



# Outside in



## Herbst Architects Great Barrier Island, 2008

New Zealand's climate presents many challenges for living out of doors. In the North Island, it is not unusual to experience four seasons in one day, and on the coast these are magnified. For more than a decade, architects Nicola and Lance Herbst have designed holiday cottages on Great Barrier Island, exploring various ways to protect outdoor space and thus make it possible to spend more time outside. This bach at Medlands Beach is one of the most layered they have designed to date.

Set back from the beach, the site is flat with views of mountains to the south and the tops of the dunes to the north. The architects have captured these vistas with a band of clerestory windows and slight elevation. In all other respects, however, this house is focussed internally to create a sheltered and private precinct. It is designed to trap sun, shed rain and shield from cold southwesterly winds.

Three plywood boxes mark the corners of the L-shaped plan. Two contain bedrooms and bathrooms and the third a garage. They are each thermally sealed and connect to each other and the living space via a semi-outdoor walkway that runs the full length of the house. In the centre – protected to the south by a concrete-block wall – is a large 'veranda'. Technically, an area of it is thermally sealed, but its exterior materials, post-and-beam detailing and floating roof, make it look and feel like a veranda. The space is graded from fully inside for the lounge to semi-inside for the kitchen and to semi-outside for the fireplace and outdoor eating.

'One of our primary concerns when designing this bach was to challenge "convenience" as the driving force behind decisions,' explains Lance. 'In baches, we concentrate on the rituals associated with a space. Most eating is done outside and the covered outside deck is designed as the primary space. It has a fireplace and wind shutters to allow its use in most weather conditions.'

**LEFT** Asymmetrical cutouts are a practical and aesthetic detail on the plywood kitchen cupboards.

**PREVIOUS SPREAD** The main living space has private sleeping boxes at either end.

Even the bedrooms create their own microclimate: each 'sleepout' has its own small courtyard that is open to the sky yet screened on the sides by translucent fibreglass sheets. By day, doors and curtains can be wide open and they remain a private realm and at night they glow like lanterns.



**THIS PAGE** The deck off the main bedroom is screened with fibreglass sheeting to create privacy while still transmitting light.

**RIGHT** Garage, living room, and guest bedrooms are accessed from this sheltered walkway.

**FOLLOWING SPREAD** Living spaces are layered to create a progression from indoors, to semi-outdoors.



