



# SITE SPECIFIC

An extended Auckland family have worked with their architects to bring a specific brief to life: the creation of two homes on one site that work together, while each affording their own separate enjoyment of the surrounding land.

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**INDOOR/OUTDOOR** The strong relationship between internal and external living spaces means that the spaces inside don't have to be extensive, as they're already extended both functionally and visually.







**MATERIALS** The bach-in-the-bush feel of this home is accentuated by the use of raw materials such as ply and concrete, with pops of orange, red and yellow added to details such as doors, drawers and cabinetry.





**OPEN-PLAN LIVING** The raw materials used for the interior reveal how the home was made – an honest design that is not only aesthetically pleasing, but one that is also sturdy enough to withstand the knocks from a young family.



*BUILDING A NEW HOME CAN BE AN ARDUOUS TASK* – and finding the right piece of land to build it on can be even more trying. But when Mark and Susie Easterbrook came across an idyllic section in West Auckland it was love at first sight. “We had made the decision to move to Titirangi from Mt Albert and build,” explains Mark. “And, I’m slightly embarrassed to say, we fell for the first piece of land we visited!”

The first decision very easily fell out of the way, the Easterbrooks moved to the second – which architect should they choose to help them with their site-specific build? They dreamt of bringing up their boys Hunter (10) and Jake (5) in a home that would take advantage of the surrounding environment – but, as Jake has been diagnosed with autism, they also required a second house for Susie’s mother and stepfather who were moving with them to help out.

“I have several friends who are architects, but I didn’t want to work with any of them in case things went wrong,” Mark laughs. So, after consulting said friends, it was decided that Tim Dorrington of DAA would be a good fit for what they had in mind.

As creative director at boutique design and advertising agency Goodfolk, Mark had some strong ideas for the house design – but this wasn’t a problem for Tim. “I didn’t want to be an interfering client, but I also had my own thoughts,” Mark says. “Luckily, Tim and I were on the same wavelength with most things. I’d like to think my contributions to the design process had a positive impact – hopefully Tim agrees!”

The design team – Tim and his colleague Marie-Claire Henderson – set about creating a pair of buildings, compact in size, with forms inspired by the simple structure of a shed and a tent. But, although aesthetics were important, something else trumped them.

“The need for privacy was the major driving factor for the placement and orientation of the two dwellings on the site,” says Marie-Claire, who was responsible for the finer details of the design. “It is evident from the physical closeness of the buildings that they operate as an extended family unit, but there are no windows which look from one house into the other. The offset and 15-degree change in orientation also means that neither house stares directly out at the walls of the other, but rather each gets its own views of the site and surrounding bush.”

The end result is impressive, in the most unassuming of ways. On approach from the sweeping driveway, the main home appears humble in structure. But on entering, you’re welcomed by a great sense of space as the centralised living area opens on both sides onto lawns and an outdoor living area.

Flanked on either side by bedrooms and bathrooms, for Mark and Susie at one end, with the kids’ rooms at the other, the spaces are all colour-coded. Mark explains: “We used yellow for the boys’ rooms, since they’re the sunshine in the family; orange for the front door, because it’s warm and inviting; turquoise for the



**SUITABLE FOR ALL SEASONS** Designed to be comfortable in all kinds of weather, the broad verandah and high clerestory windows in the living area mean that while there is always plenty of sun in winter, the home is shady and well ventilated in summer.

bathrooms and laundry, to signify water; and red for the master bedroom – because if it’s closed, it means ‘No entry!’”

These pops of colour work well with the rich, timber-oriented palette of materials – plywood, aluminium joinery and concrete floors giving the house a bach-in-the-bush feel. This is accentuated by the Glulam beams that frame the living space, and floor-to-ceiling glass looking out to the established fruit trees and natives beyond – the perfect spot for the boys to adventure.

Regardless of whether they’re playing outside or in, clever planning has provided plenty of space for varied family activities. While the footprint is only a modest 120 square metres, and the main living space four metres wide, it efficiently contains an open-plan kitchen and dining area, along with a drop-down sunken lounge. It is wrapped on two sides by low in-built shelves full of books and games. And, with the TV tucked away behind more in-built cabinetry, you can easily imagine nights spent reading around the pot-belly fire in this modern take on a conversation pit.

It all just works. After all, a good home is one that can comfortably accommodate not only family life, but those the family enjoys sharing it with. “We were invited back for the housewarming and it was fantastic to see all of these social spaces working beautifully, and everyone enjoying being in them,” says Marie-Claire. Job done – extremely well. ■

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**CONVERSATION PIT** The built-in seating surrounding the sunken lounge creates a cosy nook for relaxing within the open-plan living space – and nailing tricky guitar chords.



**BATHROOM** Keeping with the bach-like theme, a stand-alone tangerine enamel bath adds a pop of colour to the otherwise bright white bathroom. The bespoke vanities were designed by Tim Dorrington and wall hung to maximise space. **MASTER BEDROOM** This room is a haven for Mark and Susie, with a wall of glass providing uninterrupted views out to the bush. The built-in ply wardrobe makes efficient use of the space.







**KIDS’ BEDROOM** Windowseats in the kids’ bedrooms are turned into study desks with the easy removal of the padded squabs – an aspect which future-proofs the home for a growing family. **FLOOR PLAN** Oriented to the north-west, the main house is a long narrow structure that opens from both sides, allowing plenty of sun and natural cross-ventilation. The smaller dwelling, affectionately referred to as the “mini me”, shares a similar aesthetic, but is oriented north to provide privacy and bush views of its own.

**Main house**

**Minor dwelling**

**AT A GLANCE**

**The project:** With the help of Tim Dorrington and Marie-Claire Henderson of DAA, Mark and Susie Easterbrook have created a home for themselves and their two boys Hunter (10) and Jake (5) in Titirangi – along with a second dwelling for Susie’s mother and stepfather.

**What are you looking forward to at home this summer?** Throwing open the doors and letting the sun in, eating home-grown fruit, and sharing long, lazy evenings with our friends.

**What are your favourite things about your new home?** The way it lets the light in; the uncurtained wall of glass in the master bedroom that looks into the bush; and the convertible office/spare bedroom space.

**What are your top tips for juggling building a house with work and family life?** If you can, live close. And on weekends, especially if you have kids, spend lots of time just being in your new space even when it’s a bare patch of land. Also, audit your possessions and decide what you

really want to bring into your new house – we ditched a huge amount of stuff.

**Now your home is finished, what’s next?** There’s a famous story about Frank Lloyd Wright designing a doghouse for one of his clients. I’m hoping I can con Tim into designing a woodshed for me. In the meantime, there’s landscaping and gardens to tackle.



**MULTI-FUNCTIONAL ROOMS**  
An office is tucked away in a space that can be open to the kitchen, or closed off completely behind cavity sliders as a quiet study space or spare bedroom when guests come to stay.





**ABOVE** With an honest palette of materials, plywood cladding and bright pops of colour give this home a classic bach aesthetic.

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## DESIGN DETAILS

A primary colour palette mixed with ply is the material key to this striking home.

Resene  
Supernova

Resene  
Monza

Resene  
Chilean Fire

Resene  
Paradiso



Triangle pendant light by Douglas and Bec, \$240, douglasandbec.com



Starburst clock, \$199.95, nood.co.nz



Joska and Sons Poise lamp, \$560, joskaandsons.com



Bone china vessels by Form and Fable, \$150 each, essence.co.nz



Huia Bird cushion in cyan, \$59.90, ikoiko.co.nz



White and Newton teak dining suite, \$4200, mrbigglesworthy.co.nz