

01



ALL IS CALM

With cool moves and
restful tones, a dated
Auckland townhouse becomes a soothing
beachside haven.







Drawing design strands together is as much a part of an architect's job as nailing the spaces. When Hamish Cameron was asked to bring a 1990s seaside dwelling into the present, there were a few conflicting influences to deal with, as well as awkward spaces to resolve.



This two-storey masonry townhouse in Mission Bay, Auckland, is one of four designed by Lawrence Sumich. "It was iconic in its time," says Hamish Cameron of Hamish Cameron Architecture. "It introduced the slightly higher-density model of the Sydney terrace house to Auckland."

The owners brought their own design histories to the drawing board. They had raised their children in an elegant Arts & Crafts house, then decamped to an apartment when the fledglings had flown. The minimalist space had stark, uninterrupted geometry and a white-on-white palette.

Cameron's role was to navigate a path between these two opposing aesthetics within a structural envelope and exterior that couldn't be altered – any interventions would need to be an inside job.

The townhouse hadn't been altered for decades: an awkward stair fed into a central hall and the upstairs living was sliced in two by a fireplace. The main bedroom, located on the south side of the home, was also on this level.

Achieving the right balance between simplicity (his request) and softer edges (hers) came next. "Hamish has a lovely way of dealing with light and spaces," says one of the owners. It's a fine-line feat – a mathematical jigsaw that involves subtracting then adding elements to achieve openness countered by intimacy.



The bisecting fireplace was gone by lunchtime, which immediately opened up the space to the width of the main room. To fully exploit the envelope, Cameron realised he needed to consider the potential overhead. The steeply pitched roofline had been covered over with a dated coffered ceiling – its effect was a sense of bearing down on the space. Cameron lifted the ceiling to expose the base of the trusses above the north-facing living/dining and kitchen room. At the southern end he went further and popped in a loft. This box within a box is contained by black-steel joinery. In place of a former bedroom is now a den and gas fireplace. Above this, a flexi room in the former roof space is accessed via steep stairs with mesh balustrades.

The insertion has an industrial edge, which works well with the rhythmical march of exposed timber beams – but it's a tempered intervention, not quite New York warehouse, more Euro urban-chic. "I particularly like the work of Belgian architect Vincent Van Duysen," says Cameron.

Van Duysen is known for designing interiors with a sense of calm and you can see that influence in the kitchen, where pale timber meets pale Italian marble benchtops. "I simplified the joinery so the space doesn't look kitchen-like," says Cameron. "With no cabinetry on the back wall it makes the room feel far more balanced."



With skylights bringing natural light into the home's core, a feeling of serenity pervades the upper level – emphasised by the shifting tide as it makes its way up and down Bean Rock lighthouse. Here, on a curve of Tāmaki Drive, there's a break between the volcanic rise of Rangitoto and the finger of land on the North Shore that stretches the eye to the horizon.

Cameron's clients are well aware of the privilege of a beach on their doorstep, a harbour framed in one end of their living room and ease of access to the city. The beauty of this view is that there's always something different to watch, "from the way the light changes on the water to the Team New Zealand boat out training", says one of the owners.

From dated to minimalist, the restful nature of this home means it's a keeper. And it's been future-proofed with the addition of a lift – "well, more of a moving platform", says Cameron. The platform allows elderly family members to visit without negotiating stairs, and will serve the owners in time to come.

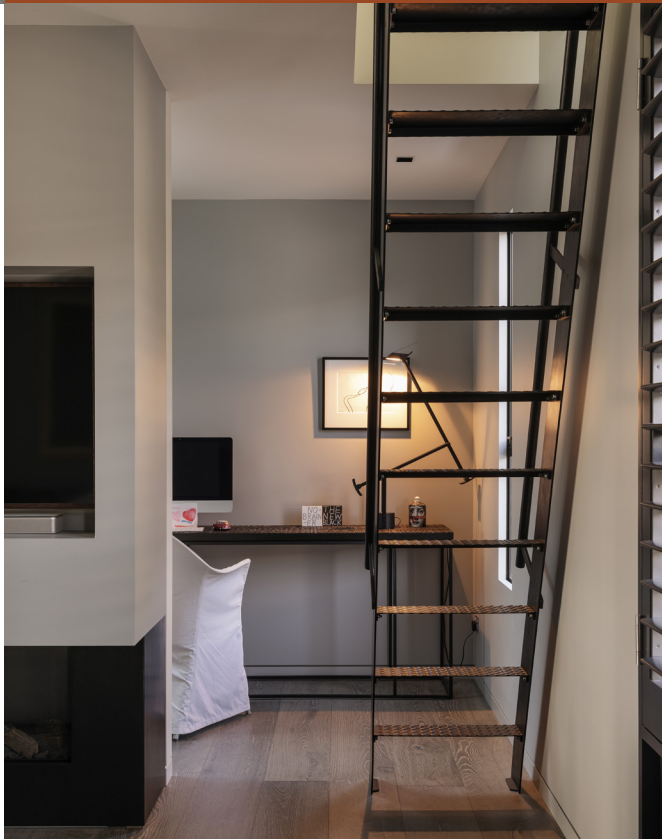
When the couple's grandchildren visit, they are quick to commandeer the loft where they stage plays or 'drop' their soft toys into the den below for their grandparents to retrieve. A guest room in the reconfigured downstairs area suits when they stay over and is just a sliding door away from where their grandparents sleep. The two north-facing rooms each have their own bathroom, one with a view up to the sky.

Selling the house where the owners had raised their two children was a tough decision but the renovation process has been invigorating. "I love architecture and I love design and Hamish made it fun," says one of the owners.

They have planted roses and lemons in pots on the patio, and rather enjoy the sense of community that living in a shared complex brings. While the art on the walls and a few select keepsakes hold memories, the present is just as delightful – as with a bag of grapefruit left on the porch by a neighbour to remind them what is special about the here and now.







Top: A flexi room in the former roof space makes excellent use of the previously under-utilised area. Above: After a lifetime of acquiring, the owners only brought a handful of pieces into their new home. Opposite, top left: The Mirah chair by Jader Almeida for Sollos is from ECC. Fornasetti plates hang above. Opposite left: A Tizio lamp by Richard Sapper for Artemide from ECC sits next to two pieces by John Reynolds in the office space on the other side of the den.

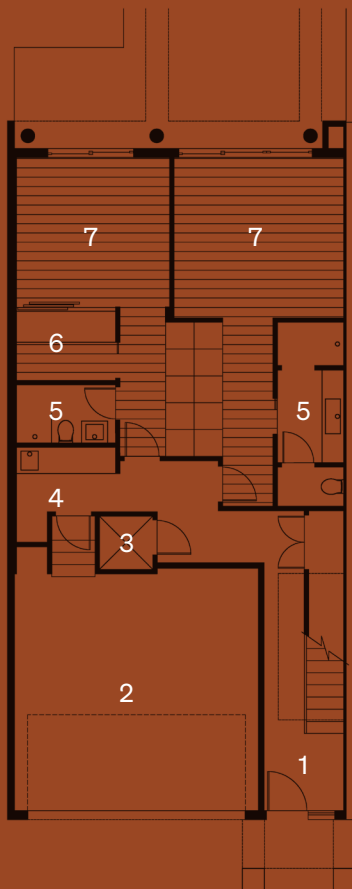




PLANS



1. Entrance
2. Garage
3. Lift
4. Laundry
5. Bathroom
6. Desk/Alcove
7. Bedroom
8. Study/Alcove
9. Media Room
10. Landing
11. Scullery
12. Kitchen
13. Dining
14. Sitting
15. Terrace
16. Loft



Level 1



Level 2



Level 3