made, wave-edged desktop in Steven's design studio. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM** Steven favours "a collision of styles", bringing together pieces from different eras. **For Where to Buy, see page 202.**

## Villa extracts

Steven Last has created more than a home at The Last Villa. It's a world unto itself, providing him with a personal enclave for home, work and play, as well as a secondary income stream from short- and medium-term boutique accommodation. Just as a biographer inhabits the life of his subject, so Steven seems to channel the visionary spirit of the building's creator, Taffee Patterson, making him the perfect guardian for this residence. "I feel like a custodian for the future," says Steven. The more time he spends there, the more it inspires his own work, he says. Having discovered that his streetfront wall provides an acoustic buffer, loads of privacy and a strong sculptural element, as well as generating much curiosity, he has worked the concept into several beach house designs. For information on accommodation at The Last Villa, go to [thelastvilla.com.au](http://thelastvilla.com.au).



< balconies. Across all levels, a classic European apartment treatment – including white walls, exposed rafters and floorboards, part of an aesthetic that values beauty and integrity over perfection – has produced a series of elegant and original capsules for living.

"I knew that small spaces would be the way of the future," says Steven. "Spanish and Japanese cultures' use of space is of major importance when I think about sustainability and our carbon footprints."

"This place is also the most economical overseas experience I've had," Steven adds. "I close the door and walk into multiple levels of European living!" **H&G Last Architects, Sandy Bay, Tasmania; (03) 6225 2337 or [www.lastarchitects.com.au](http://www.lastarchitects.com.au).**

**ABOVE** Potted geraniums bloom on north-facing Juliet balconies at the rear of The Last Villa. **LEFT** These vinyl and timber armchairs offer a comfortable perch for contemplating the Derwent River. The rug, an overlooked Axminster remnant from The Carpet Factory, is a cost-effective flooring solution. **For Where to Buy, see page 202.**



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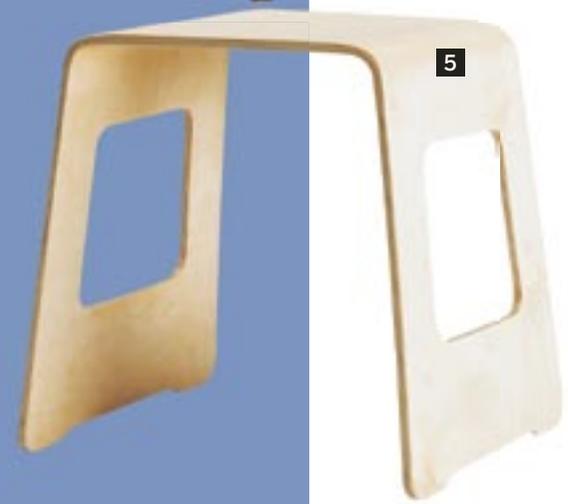
## Get the look

Recreate Steve's worldly style by mixing antiques and contemporary pieces. Timber finishes and brightly coloured accessories add life to a crisp white scheme.

**1** Michelle steel and glass chandelier with amber crystals, \$495, Beacon Lighting; 131 595 or [www.beaconlighting.com.au](http://www.beaconlighting.com.au).  
**2** Sanela velvet cushion, \$20, Ikea; (02) 8002 0400 or [www.ikea.com.au](http://www.ikea.com.au).

**3** Tile Bazaar wool-blend rug (170x240cm) in Earth, \$1799, Designer Rugs; (02) 9550 9933 or [www.designerrugs.com.au](http://www.designerrugs.com.au).  
**4** Classic Art 205 chrome-plated steel

chaise longue with leather upholstery, \$1724, King Furniture; (02) 9516 5466 or [www.kingfurniture.com.au](http://www.kingfurniture.com.au).  
**5** Benjamin plywood stool, \$29, Ikea. **H&G**



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