

*International*

# Architecture & Design

## OPEN HOUSE

BLURRING THE BOUNDARIES IN  
A **NEW ZEALAND** BEACH HOUSE  
AND A **SAN DIEGO** CANYON HOME

CHIC FARMHOUSE  
UPDATES IN  
**ENGLAND** AND  
**FRANCE**

**CENTURY COTTAGE**  
REVIVAL ON  
**GEORGIAN BAY**

GORGEOUS  
GARDEN  
FURNITURE

THE NEW  
**VERSAILLES**  
WATER THEATRE  
OPENS WITH A  
SPLASH

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# FOLLOW THE SUN

BUILDING A BETTER BEACH HOUSE ON OMAHA BAY IN NEW ZEALAND TRANSLATED INTO A SEE-THROUGH STRUCTURE THAT RECEDES INTO ITS LUSH GARDEN SETTING AND ITS BACKDROP OF BIG SEA AND SKY.

BY ELLEN HIMELFARB  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SIMON WILSON

● The Omaha peninsula reaches out long and low into its little bay, and the small community of holiday homes littered around the coastline follows its lead. Barely 200 in all, they're built long and low, as if ducking to avoid obstructing the view. Beyond this spit an hour north of Auckland, New Zealand, lie dozens of secluded islands, and beyond them, the South Pacific. Even within this wild continent of heavenly views, Omaha's is considered one of the finest.

Naturally, the residents want to do it justice. They include Ian and Glenda Bailey,



**Right:** A boardwalk path leads from the street straight into the house, and when the glass doors are open, there are sightlines down to the water. The cedar cladding takes a beating in summer, but lasts for eons, provided it's treated with a stain every three to five years. Architect Paul Clarke of Crosson Clarke Carnachan says he didn't want to build a holiday home that required a lot of maintenance.



who, a decade ago, purchased a 1980s house in desperate need of an update. Together with Paul Clarke of Auckland architecture practice Crosson Clarke Carnachan (CCCA), they ultimately rejected the idea of renovating—the budget for extending to accommodate their three grown children and grandchildren would have been the same as rebuilding entirely. In the process of starting anew, they helped reinvent the North Island beach-house ideal.

Like the Nebraskan Omaha, 12,000 kilometres away, this is big-sky country. The vineyards of the Matakana wine region unfold into the horizon just a short drive away. Just past the road access is an expansive golf course, and, offshore, sailboats glide past surfers and fishermen. The Baileys wanted their home to be a family base for all that. Clarke says they took a “blue-sky approach” to the design, which seems rather apropos for the area. Keeping an open mind, he used the sun and the view to steer the 2,500-square-foot layout and ultimately brought the family much closer to the idyllic location. “The original house didn’t utilize the morning sun,” says Clarke. He and a local team of builders removed some substantial but unremarkable trees on the eastern aspect of the site to welcome in the morning light and designed a flat roof, sliced through with skylights.

The design pays as much heed to outdoors as indoors, incorporating 1,000 square feet of local kwila wood decking, two open-air fireplaces and an alfresco shower. Positioning the structure on a frame of concrete helps protect it from tsunami-related flooding, per local regulations, while simultaneously creating interesting levels of decking. “It created a nice stage around the home, which we staggered down, so you can sit on the steps like you would a bench,” says Clarke. Just inside the street access nestles a “morning courtyard.” Above it is a mechanical pergola, louvred like a giant shutter to filter sunlight, as well as any rainwater. “You’re able to manipulate that, to either respect the visual connection between indoors and out, or shut it completely against weather or harsh sun,” says Clarke. A larger “evening courtyard” faces the water.

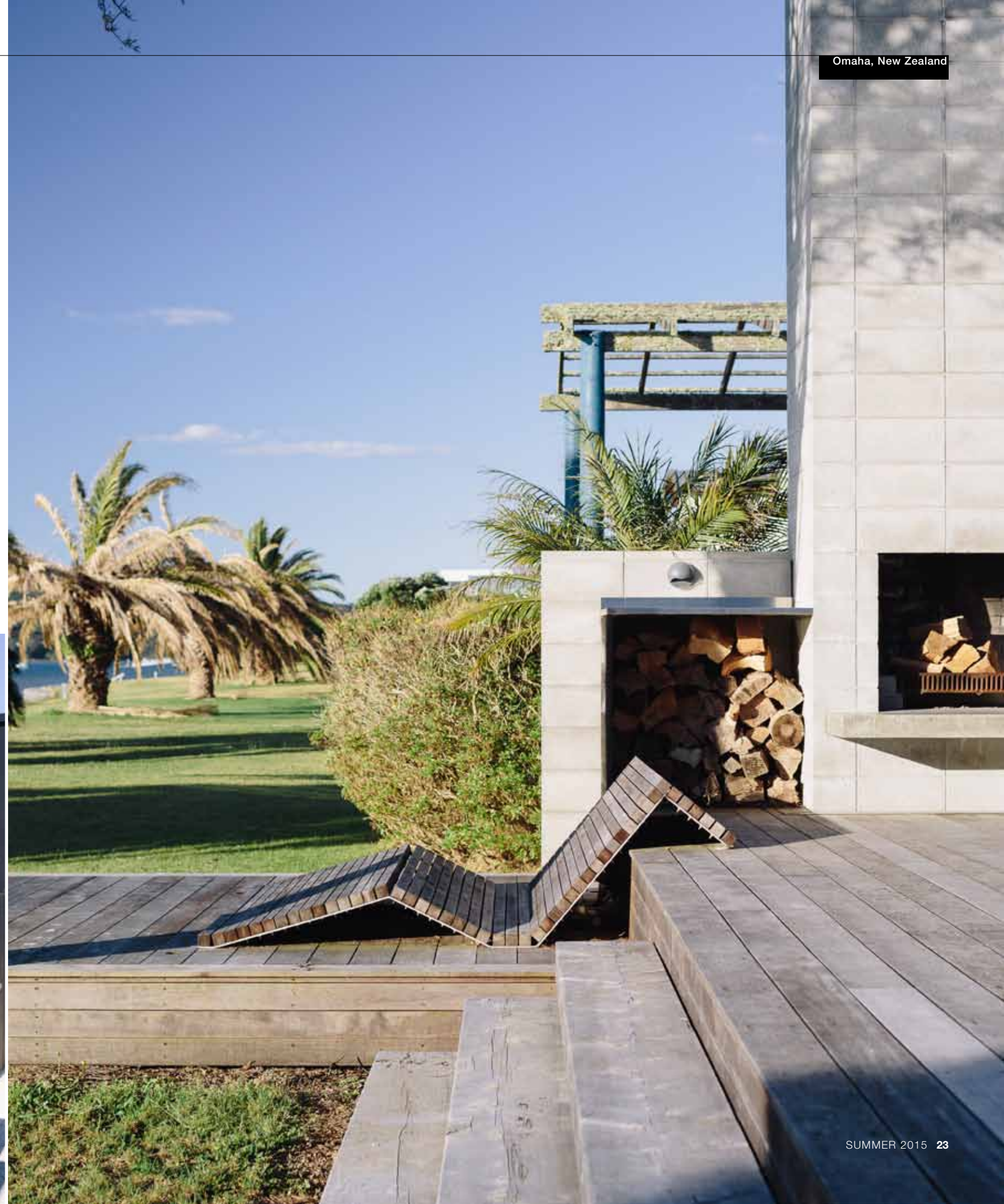
The layout of the house takes the behaviour of each family member into account, so the days play out like a well-orchestrated performance. A large bunkhouse and rec room, oriented toward the street, sit off the morning courtyard, so the children, who wake the earliest, can roam around the deck and into the kitchen without disturbing the elders. Parents of the youngest kids sleep in an adjacent double bedroom, and the other parents sleep upstairs in two rooms overlooking the water. The most private wing is the west-facing bedroom suite of Ian and Glenda, tucked behind an internal fireplace that acts as an “acoustic separator,” in Clarke’s words. The thick, solid walls around it have the added benefit of soundproofing the bedroom from the living room activity.

Guests move gradually westward throughout the day, following the arc of the sun. When the temperature is at its peak, or if it’s raining, some retreat to their private sheltered terraces, which face the estuary to capture the breeze. The children, meanwhile, escape to their rec room to play games or watch TV. By mid-afternoon, everyone has

## The natural environment makes its way into the fabric of the house via the dark cedar cladding, which reflects the deep misty grey of the surrounding hills.

**Below:** Outdoor spaces are as important here as indoor—and in many cases the two are interchangeable. The family uses this shower more than those in the bathrooms, Clarke says. It’s tucked around the side of the house, off the owners’ en suite bathroom, and obscured by cedar siding.

**Right:** A wood-slat chaise designed by Orson Waldock, the landscape architect on the project, folds in and out like a Jacob’s ladder to echo the steps of the kwila wood deck.



**Below:** Sunlight from the north is confined to a bank of transom windows, keeping the kitchen cool. Clarke worked with joiners from nearby Matakana on creating sun-reflecting, seamless white cabinetry and uninterrupted stainless steel countertops. A monster steel-topped island that can seat all the grandchildren for casual meals links the house's eastern and western flanks.



**Right:** In summertime, glass doors pull back completely to blur the boundary between indoors and out, and cooking is done almost entirely on the barbecue.



Early in the day the louvres in the pergola are left open, and the sun casts interesting shadows across the dining room floor. Ahead and to the right is the “breakout space,” where the children sleep and entertain themselves, separate from their parents. Clarke tucked the main entrance off to the right, so it wouldn't interfere with the views.

graduated to the west side of the house to sip wine, barbecue and share the evening meal. A public walkway running along the property line means neighbours stop to chat as they pass by.

The most remarkable feature of the house must be the twin chimneys, two simple concrete beacons that define east and west. From an architectural perspective, says Clarke, “it was about creating two forms that relate to one another and relate to the joy of fire and celebration, of sitting back and relaxing.”

When the oversized glass doors are open, the seaside view extends right through the house and out to the street, and the rest of the structure seems to recede into the garden of bamboo, palms and lush ferns. This area is a haven not just for the capital-K Kiwi population, but also for all manner of local wildlife. The endangered New Zealand dotterel breeds on this estuary, and Clarke's material choices do everything to respect local preservation efforts. The natural environment makes its way into the fabric of the building via the dark,



**Left:** The family doesn't lack for seating in the living room, which wraps around the core of the home. It's part of the main "zone" of the house, which can be completely closed off by pocket doors for privacy. The fireplace offers crucial soundproofing for the master bedroom on the other side of the wall. Clarke designed clever American oak cabinetry to keep games and toys out of sight, leaving some cubbies open so the unit doesn't appear monolithic. A panel on the left side slides back to reveal a TV.

**Below:** The house is a simple series of boxy volumes, respecting property boundaries that dip down in places to allow the neighbouring houses their light and views. The two chimneys mark the eastern and western flanks and highlight the family's love of outdoor fires. The two upper bedrooms and owners' bedroom face the water and have private, shaded decks.



Furniture from the "morning courtyard" is dragged over to this west-facing "evening courtyard" as the sun lowers. Clarke had to raise the home's foundation to protect it from the high flood plain. As a result, the house steps down toward the waterfront, creating levels of seating resembling a stage and a catwalk. The Re-Trouvé white wire chairs and stool are from the Italian designer Emu. The rug is from The Ivy House, a rug showroom in Herne Bay, Auckland.



**Left:** The family dines on the terrace as the sun sets. Pulling together two dining tables creates space for 16.

**Above:** The south side of the house—which looks toward the neighbours—has very few windows because of the orientation of the plot. The staircase and bathrooms are located in this darker flank.

sustainable-cedar cladding, which reflects the deep misty grey of the surrounding hills, and the sandy, natural-concrete accents of the chimneys and trim, which echo the beach. Inside, the flooring is durable American oak, “quite cost-effective in New Zealand.” Clarke says, “I wanted [the house] to look like a body—the skin is the dark-stained wood, and the internal flesh has a softness.”

This is the architectural version of a buff human body that would look good even in a burlap sack; in a properly designed home, says y and contemporary with well-chosen pieces, such as an outdoor chaise longue that folds onto itself like a Jacob’s ladder toy. The slate-grey sofas, geometric-print rugs and simple, ergonomic dining chairs align with Clarke’s style. He calls it “warm minimalism.”

Today you can see this sort of warm minimalism up and down Omaha’s coastal roads, as neighbours build modern silhouettes tempered by muted timber cladding. The style makes sense on a coast where nobody wants to shout their presence from the rooftops. Says Clarke: “It’s the warmth that keeps it from being too slick.” ●

*For floor plans, see page 80*

**Above:** Homeowners Ian and Glenda Bailey share the master suite, the only bedroom that opens up to the estuary. Glass doors to the west slide open to reveal a patio sheltered by a titoki tree. Another set of glass doors opens to the shared courtyard (left).