

# BOXED IN

WITH THEIR STYLISH HOME OVERLOOKING  
A BEAUTIFUL HARBOUR, EVERY WEEKEND  
SPENT ON THIS SECLUDED ISLAND  
IS A HOLIDAY



**RIGHT** The open nature of the home lets the outside in

DETAILS

HOUSE

KAWAU ISLAND HOUSE

LOCATION

KAWAU ISLAND,  
NEW ZEALAND

**WORDS** // CLAIRE MCCALL

**PHOTOGRAPHY** // EMMA-JANE HETHERINGTON

With aquamarine bays that meet a blanket of bush in a secluded enclave not far from home, it’s easy to understand why Lorenzo and Melissa Canal love to escape to Kawau Island every Friday after work. But their two pre-teen boys were harder to convince. “They didn’t want to miss out on Saturday sport,” says Lorenzo. So he put his foot down. This property, with a house designed by Dorrington Atcheson Architects (DAA), has since become a second home for the Auckland couple and their athletic lads Louis and Jules.

To be fair, the plan was hatched before the arrival of kids. Around 16 years ago, Lorenzo and his twin brother Edoardo bought 7 hectares here. The land, which overlooked Bon Accord Harbour, was steep and inaccessible. Since Lorenzo is a qualified engineer and Edoardo works in project management, the pair weren’t fazed. They installed a wharf and a cable car, and once they’d imported enough white sand to create a private beach, subdivided the property into 10 building sites. They felt they’d earned the right to call it Hideaway Cove.

Lorenzo and Melissa chose to build on a section which faces west towards the Kawau Boating Club, a much-loved local hangout. To ensure the dwelling did not impose on the easy-going nature of island life, their brief to architect Tim Dorrington was for a modern bach — a simple building with the nostalgia factor at its foundations. “It’s such a fantastic site and the design still needed to speak of architecture,” says Tim. “While the overall feel could be laidback, we agreed that the detail should be sharp and uncompromising.”

To ensure the home faded into the manuka and puriri forest, DAA devised a collection of small buildings akin to a campsite. In essence, a living and sleeping pavilion are connected by two ‘spines’ — one that is used to store all the toys that make the most of this watery playground, another that contains a kitchen, pantry and wood store. “The living pavilion is a social hub, and because much of the cooking is done outside, the kitchen is a modest galley,” says Tim. Lorenzo saw the kitchen as an opportunity to flex his engineering muscles. “I wanted it to be a showcase of raw materials,” he says. A concrete benchtop was reinforced with glass, with black steel cabinets, a splashback and shelving acting as additions within the space. “Because the



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- LORENZO CANAL





WHILE LOUIS AND JULES ROLL OUT LONG SHEETS OF FRESH PASTA, LORENZO ENJOYS BREWING HIS OWN BEER, WHICH HE KEEPS IN THE WALK-IN COOL STORE FOR LIQUID REFRESHMENT OVER THE SUMMER HOLIDAYS





Generous windows frame the picturesque views



timber shell is so warm and comfortable, we could afford to add some edginess.”

The other pavilion has two bedrooms, two bathrooms and a ‘rack and stack’ bunkroom to host a crowd. “We used yellow, green and blue on the melamine of the built-in headboards, ladders and bookshelves,” says Tim. The primary colours are a happy reminder this home is meant for holidaying.

Clad in a combination of vertical cedar shiplap and black ply, the pavilions have a sophisticated crispness to their design. The materials, though, are representative of the Kiwi vernacular, as are the mono-pitched roofs which lift into the wide sky.

Lorenzo took no shortcuts with the construction and admits the house might be “slightly over-engineered”. All the building materials were shipped in by barge or flown in via helicopter. “On a site like this, you’d normally opt for a pole house, but I was determined to have concrete foundations,” he says. The concrete was made on-site in a diesel-powered mixer.

Inside, there are cedar-sarked ceilings, Italian poplar plywood wall linings and American oak flooring. The warm ambience of this timber wrap is contrasted by the cool blue of the ocean seen through soaring picture windows. While the view demands the most immediate attention, those with an eye for architecture will be impressed by the finer details. There are no architraves or skirting boards, so junctions had to be perfect and the narrow board cladding was challenging to construct. “We could have bought pre-grooved weatherboard which would have saved time and money, but these single lengths better emulate the variation in the shade and the fine shape of the manuka trees,” says Tim.

Naturally, much of the living is done in the outdoors, so the architect used a humble footprint for the two main buildings which are 6 x 8 metres each. Sliding doors open up the spaces and windows become frames for the sea and the trees. A covered courtyard, nestled between the main forms, provides shelter from an on-shore wind.

**NATURALLY, MUCH OF THE LIVING IS DONE IN THE OUTDOORS, SO THE ARCHITECT USED A HUMBLE FOOTPRINT FOR THE TWO MAIN BUILDINGS**



The perfect spot to enjoy a good read





The idea of this home is to muck in. The bathroom zone operates like an ablution block and is designed for quick turnaround, rather than luxury. Walls divide the shower from the washbasins and there's even a changing area so many 'happy campers' can use the space at once. There is one extravagance — a private loo on the southernmost end of the dwelling with a stable door that opens to the landscape. It is kitted out with shelving to hold the all-important reading material. "It's our version of a long drop," laughs Lorenzo.

The Canals relish the way time seems to slow down when they're on the island. Contrary to the boys' expectations, there's plenty to keep body and mind occupied. If they're not out fishing, diving for scallops or enjoying hot cheese scones at the boating club, they're at home helping to put together a meal. While Louis and Jules roll

out long sheets of fresh pasta, Lorenzo enjoys brewing his own beer, which he keeps in the walk-in cool store for liquid refreshment over the summer holidays.

At dinnertime, the family and their guests often gather in the courtyard, or if the winds are kind, they can be found plumped into bean bags on the pier-like deck. This emerges from the slope to hover above the bay; its tiers follow the contour of the land, and its sides wrap up to become seats. A glass balustrade on the cantilevered edge frames the horizon where boats come and go. "It is 6 metres up in the air, so it feels invigorating," explains Tim.

Top of the menu? Pure relaxation. "In Auckland, our weekends used to rush by in a frenzy of busyness," says Lorenzo. "Here, we are only 90 minutes from the city, but a world away." 🍷

PROJECT TEAM

Architects Tim Dorrington,  
Irina Labuntseva, Rebecca Walker  
and Marie-Claire Henderson,  
Dorrington Atcheson Architects  
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Structural engineer  
Ashby Consulting Engineering  
(09 425 9422)

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([fisherpaykel.com/nz](http://fisherpaykel.com/nz))
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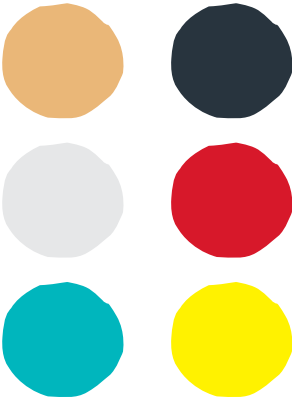
Methven  
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- Lighting — recessed downlights

Superlux ([superlux.co.nz](http://superlux.co.nz))
- Lighting — recessed lighting

Prolux ([prolux.co.nz](http://prolux.co.nz))
- Lighting — wall clamp spotlight

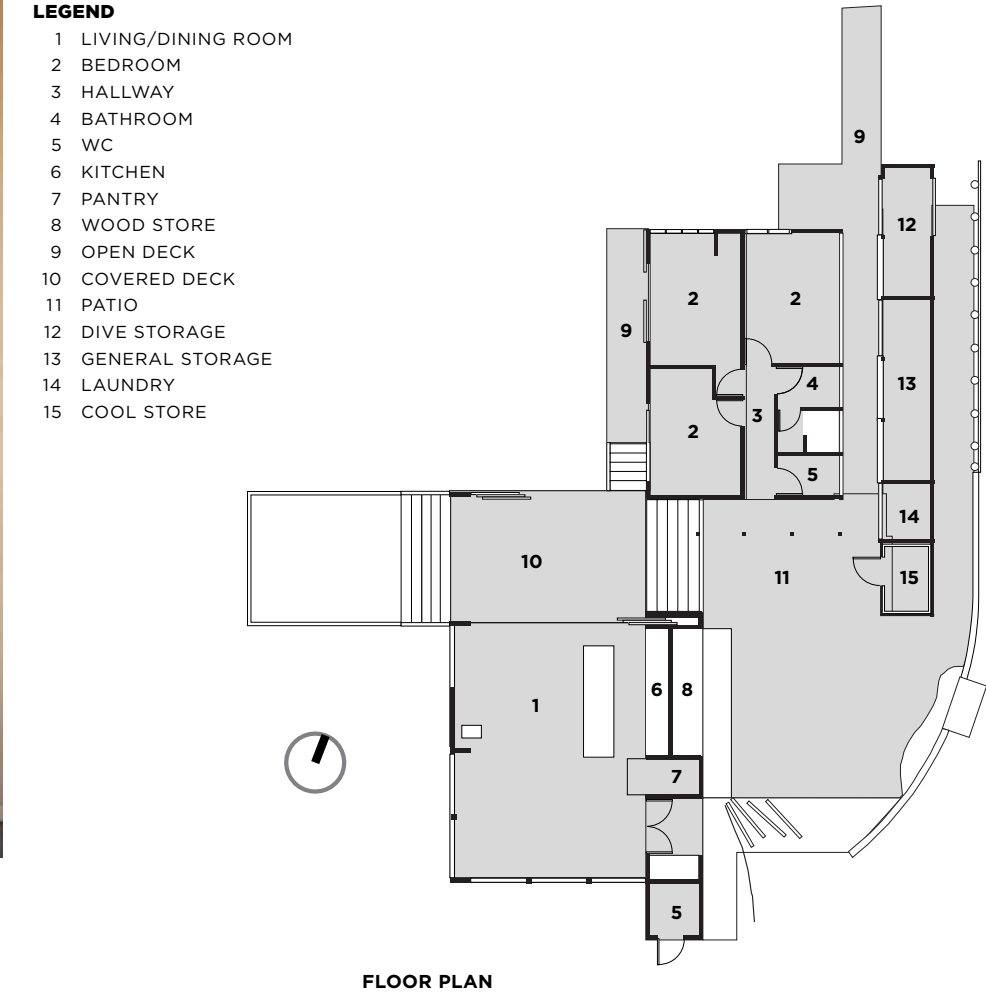
Ikea ([ikea.com](http://ikea.com))
- Sink — wall unit

Franke ([franke.com](http://franke.com))

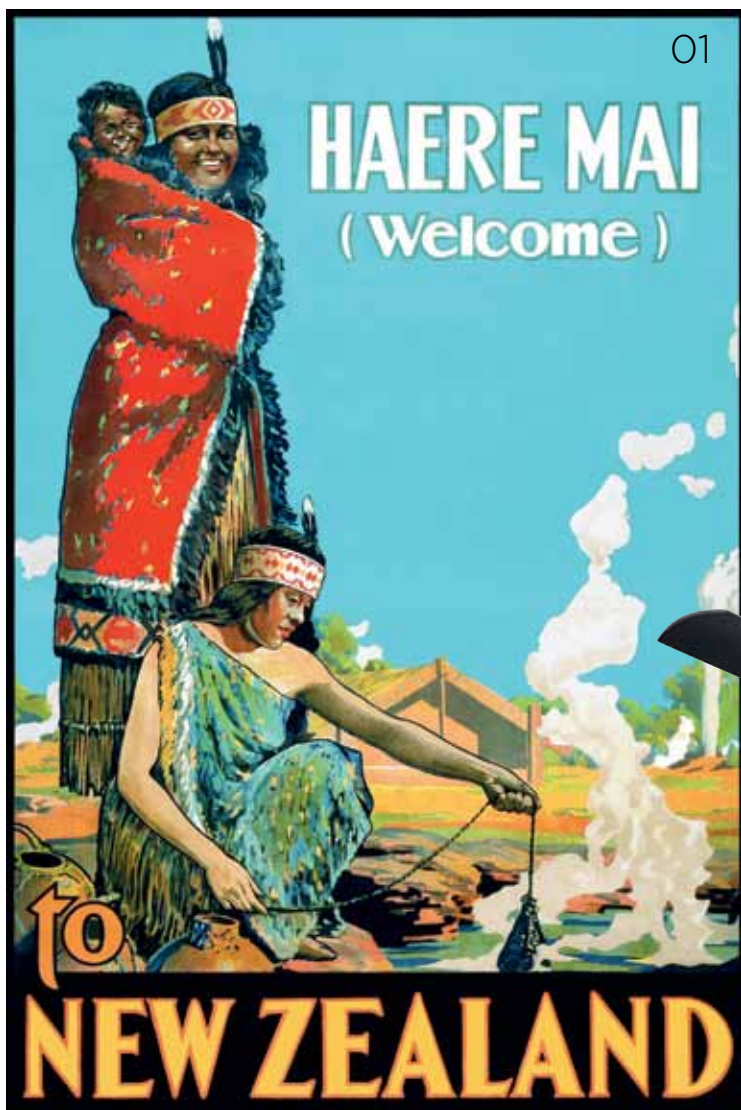


Colour Palette

Primary colours of blue, red and yellow have been used to punctuate a master palette of timber, black steel and concrete. The result is a playful, holiday vibe perfect for a retreat from the city







01



02



03



04



05

## Get the Look

**01:** Welcome to New Zealand print from [venusvalentino.com.au](http://venusvalentino.com.au) **02:** E27 pendant in black from [muuto.com](http://muuto.com) **03:** Pink Front cushion from [cushandco.com.au](http://cushandco.com.au) **04:** Eco2 fan in matt black from [hunterpacific.com.au](http://hunterpacific.com.au) **05:** Tolix Tabouret 45cm in red from [thonet.co.nz](http://thonet.co.nz) **06:** Classic table from [mrandmrswhite.net](http://mrandmrswhite.net) **07:** Bambury Wembley throw from [zanui.com.au](http://zanui.com.au) **08:** Tolix Tabouret 65cm in black powdercoat from [thonet.com.au](http://thonet.com.au)



08



06

07