



Summer shelter



Herbst Architects

Great Barrier Island, 2001–2008

Great Barrier Island has always attracted the adventure-minded. For a start, it takes planning and organisation to get there: the 90-kilometre journey from Auckland across the Hauraki Gulf is by ferry or plane, and the weather can easily turn, making for a bumpy ride. Once there, it is mostly bush with a few gravel roads winding their way lazily between a few small settlements, beaches, harbours and the interior.

For architects Nicola and Lance Herbst this was utter paradise. Not long after their first visit to the island, they bought land at Medlands Beach and began designing a summer retreat. They went right back to basics to meet the practical needs for living and building on the Barrier: it is off the grid, so water and power had to be collected and generated on site, and building supplies shipped from the mainland.

A water tower was built first to feed the 'field kitchen', with shower and composting toilet behind. The following summer a veranda and single room were added, and a few years ago a two-room sleeping pavilion was built at the rear of the site. 'These things grow as an accretion of small buildings,' says Lance. 'And so you end up with buildings that are made up of small pieces that then create negative spaces that become interesting.' These in-between spaces are as important a part of the whole as the pieces themselves.

At the Herbsts' bach the semi-public front yard and private rear yard are part of a privacy gradient. The desire to be social and part of the beach community is provided for by the veranda and its connection with the road, while solitude and quiet can be found at the rear. As physical layers of a building are removed, social layers relax too. The lovely thing about the veranda is that it can be made as open or as enclosed as desired, simply by sliding the translucent wind shutters.

LEFT Dining is an outdoor experience, protected by a simple roof and sliding wind shutters.

PREVIOUS SPREAD The main expression of the front block is the water tower, which feeds a kitchen, toilet and shower below.

The veranda is the most experimental part of the house for another reason: it is the kitchen and dining space, and yet it is out of doors. The field kitchen is essentially a cupboard and, when opened, its doors pin back to form the southern wall. A tin roof, shutters and low retaining wall are the only other measures that shelter and define this space. It is a celebration of summer and a beach way of life.



THIS PAGE The shower is semi-outdoors to accentuate relaxed beach living.

LEFT The bedroom is made private by the use of translucent fibreglass screens around the deck.

FOLLOWING SPREAD Macrocarpa wall lining, exposed rafters and sea grass matting create a textured living space.



