HERE

GUIDE TO

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BUILDING

2023

As a design magazine, we're often guilty of focussing on the result rather than the process – of skipping happily from concept design to finished result.

But as anyone who's been through it knows, the year – or five – in between those stages can be expensive and stressful. It can also be deeply rewarding.

For our first ever Guide to Building, we wanted to focus on the building process, detailing how a few favourite houses came to be, and delve into some current issues with industry experts. And, we've noted a few things we've had on our want list for a while now. We hope you enjoy it.

CONTENTS

CASE STUDIES

Want List

The Here team spends a lot of time in other people's houses, whose architects and owners have assiduously researched and thought through a range of solutions and ideas. When it came to making the Here Guide to Building, we thought we'd rip off – cough, seek inspiration in – some of the best things we've seen recently.

TAPS

Chromablock
woodmelbourne.com.au

A collaboration between cult Melburnian bathroom-fittings designer Wood Melbourne and New Zealander Georgina McWhirter, the Chromablock series of taps and handles is an experiment in colour, based on the work of Corbusier and Kahn. Made from acrylic, they're beautiful and fun.

WOODBURNERS

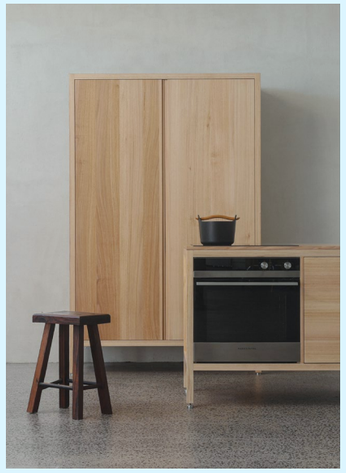
Various international studies have concluded that burning wood to heat your house is, broadly, carbon neutral. In urban areas, you'll need an an Ultra-Low Emission Woodburner. EECA has a very handy online list of approved woodburners, in which you can rank every burner by efficiency. Some favourites?

Tropicair Duo: An impressive 0.1g of emissions per kilogram of wood. Designed and made in Canterbury, it features two chambers.
Warmington Studio and **Pyro Classic:** For looks. Both are designed and made in New Zealand.
Bosca Limit 380: A compact size and wide viewing window – flames being an important, though purely aesthetic, consideration.

KITCHEN

Casett kitchens
casett.co

There's something lovely about a kitchen system that behaves more like furniture than fitting. Patrick Loo and Sajeev Ruthramoorthy are highly regarded New Zealand architects: in 2021, they launched Casett, a kitchen system made from timber (they've since been joined by cabinet maker Moritz Stewart). With its elegant legs and lack of a toekick, the design has a clean line that feels suitably loose. Casett is made in New Zealand from local materials and comes in two ranges. Fundamentals is based on a module system and the Premium range is much more customisable. Both are available in a fetching range of coloured wood stains and a clear matt finish.



SINGLE GAS HOB

Pitt Azuma
kouzina.co.nz

We apologise, but there are some tasks – namely, cooking with a wok – that gas just does best. May we suggest a single Pitt Azuma gas hob as the perfect companion to your induction hob? Beautifully engineered, completely minimal and able to be set directly into an appropriate bench surface.

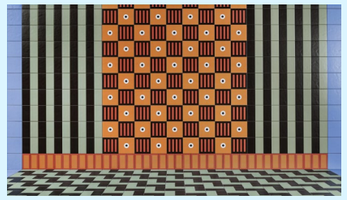
TILES

Inax
materialspace.co.nz/inax

Inax tiles were developed in 1924 as part of a collaboration with Frank Lloyd Wright on the Imperial Hotel in Japan. With organic textures and a range of shapes, they're warmly elegant: we are particularly taken with the Patino collection's earthy, burnt tones, and the muted pastels of the Plain 50 series.

Mattonelle Margherita
europeanceramics.co.nz

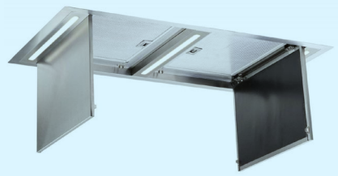
Mutina's Mattonelle Margherita tiles are designed by the French artist Natalie di Pasquier around a colourful duality: a range of simple, minimalist tiles contrasted with exuberant pattern. Comprising of 41 different patterns, designed by hand – 27 graphics and six plain elements – they're graphic, with a subtly mid-century feel.



EXTRACTOR

Schweigen
schweigen.co.nz

Pity the chef stuck beneath the power pack extractor, the sound of the motor whirring above them. Enter the Schweigen Quiet extractor range, in which the motor is outside. Your standard extractor pulls steam up, then pushes it along a pipe. Schweigen just pulls from the top. Silently.



EV CHARGER

Evnex
evnex.com

Designed and manufactured in New Zealand, the Evnex home charger is compatible with all EV car brands, and – importantly – comes in a range of fetching colours. Aesthetics aside, the Evnex app tracks your charging emissions and is also solar-ready, allowing you to use excess power from the roof.

INDUCTION HOB

Gaggenau Vario
gaggenau.co.nz

Remember the delight of turning an actual dial to control your heat? While we wholeheartedly approve of induction, we also struggle with the digital nature of many. After extensive research, we can advise that the Gaggenau Vario hob is the only induction hob in this country available with a dial.

SHADE

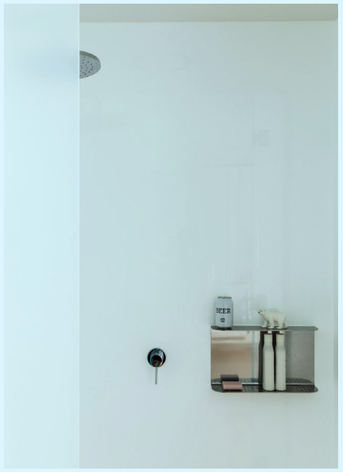
Canopi
canopishade.com

The New Zealand climate necessitates cover: allow us to introduce the Canopi wave shade, which is retractable and very pretty, custom-made from commercial-grade fabric and stainless-steel componentry in Dargaville. The shades can be attached to pergolas, poles, decks and walls.

BATHROOM

henrybrooks.co.nz
plumbline.co.nz
platinumhg.co.nz
cleancleanclean.co.nz

Architect Mike Hartley's own bathroom (Here 13) features off-the-shelf components and an acrylic shower liner. "While not a beautiful tiled environment of loveliness, it does the trick for our family," he says. The key is going full-height, up-speccing the hardware, and doubling the plasterboard for acoustic reasons. Hartley specified a standard shower tray and a custom full-height shower liner from Henry Brooks, a Progetto Tube shower column from Plumbline and full-height obscured glass door from Platinum. You could add a shower caddy from CleanCleanClean.



SINK

Perrin & Rowe
inres.co.nz

There are few things more important than a very large kitchen sink – particularly if you only have one. Make sure your sink is big enough to take the oven tray, but isn't so deep it takes too long to fill up. We like this one from Perrin & Rowe – fully insulated to provide sound deadening and thermal performance.

PANTRY

Blum Space Tower
blum.com

You will never lose half a bag of rice down the back of the pantry again. Featuring fully extendable pull-out drawers with full visibility of their contents, the Space Tower makes the most of every corner of space. Note: can be used anywhere you need good storage, not just the kitchen.

TOWEL RAIL

Eskimo Gordon
eskimoheat.com.au

Until the explosion of vertical heated towel rails a few years ago, the idea of the electric heated towel rail had barely changed since the 1980s. Trouble is, most vertical rails only take one towel. Enter the Eskimo Gordon, which comes in two sizes (four towels, or eight), and heats towels in a fraction of the time.

HANDLES

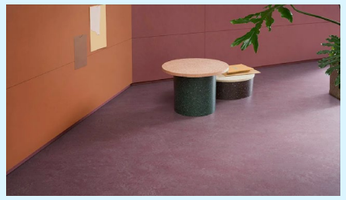
Ote
ote.design

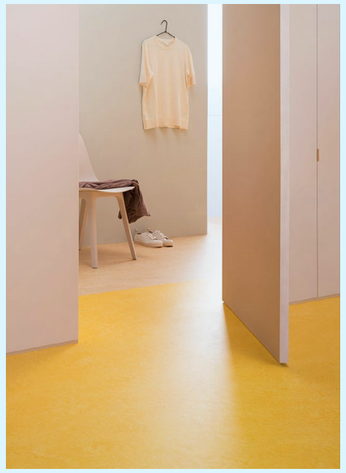
Pac Studio's Sarosh Mulla and fellow architect James Pearce usually design whole houses. Of late, they've developed several ranges of hand-made cabinetry handles, designed to last for generations and customised for you and your home. Pictured: brass and kauri handle.

FLOORING

Marmoleum
forbo.com

Linoleum – and Marmoleum in particular – is having a bit of a moment. It's hard-wearing, made from natural materials and adds a welcome jolt of colour. In the case of Marmoleum, it's also climate positive. We're taken with the Walton range – solid blocks of rich colour including Eggplant and Bottle Green.

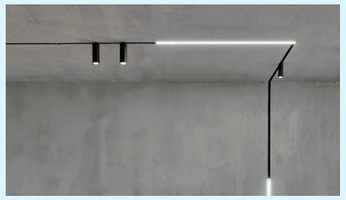




LIGHTING

Flos Tracking Magnet
ecc.co.nz

The Flos Tracking Magnet system is both elegant and minimal, freeing the lights from bulky power units and allowing total flexibility of placement via an electromagnetic connection. Available in recessed, surface and suspended versions.



SHOWER BASE

Cosentino
cosentino.com

More in standard componentry: for the feel of stone without the cost, Cosentino has released C Bath, a standardised shower base available in both Dekton and Silestone, and in a range of great colours.

LAUNDRY

Bosch
bosch.co.nz

The Bosch i-Dos system automatically measures your laundry liquid precisely – saving both water and detergent in the process. As an added bonus, the Serie 8 washer also comes with smart connectivity.

HEATING

Arroll
centralheating.co.nz

With heat-pump technology, running water-driven radiators is now an economical – and delightfully warm – choice. We like Arroll's range of traditionally minded cast-iron radiators: the Peerless or the Edwardian are good-looking, and a little plainer than most.

Brush Work

Paint is one of the easiest – and cheapest – ways to bring personality to a new build or renovation. But choosing colour inevitably involves more than just a couple of shades: here, we offer a little advice.

Palette 1: Dark

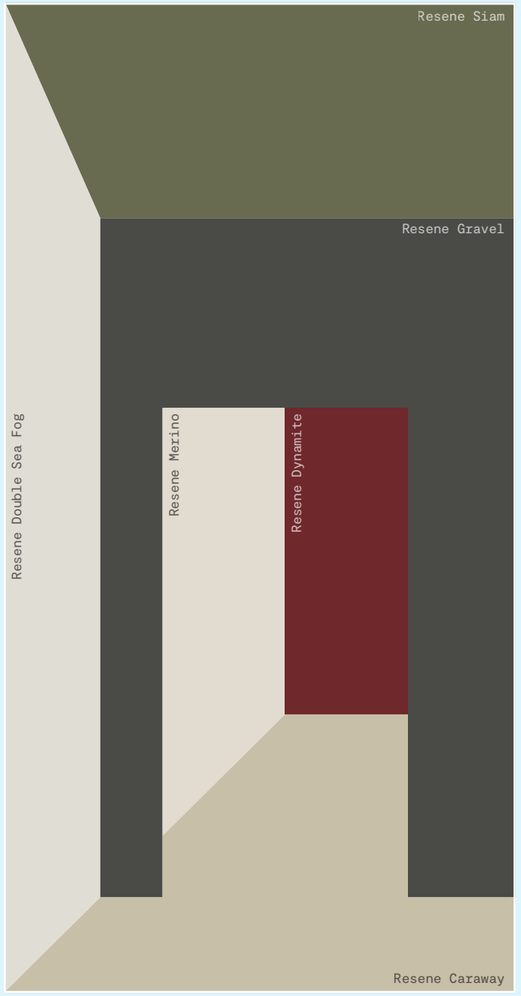
A dark palette is neutral and hard-working. Much like white, dark colours will change depending on the strength of the sun or the amount of shade – dark colours can appear grey, brown or even purple depending on the light. The key is the base colour: a paint with warm undertones will create a different look to a colour with a blue base.

With that in mind, you might like to think about gloss levels – matt versus gloss, or a mixture of the two within the same colour to bring out details. Also think about whether you paint different parts subtly different colours: doors and trim dark, with weatherboards a little lighter. Consider off-setting with a warm white or a jolt of colour – and specify Resene CoolColours to keep the paint and cladding cooler, and help them last longer.

Palette 2: Neutral

Whites and neutrals are highly reflective and will make rooms appear larger and brighter. But be careful: if there's a lot of sun – inside or out – a crisp, highly reflective white will be glaring and will dirty easily. A colour with a red or yellow base will tone things down – while still bringing an airy feel to even the darkest of rooms.

Even then, depending on the light, you might like to consider playing with half or even quarter tones of the same Resene shade in different rooms, or even different colours – if brighter, go with more pigment, and if darker, be careful to choose a colour with a warm base so the room doesn't feel cold. Equally, a low-sheen Resene SpaceCote paint will make the paint look muddier and denser, while glossier finishes like Resene Enamacryl will make it appear cleaner and brighter.

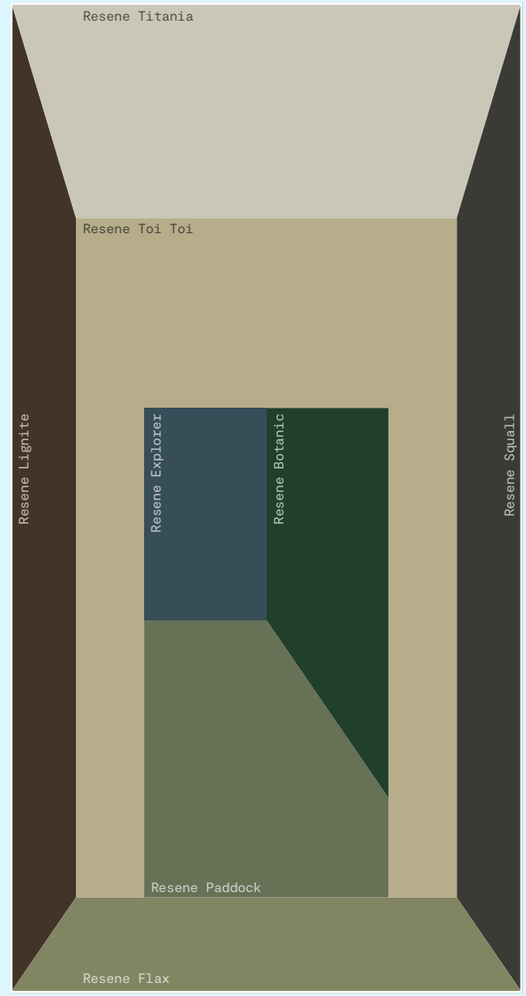


Palette 3: Character

There are many paint schemes around for character homes, and they're fabulous – if a little busy for our taste. Equally, seeing the emergence of mono-coloured character villas and bungalows in formerly colourful suburbs does seem a little sad: they were never just one colour. The trick is to choose colours that feel sympathetic and create enough interest – without coming over fussy.

Consider the fretwork and detailing: do you want to pick those out in a different colour, or possibly just a different gloss level? Consider half or quarter tones of the same Resene colour, used in a variety of ways – inside and out – to create interest, and colour. Greys and greens are an excellent way of making the house feel the right age and stage, inside or out, while a judicious heritage red from the Resene Heritage colour range will always add a welcome touch. And if you're going to use white – and fair enough – make sure it's a Resene white with a warm base.

Colours are as close as printed process allows - always view a physical sample before making your final choice.



Palette 4: Landscape

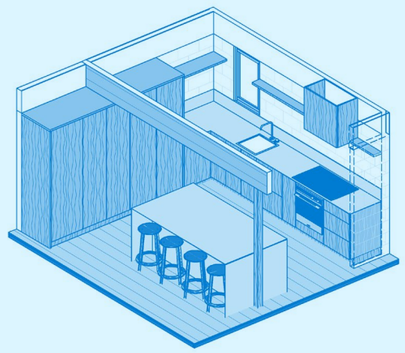
The New Zealand landscape is a strong presence in our architecture, and one reason why many of our new buildings take a recessive approach. Many councils have guidelines available for an indication of what might be appropriate in your area using references from the Resene BS5252 collection. But a palette tuned to the landscape can produce a surprising variety of colours.

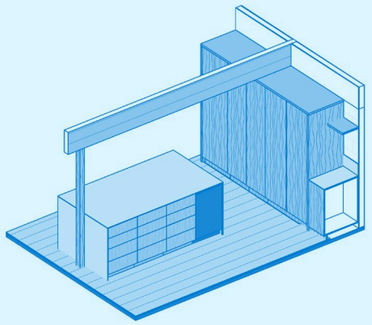
In general, choose intermediate Resene colours that seem to have more than one thing going on – colours that will shift and change depending on the time of day and available sun – and avoid gloss finishes. Green is an obvious place to start, from tussocky and yellow to rich and deep. Resene Pitch Black wood stain is an excellent way of ensuring houses are recessive. Or opt for black, slightly faded, with a touch of brown. Murky browns and beiges, or even muddy greys, are a great way to connect with the landscape, both inside and out. And finally, don't forget elegant grey-blues to keep things fresh.

Test Kitchen

Blum's kitchen test drive allows you to experiment with and experience your design in a 1:1 scale mock-up.

Story by Harriet Cowie





For the past few years, my husband and I have been chipping away at renovations of our Ōtautahi home. Designed by Don Cowey in the late 1960s, it has all the telltale signs of the modernist movement – good and bad. Our first task was double glazing, then we dealt with the leaky bathrooms, a dodgy window seat and a draughty home office. But that's all been a warm-up for the main event: the L-shaped galley kitchen. (We've been helped in all this with plans by Johnstone Callaghan Architects.)

After three years of making family meals in the narrow, steamy space, I am done. Though we know what we want to achieve – an open-plan design, new island and extra storage – landing on the layout has been challenging. My complete inability to envisage architectural drawings doesn't help, but there are also the questions of spacing, depths and functionality. Enter the Blum kitchen test drive.

Free at Blum's Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland and Ōtautahi Christchurch showrooms, the service allows you to interact with a full-scale mock-up of your design. You send the team your plan, and they set it out for you to experiment with the format and functionality. Immediately upon seeing our proposed kitchen, my primary concern – that the space between the island and the bench was too narrow – was laid to rest. Walking through the layout with Blum specification consultant Kate Ward, we discussed ways to improve efficiency and keep costs down.

Kate suggested that the two Space Towers (versatile pantries with pull-outs) could merge into one. Instead of 12 drawers on the island, nine would offer the same storage volume with fewer materials at a lower cost. We incorporated hidden internal storage, resolved the awkward corner cupboard, and added the Servo-Drive electrical opening system to the bin drawer to minimise grubby handprints. I took Post-it notes labelled with everything in our existing kitchen and stuck them on the cabinets to ensure it would all have a home. Honestly, aside from my husband and I arguing about where the wooden serving boards should go (top pantry shelf, all sussed), the process was seamless. We made sensible changes, found some cost-effective solutions and got the peace of mind we were on the right track. Now we just need to build it.

Book a test drive at a Blum showroom near you
6 Avenger Crescent, Wigram, Ōtautahi Christchurch;
621 Rosebank Road, Avondale, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland
blum.com

Opposite: Original modelling for the Ōtautahi kitchen renovation.
This page: Plans are trialled and tweaked in the showroom.

Window of Opportunity

Comfort and energy-efficiency are at the heart of APL's innovative thermal glazing systems.

Interview by Simon Farrell-Green
Illustrations by Alex Scott

Last November, the first of a series of major changes to the building code came in: over the course of 2023, new buildings in every part of the country will be required to meet higher standards of thermal performance. In short, buildings in more temperate parts of the country are now required to perform better than the buildings in colder regions did under the old code – and those in cooler regions are now subject to considerably more stringent standards than before.

The impact of this cannot be overstated. For decades, New Zealand homes have been notoriously cold. Now, they're required to perform at an international standard, which will make them warmer (or cooler), healthier and more energy efficient. The code ensures all that by requiring each aspect of a building to perform better – and windows are one of the most crucial elements in keeping a building warm.

For home-owners and architects, it's now not enough to just opt for double-glazing; a sophisticated suite of technology is required to make sure you comply with the code. So we reached out to Dave Burggraaf, senior design engineer at window systems supplier APL Window Solutions – which you'll know through its brands Altherm, Vantage and First – for a deep dive into the new rules.

Here: So what's actually changing?
Dave Burggraaf: The New Zealand Building Code (NZBC) clause H1 provides for the efficient use of energy and sets physical conditions for energy performance of certain buildings. The changes to H1 that affect glazing are an increase to the minimum R value of the entire window or door unit. The R value is a measure of how well the building element (a window, for example) resists the conductive flow of heat from one side to the other. In winter, the heat wants to escape and in summer it wants to get in. A higher R value product provides more resistance to this heat flow.

H: How much more efficient do our homes have to be?
DB: The previous code set a minimum level of R0.26 and slightly higher for the colder parts of the country. The new regulations apply to all new homes, and require the minimum R values to be R0.46 in the more temperate areas and R0.50 in the colder areas. So we see a very large jump in requirements for specialty glazing and thermally improved window and door frames.

H: Why have the regulations changed?
DB: The changes are part of the larger initiative to get New Zealand to carbon neutral by 2050. There have been changes to NZBC H1 before, and we see future changes coming sooner and with bigger steps on the way to achieving carbon neutral.

H: Where does it place us now in global terms?
DB: The recent changes to H1 place New Zealand about in line with international standards. This is an impressive lift in performance, keeping in mind that we don't see the extreme hot or cold of other countries.

H: Where do I start to work out what level of performance I'm going to need?
DB: Start with the NZBC clause H1/AS1: if your building is less than 300 square metres (which is the majority of new houses) and glazing is less than 30 percent of the total wall area, there are tables within the acceptable solution

that set out minimum R values depending on where you live. If your building is larger than 300 square metres or glazing takes up more than 30 percent of the wall area, there are other ways to establish minimum performance levels, such as calculating or modelling where thermal performance levels are averaged over all joinery units.

We've developed an online tool that will tell you which zone you fall into. Climate zones 1 to 4 require a minimum of R0.46 and climate zones 5 and 6 a minimum of R0.50. There are special conditions for opaque doors, and skylights require a higher R value again.

H: What do we stand to gain?
DB: Any thermal-performance improvements to the building envelope help to reduce the energy required for heating and cooling, and the ThermalHeart+ products will certainly contribute to these savings.

H: How have you met those new requirements?
DB: We have produced larger platform frames capable of taking much thicker glazing units – up to triple glazing if needed. Within the window profiles, we have incorporated thermal isolator strips which prevent energy transfer across the frames, resulting in higher R values.

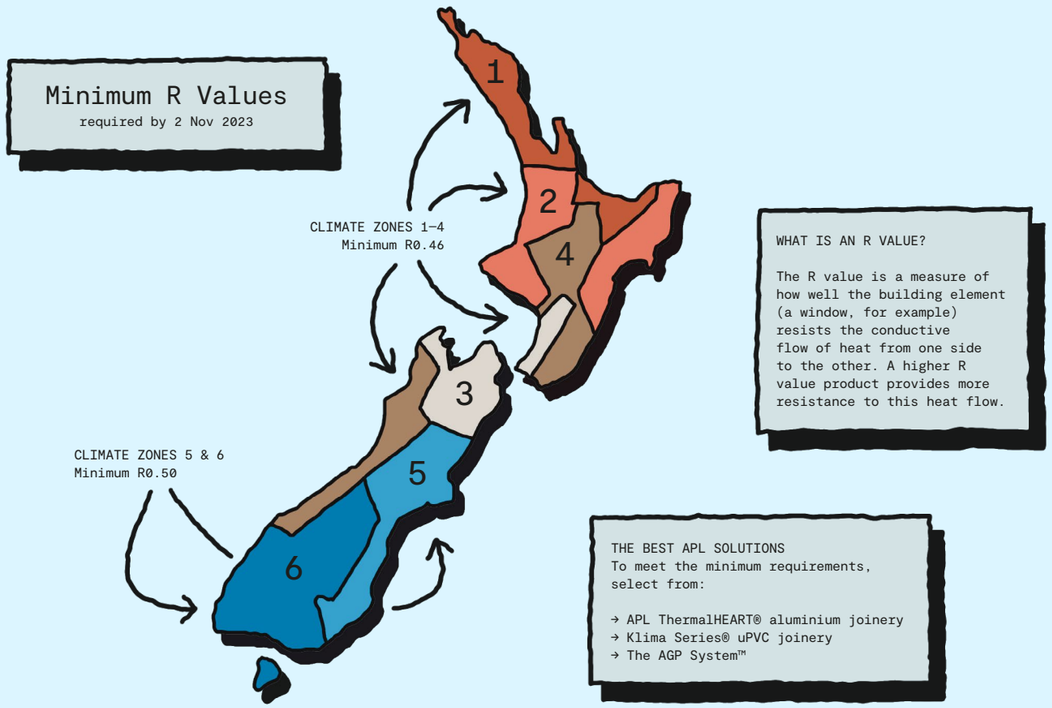
Previously, window performance has emphasised glass, or the frame: with ThermalHeart+ all the parts of the window including glass and frame work as a high-performance unit. The new system adds multiple innovations to achieve higher weather performance, better acoustics, improved airtightness, longer-term durability of materials and enhanced structural strength.

A key component to improving energy efficiency is airtightness. The ThermalHEART joinery ranges adopt new methods of sash and panel sealing to ensure the tightest fit for sashes and panels while remaining easily operable. Along with lower energy bills, benefits include enhanced internal surface temperatures (especially with the Centrafix installation option). Finally, the AGP System for glazing helps limit overheating in summer and retains heat in winter – this reduces the energy needed for heating and cooling.

H: What do they actually do?
DB: It's quite simple: the combination of thermally improved frames and insulated glass units with low-emissivity coating; and a very efficient spacer system with the gap between panes filled with argon gas gets us across the compliance line easily – with the capacity to achieve higher R values if required. With Centrafix (see opposite), we can do even better.

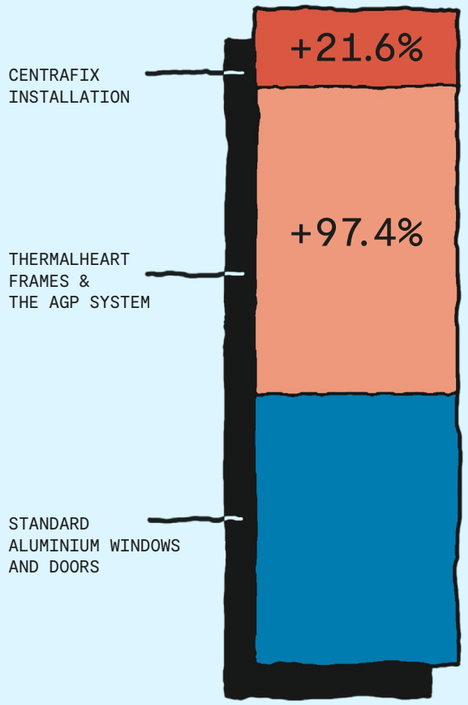
We've configured our new three-tier ThermalHEART product range to satisfy any code requirement – up to and including a Passive House variant. This demonstrates the breadth of capability of the new systems now and into the future.

ThermalHeart+ by APL thermalheartplus.co.nz



All the Elements Align

Additional thermal performance improvement*



* For full technical details and references visit thermalheartplus.co.nz

You can streamline design and enhance thermal performance in the process with Centrafix.

Centrafix is a window installation system that enables the window frame to be recessed back into the building wall. Which might seem like a small thing, except it means that all the insulation elements of the wall fall generally into line. This is a good thing when it comes to thermal performance.

The acceptable solution of the New Zealand Building Code requires windows to be positioned out near the cladding line, and – for reasons of weathertightness – over a drained and ventilated cavity. Generally, that cavity is full of cold, externally sourced air, and it places the frame of the window out of line with the other insulating parts of the building. "The offset between the two creates a thermal bridge, allowing the cold air to circulate and the heat to escape," says Burggraaf. By pulling the window back, you close the thermal bridge, and bring all the insulating elements together in a line.

It might sound simple, but to pull a window inside the wall, you usually have to install complicated, bespoke flashings. With Centrafix, APL has developed an extended outer facing that maintains the connection with the cladding, and seals off air spaces around the window frame to prevent thermal bridging, while also catching and draining water.

Centrafix has been appraised by Branz as an acceptable solution to the building code, and has also achieved Codemark certification – creating a pathway for easy compliance, with no extra consent required.

The result is a window installation that can improve the thermal performance of a window system by up to 20 percent*. But there's another upside: the joinery sits flush against the cladding, while the body of the window is recessed for a cleaner, modern look.

Solar Power

As the price of solar panels has come down, and their efficiency has gone up, installing them has become something of a no-brainer – assuming you have the budget, that is. We put some burning questions to Lightforce's general manager of customers, Joel Bowden.

Interview by Simon Farrell-Green

Here: What does it cost?
Joel Bowden: The main consideration is whether you want a panel-only system or a panel and battery. Panel-only starts at $11,000 including GST, and between $10,000 and $25,000 would capture most panel systems. An entry-level system with a battery is $20,000 to $40,000.

H: Has the price come down or has inflation caught up?
JB: A bit of both. The price of solar came down materially from 2019 and there's more competition in the market.

H: How many panels do I need, and how do I work that out?
JB: It's really about what you want to achieve. About a quarter of our customers are doing it for environmental reasons and they want to offset as much as they can. Most people have a financial tilt on it – so we'll base the size of the system on their daytime and nightly load. The key is getting that balance of generation and consumption right – the closer you get to 100 percent consumption the better. You want to offset the daytime rates as much as possible, but you don't want to do so much that you're exporting to the grid.

H: Why not?
JB: There's an industry term, "the levelised cost of energy", which is the lifetime cost of producing a kilowatt hour of energy. If it costs you 20c per kilowatt hour to produce and you sell it for 17c, it's not a great model. With batteries, we can level that off a bit – but then we need to make sure there's enough generation to power them.

H: Are batteries worth it?
JB: There's two schools of thought. There's an economic argument around keeping what you generate on site – but there is a reasonable payback period. We're seeing another argument for it now, which is resilience – you only need to speak to people in Hawke's Bay who had six to 10 days without power earlier this year. A lot of people don't realise that in the event of an outage, your solar panels drop out too – you can't risk power going back into the grid. But with a hybrid inverter and a battery, your solar will continue to operate.

H: Do you need a consent?
JB: No, you don't. For roof-mounted systems, there's no need for a resource consent or a building consent. You do need approval from your lines company, and there are some specific exclusions, such as character zones or site-specific covenants, which may trigger a consent.

H: When's the best time to do it?
JB: We always look at the condition of the roof. When you're putting on solar, the panels have a warranty of 25-30 years and you don't want to move them – so you might want to think about that first. Other than that, the best time to install solar panels was yesterday. There's been a massive increase in quality and reliability – panel efficiencies are still improving, but we're not seeing the huge increase we used to see.

H: Like laptops in the 90s.
JB: That's a good analogy. The price of panels has come down, but the cost of power is continuing to increase. By some estimates, domestic power bills could double in the next five years due to the investment required in the grid.

H: What's the relationship with EVs?
JB: Many smart chargers can now assess when the best price will be – so with solar, you're either using excess solar production or you're charging at the cheapest time. Eventually – and we're not quite there yet – you'll be able to charge up your car, then use that to power your home.

Lightforce: lightforce.co.nz

1

Case Study

WAIMATARURU

Project type
New-build

Designer
Pac Studio and
Kristina Pickford

Builder
Percival
Construction

Floor size
350m²

Cost
Undisclosed

Timeframe
30 months

Construction
Timber portals

Cladding
Lawsons Cypress

Flooring
Timber portals

Location
Ōtama Beach,
Coromandel
Peninsula

Story by Simon Farrell-Green
Photographs by Sam Hartnett

2

To build a house like Waimataruru – our Best House Aotearoa 2022, designed by Pac Studio in collaboration with Kristina Pickford – you need a couple of years and a lot of attention to detail. “There’s no tolerance on a house like this,” says Percival Construction’s Damian Percival. “No skirtings, no scotias to hide things, a lot of negative detail. Everything had to be precise and all our vertical lines had to be perfect – everything can be seen.”

The site is undoubtedly beautiful: 10 hectares of regenerating bush on the hill above Ōtama Beach, looking out to Motuhua Point, a view that takes in ocean and rocks, pōhutukawa and islands in the distance. But it was also enormously difficult: there’s a 12-metre fall from one side of the building site to the other, and regenerating bush right up to an existing building platform, which everyone was keen to preserve.

The design sits on firm ground at one end, with a single sheltering roof running down the length of it. The house steps through multiple levels and two different types of foundation: a poured concrete slab at one end, with timber piles at the other, where the building almost floats in the pōhutukawa. “We needed to know exactly where they were going,” says Percival of the foundations, “and that they were correct to the lie of the land, so that when you backfilled your retaining it looked like it had always been there.”

Percival muses that the way the place came together was more like a commercial build than a residential one. They started with the foundations, building from the outside in – the upper foundations first, then the lower, before filling in the middle. Doing it this way, says Percival, meant they were able to work inside the footprint

of the house, preserving the surrounding native bush. They then built scaffolding to match the finished heights of the house, and at the correct levels stepping down the slope, before constructing profiles to work to.

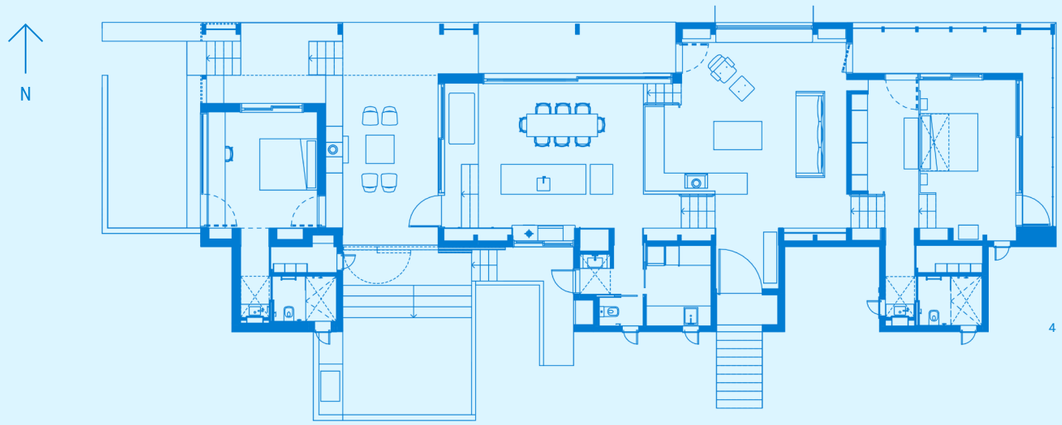
The timber portal frames, so integral to the design, were the most challenging element. Partly constructed off site, with many assembled and bolted on site, they were brought in by truck and craned into place. To get to Ōtama, you drive over the Black Jack Road from the seaside hamlet of Kūaotunu – it's a narrow, winding track with long stretches of gravel. First, the truck delivering a load of portals got stuck at the bottom of the hill, before it was finally towed up by a logging truck.

When it got to the site, tantalisingly close, the delivery truck again got stuck. The portals were left on the beach overnight, with Dean Harris, a longtime member of Percival's team, staying over to keep a watch on them. Eventually, with a crane brought to site, the portals were assembled and fixed in place.

Finishing the house required precision. The ceiling, for instance, is built from tongue-and-groove timber, sitting between the portals with a negative detail and a recessed lighting track – all of which was planned and calculated before a single piece of timber was fitted. To construct the "spine" of eucalyptus cabinetry that runs down the entire southern side of the house, timber panels were delivered to site, cut to size, then disassembled and taken back to Whitianga to be edged.

Not that Percival's complaining. "There were a lot of building techniques," he says, from constructing the floor to finishing the walls and the ceilings. "We all worked on them, and it was great for the apprentices – they got to learn so many different things."

Ask him what else was special, and he refers to owners Kristina Pickford and Michael Wolfe, who worked alongside the builders wherever they could. Using the ancient practice of shou sugi ban, Pickford spent two weeks charring the larch that clads the service rooms on the back of the house to ensure the result was just so. "To have a hands-on client want to be involved and part of the build? That's just so exciting," says Percival. "To see Kristina and Michael working that hard was just amazing."



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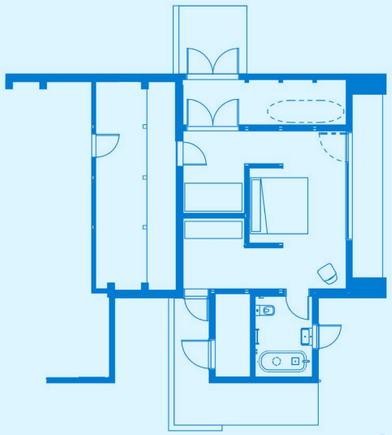

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Images:
1. The spine of eucalyptus cabinetry.
2. Waimataruru seen from Ōtama Beach.
3. The hand-charred larch service rooms.
4. Upper-level floorplan.
5. Lower-level floorplan.
6. Timber portal framing echoes through the home.
7. The cladding is Lawson cypress.
8. An ocean view from the living room.
9. The home nestles into regenerating bush.

This case study was produced in association with: Percival Construction
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1

Project type
New-build

Designer
Rata Fraser of Rata Architecture & Design

Builder
Ben Gommers, Gommers Construction Limited

Floor size
204m²

Cost
$500K–$1 million

Timeframe
12 months

Construction
Pre-cast concrete, steel beams, timber framing.

Cladding
Cedar weather-boards; pre-cast concrete

Flooring
Solid 18mm beech

Lining
Ply and plasterboard

Location
Glen Innes, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland

Case Study

GOMMERS HOUSE

Story by Simon Farrell-Green
Photographs by Barry Tobin

2

"You don't expect it to be here," says builder Ben Gommers of his home in the gentrifying suburb of Glen Innes, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. "I love that – it's a big surprise as you come up the driveway."

Gommers and his wife Jasmine were renting the original state house on the front of the property from his mother, when she suggested he build a house on the back lawn. At the time, he was working for another builder. Building the house was the impetus to go out on his own, so he turned to architect Rata Fraser of Rata Architecture & Design to devise a plan for him.

Fraser's design was simple, with a long north-facing elevation running out to a flat garden. On the ground level, two U-shaped concrete frames define each end of the house, while the upper floor is timber framed, clad in cedar weatherboards. The concrete frames are a strong presence in the house, containing a living area at one end, and a kitchen at the other. In between, there's an airy dining room and a generous void above the stairs that lead to the upper level.

Building it was reasonably straightforward; managing the whole project was another story. "Financially it was hard, seeing how the budget can move around quickly and trying to deal with it. I definitely learned a lot about budgets, which I've carried through into my other jobs," Gommers says.

While the concrete boxes might look like they were poured in situ, the budget didn't stretch that far: they were actually precast, made with 45-degree mitre joints at the end. "I'd never done precast concrete before, but

I really like it. It was a day to stand them up and suddenly you've got walls." There was just enough room on the site to bring the truck up the driveway, and millimetres to spare for the crane, which only just floated over the top of the fence so the panels could be lowered into place.

Structurally, they're held up by a concrete footing, which extends a metre inside the wall. A RibRaft concrete floor sits on top of that, its steel tied into ReidBars in the base of the footing. The top floor of the house and a couple of exposed I-beams hold the whole house together. Initially, Gommers planned to paint all the steelwork dark grey to match the window and door joinery, but when it arrived painted shop-primer red, he liked how it sat with the concrete and timber.

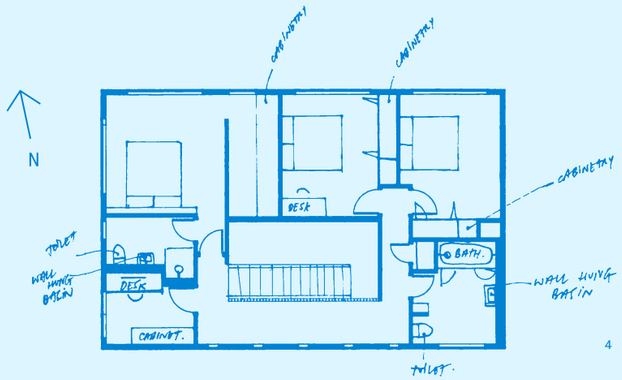
Gommers started work on the place two weeks after his younger daughter was born: nine months later, they moved in, with one functional bathroom, no internal doors and a plywood staircase. He spent several months finishing the place off, including tiling the bathrooms himself – an impressive feat, considering the bathrooms feature whole tiles only.

The morning the new staircase arrived, the family was upstairs, waiting while Gommers and his team hand-winched the feature into place in time for everyone to head out for the day. Left with a few thousand at the end for the kitchen, Gommers designed the cabinetry around Kevin McCloud's principles (prep, cook, mess, dishwasher, return), getting panels made by cutting sheet to size, and assembling it himself.

The house is full of small, carefully thought-out details like this. The floors upstairs are solid 18mm timber from Foreverbeech. They come with a microbevel, which means you lay them and oil them without needing to sand. They wear beautifully and don't feel too precious.

On the inside of the concrete panels, ply-wood-clad walls match the proportions of the concrete slabs and sit perfectly flush. The ply lining downstairs is cut in such a way that whole panels meet corners; Gommers chose to run sheets full-height from the floor, and top each with a 200mm panel. "There's so many ways you can do it," he says, "so you kind of have to make a decision and be confident and stick with it. You might get mixed reviews, but having the confidence to do it is important."

Building his own place – and having to work through details himself on site – gave him the confidence to go out on his own, focussing on architectural builds and renovations. "I'll get the drawings and I see the intent – how it needs to look when it's done. But the way you get there is open to change, so it's easier to build or it's more accurate. I really enjoy that."



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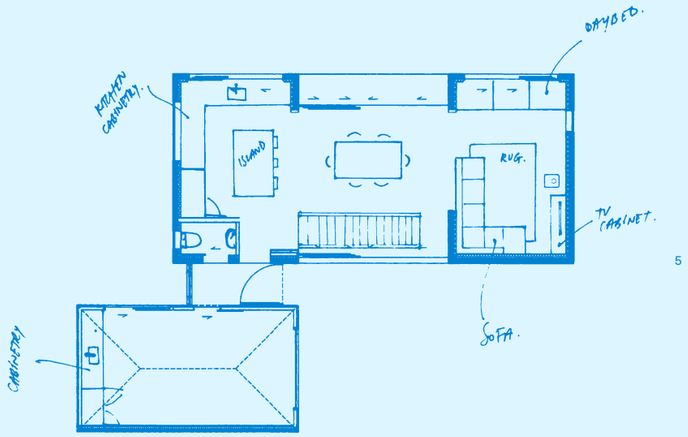

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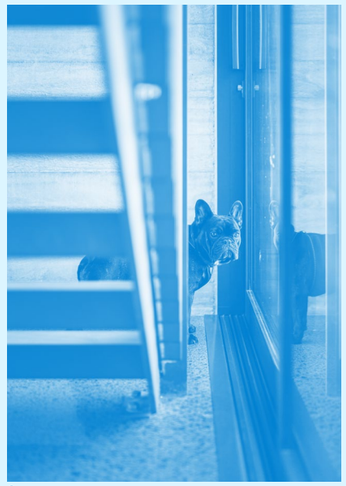
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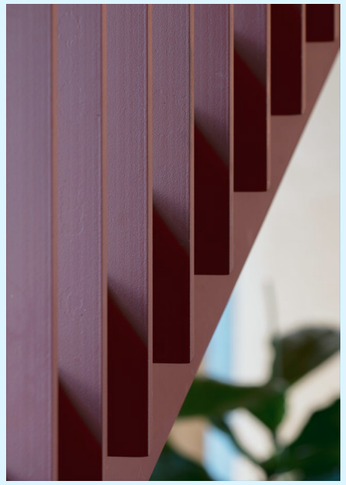
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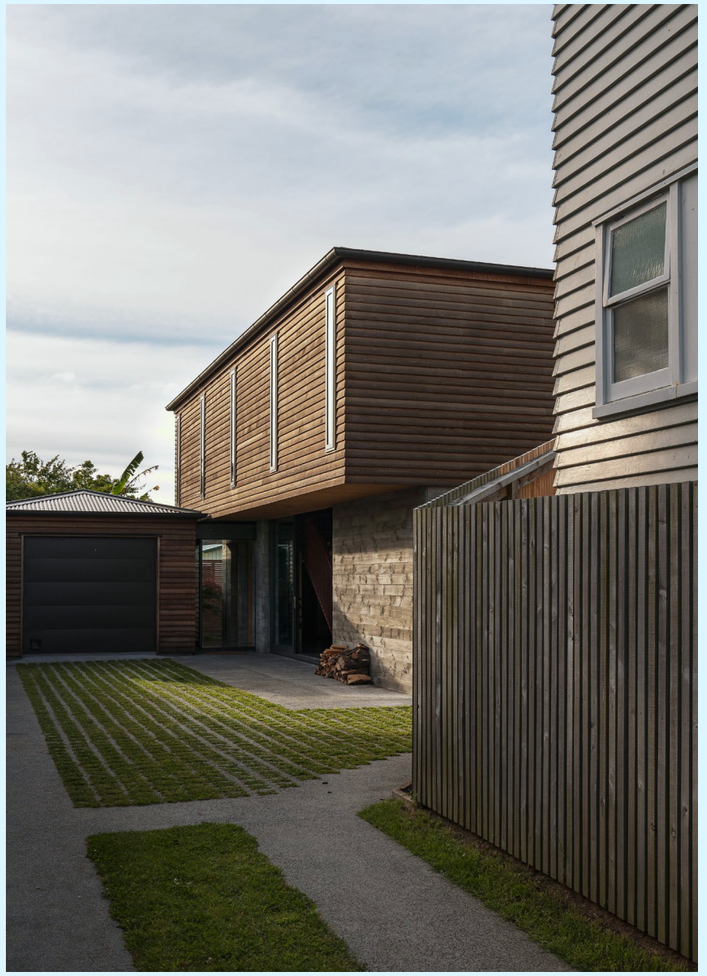
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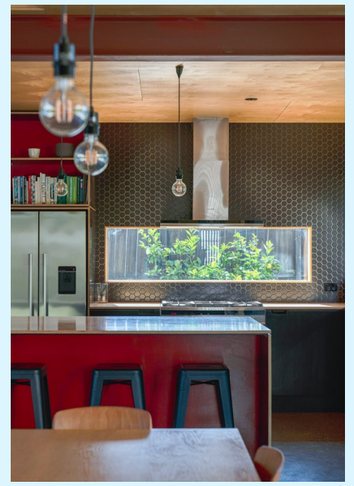
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Images:
1. A double-height void.
2. View through the living space.
3. The staircase meets polished concrete.
4. Upper-level floorplan.
5. Lower-level floorplan.
6. Warming timber offsets the concrete.
7. Detail of stairs.
8. The home is hidden behind an exsiting house.
9. Kitchen designed by Gommers.

This case study was produced in association with: Gommers Construction Limited
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1

Project type
New-build

Designer
James Warren, Upoko Architects

Builder
SpiceBuild

Floor size
155m²

Cost
$1-1.5 million

Timeframe
12 months

Construction
Architectural construction, timber frame, steel beams

Roofing
TPO membrane

Cladding
James Hardie fibre cement, cedar

Flooring
Hurford oak flooring

Location
Eastbourne, Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington

SEESAW HOUSE

Story by Harriet Cowie
Photographs by Jason Mann

2

Typically, when building a house, people lock in an architect and plans before shopping around for a builder. Not the owners of this Eastbourne home. Their first move was securing Matt Spicer and his team at Te Whanganui-a-Tara's SpiceBuild to take care of the construction. Then they went looking for someone to design it.

It was Spicer who suggested James Warren of Upoko Architects. Having previously worked together on several successful projects, he knew the architect would do the beachfront site justice. "We began with an open dialogue where we all collaborated to work through the process of how to create a reasonably maintenance-free home to their budget," says Spicer. The resulting design replaced an old cottage with this three-bedroom, two-bathroom home. The new building sits within the same envelope as the original house, but its two-storey layout delivers much more space. Topped with three sculptural roof lights that capture the sun while retaining privacy, it's an inventive, striking design – and it was up to Spicer to make it happen.

"It's not typical to have a timber-clad roof structure," Spicer says of the unique pop-ups. Though beautiful, the cedar cladding is purely aesthetic, so the builder's first challenge was ensuring they were watertight. It took innovative problem-solving and multiple layers of waterproofing detail under the façade to make them

Case Study

Building Guide

feasible. “I guess if it were easy, everyone would be doing it,” the builder reasons. With a portfolio of architectural builds to his name, Spicer’s no stranger to original intricacies in design, but this one still threw new challenges at him, like the portholes.

_____Punched into the perimeter wall, these unique circular cutouts sit in front of the spa, their powder-coated aluminium covers opening up to an ocean view. They were Warren’s idea, but it was up to Spicer to decipher the mechanics of it all. After multiple prototypes and much trial and error, the SpiceBuild team discovered the solution lay in bungee cords. This pragmatic, number-eight-wire approach resounds across the project, the team addressing each challenge with logic and common sense. “Still, it’s always the simple things that are the hardest,” Spicer says.

_____The home demonstrates the brilliance that can occur when great design and intelligent builders align. It’s beautiful, easy to maintain and remarkably private for such a public location. What’s more, it was built on an impressively tight budget. Easy access played a significant role in keeping costs down as they could drive machinery and materials straight on site, but the rest hinged on sensible planning. Collaborative decisions made early on by the owners, architect and build team – like choosing a cost-effective fibre cement cladding and designing a reasonably square structure – helped keep finances in line. Spicer’s early engagement streamlined the management and planning of the home to ensure everything ran smoothly. “I think that this project proves that when you have the right team, you can get a stunning result,” says Spicer. “The communication, the design; it was one of the best projects I’ve ever been involved with, and it just went really well.” It certainly looks that way.

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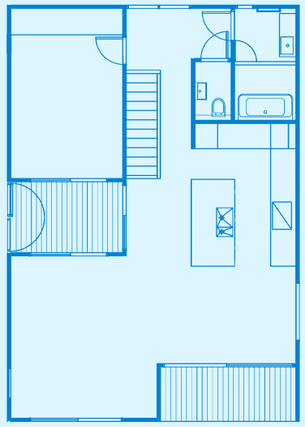

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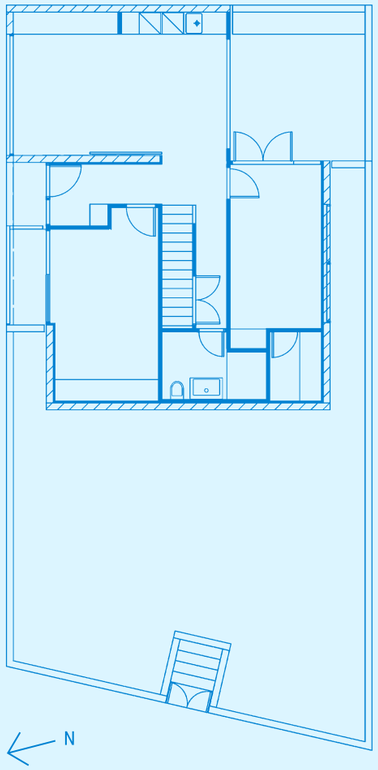

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Images:
1. The house manages privacy on a prominent site.
2. Pivoting covers in the porthole cutouts.
3. Periscope-style cedar pop-ups.
4. Upper-level floorplan.
5. Lower-level floorplan.
6. Each pop-up faces a different direction.
7. The open-plan living space.
8. Streamlined storage in the bedroom.

This case study was produced
in association with: SpiceBuild
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8

1

Project type
Renovation

Designer
Nick Rowe
Architecture

Builder
Ze Build

Landscape architect
Claire Walker

Floor size
Existing: 90sqm
Addition: 110sqm
Carport and pool house: 124sqm
Total: 324sqm

Cost
$1 million

Timeframe
10 months

Construction
Traditional slab with strip footings

Roofing
TR7

Cladding
Abodo eco-timber

Flooring
Polished concrete floors with Peter Fell colour

Location
Riverhead, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland

Case

THE COURTYARD HOUSE

Story by Harriet Cowie
Photographs by Sam Hartnett

2

Ze Build director Zane Dykman has the kind of energy you want on a building site. When asked about challenges, he talks about solutions. When asked about unforeseen changes, he describes his pragmatic way of tackling them one at a time with out-of-the-box thinking. It's a cool, calm, capable approach that inevitably served this Riverhead renovation and its young family well.

The design, by Nick Rowe Architecture, left the well-kept, original state house intact while adding a cluster of mid-century-inspired timber buildings around a sunny courtyard and pool out back. Bringing space, light and new purpose to the old home, it's an expansive extension achieved on an impressively taut budget.

Here: What did you think of the plans?

Zane Dykman: Wow, what a neat place to be able to entertain and raise a young family. Such a well-thought-out and thorough design.

H: What challenges did you come up against in the construction?

ZD: The usual problems when facing any architectural project, but as a team, the clients and I focussed on the solutions rather than the challenges.

Study

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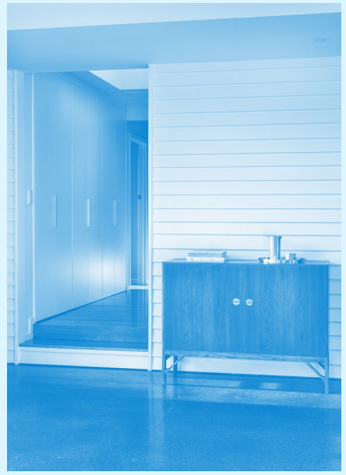

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H: The family stayed in the house while the build was underway. How did that go?

ZD: It went to plan and worked well. They would head away in their caravan over the school holidays or when we scheduled noisy days.

H: Anything you hadn't faced before?

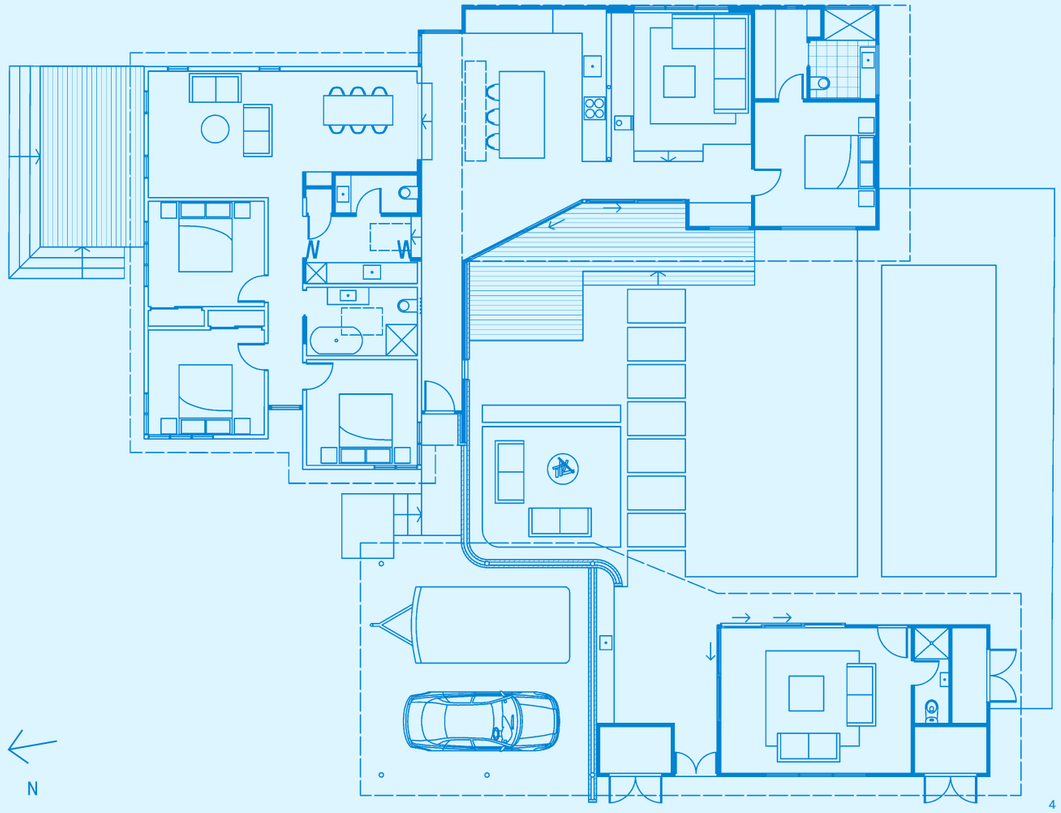
ZD: Yeah, for sure, all jobs have different challenges or scenarios. But it's just about getting everyone on the same page and moving forward together.

H: Can you give us an idea of the cost?

ZD: Circa $1 million.

H: What are you proudest of?

ZD: The end result for an epic family who have become lifelong friends – we're always welcomed back over.



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Images:
1. A new deck off the pavilion kitchen.
2. The curved brick wall.
3. The link between new and old.
4. Floorplan.
5. Courtyard garden.
6. Stained Abodo cladding.
7. Kitchen with living tucked behind.
8. The original state house is retained.

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