

# simply red

On a beachfront site north of Auckland Herbst Architects have reconciled access with privacy, and provision of space with control of scale.





**RESIDENTS OF RED BEACH** on the Hibiscus Coast just north of Auckland live within walking distance of sand and sea. A fortunate few, including the owners of a new holiday home by Herbst Architects, are so close they're just steps away from the water. These homeowners are part of a fast-developing Auckland predilection for building holiday homes that break free of the mould of Kiwi tradition. This new wave of holiday practice deviates from the old routine of enduring hours in the car and then checking for mouse droppings on arrival. Comfort and proximity to the city make these holiday homes places to get away to at the end of the working week, like Australian weekenders.

A house occupied this beachfront site but no longer met the needs of the clients' growing family. With children and recently arrived grandchildren to accommodate, the site was perfect, but not the house. It was demolished and in its place two buildings were constructed, each up against opposite

ends of the site, with a sheltered central lawn and courtyard between. The street-side structure, which houses a double garage and an apartment above, stands with its back close to the road. Along one wall a carport provides shelter not for a car but a boat-towing tractor. The garage and two solid gates protect the house from footpath inspection. Matt silver doors line up next to white painted brick laid in a staggered textural pattern. Above, horizontal timber screens conceal the apartment. A sneak view of the property can be gained through a small rectangular cut-out in the wall, a detail repeated on the brick walls of the main house.

Beyond the gate, stairs run up the white wall, past the timber screen to the apartment. Across the lawn a white shell path points straight ahead over the rise to the beach beyond – a direct path, Lance Herbst says, to the main event on a site like this: the beach. A short covered entry to the door of the house runs on a cross axis to the pathway. In the small

entry hall timber stairs run immediately up to the main living area. To the right, a sliding door opens into a downstairs apartment that can be closed off. The apartment comprises a kitchenette, bedroom, bathroom and lounge that looks back to the lawn and garage/apartment beyond. This area doubles as a secondary living space for use when afternoon wind from the beach buffets the front of the house and the lower lawn offers greater protection.

Upstairs, the primary living area is an open plan room encompassing kitchen, dining and living. Electric blinds roll up teasingly slowly to unveil a knockout view of Whangaparoa Bay and Great and Little Barrier Islands, framed on one edge by two majestic pohutakawas. Floor-to-ceiling windows make up the north and east walls of the room to show the panorama to full effect. The design challenge of neighbours lined up tightly on both sides is managed with a private BBQ courtyard



on one side, and a solid block wall on the other. This wall, which houses the kitchen and shelving, also functions as an anchor for the otherwise light structure.

Although the former house was completely removed it performed a valuable service by enabling the new house to make the most of the sea views. Current planning restrictions are such that the new building would have to have been placed further back on the site if it weren't for the front line position of its predecessor. As it is, the living floor of the house is a basic pavilion structure built out into the existing use space, only metres from where the front lawn drops steeply away to the beach below.

From the beach the house appears as two lightly stacked box shapes. The main living floor with its flat roof protrudes out from the top floor. Exterior materials are subtle and light: glass and more of the timber screens. The western red cedar cladding has already been scorched a

lighter shade; not too far from now it will be a soft, sandy grey. It is from the beach that the discrete forms and materials of the home really shine. The thoughtful interaction with area and site is made all the more obvious by comparison with some of the nearby houses; loud and inappropriate, they rear up to the beach's edge like vulgar tourists.

"We try to make buildings that have a humility about them," Lance Herbst says. This house, though, is something of a departure from what might normally be expected of a Herbst Architects' bach. The size of the building and the ample provision of mod cons express the brief's call a bach that's more like a home. From the profusion of cots in bedrooms it's clear that being without a laundry could be catastrophic. The clients also wanted to allow for the possibility of full-time occupation of the house – in this case, beautifully spare would not have worked.

Behind the main living area two bedrooms share a central bathroom.

The small, tower-like third floor is a bedroom and bathroom, and perhaps a refuge, for the clients. All up, there are four bathrooms, three kitchens, three living areas and five bedrooms. It is quite a feat to have fitted so much into two buildings that, from every approach, seem modestly proportioned. The division of the plan into three complete areas and the staggered levels that follow the upward run of the site break up the volume and prevent any whiff of the colossal.

Herbst Architects has performed a careful balancing act of form and functionality with an apparent ease that only comes from much thought and considerable skill. The house provides its occupants with privacy on a very public site, and deals cleverly with relatively complex use requirements. This is a house with refined good looks that will, over time, age gracefully. CLAIRE ELLERY

ABOVE LEFT: Looking  
the main house across  
the sandy lawn from the  
second, streetside building.  
ABOVE, RIGHT: Dining  
at Red Beach, looking  
through the house from the  
sheltered BBQ courtyard.

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**PRACTICE PROFILE**  
 Herbst Architects is a small team specialising in commercial, educational and residential projects. The practice is probably best known for its beach houses.

**PROJECT TEAM**  
 Lance Herbst, Nicola Herbst and Bodie Maxcey

**CONSULTANTS**  
**Engineer**  
 Brown and Thomson

**BUILDER**  
 Visual Statement Ltd (main house); Metro Property Services (garage building)

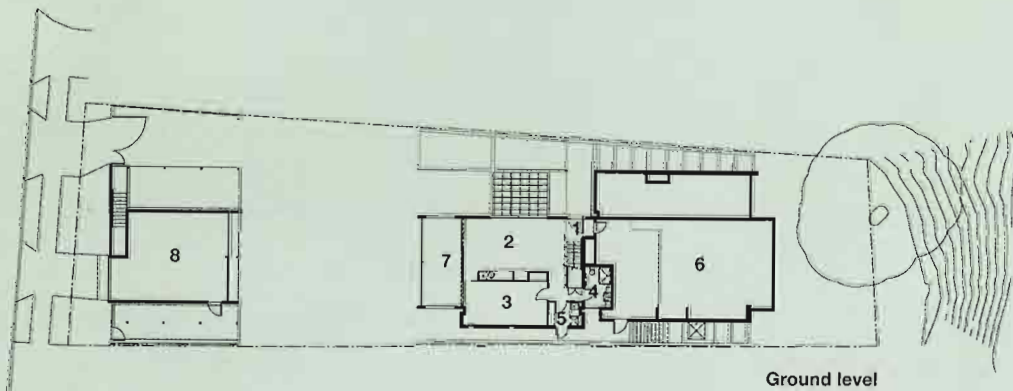
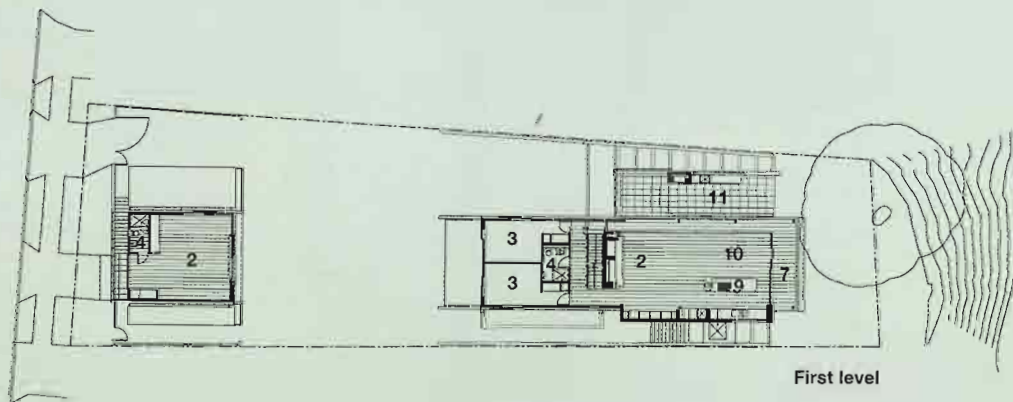
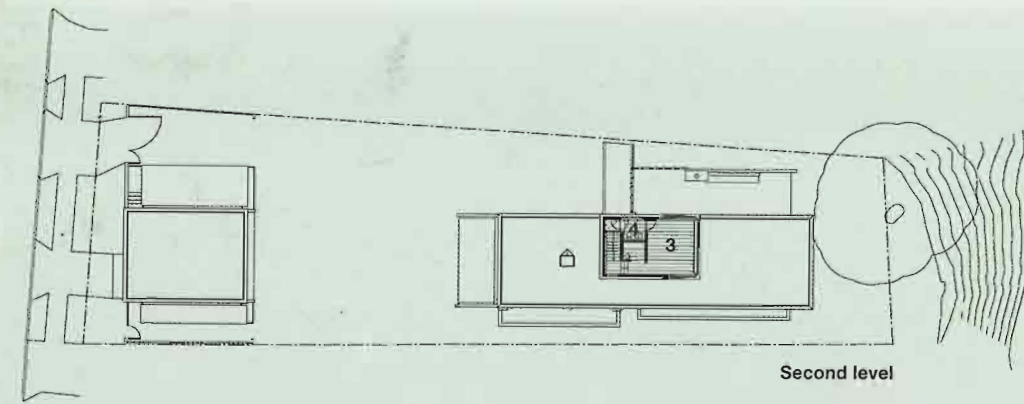
**SUB-CONTRACTORS**  
**Kitchen manufacturer** New Image Kitchens

**PRODUCTS**  
**Roofing** Glass Frame (torch on membrane) **External walls** Bandsawn ship-lapped cedar **Windows and doors** Vantage Aluminium Joinery suite by Composite Joinery Flooring Placemakers Jacobe t&g **Climate control** Etinds by Fashion on Windows **Lighting** Richard Willocks **Bathroom fittings** Chesters **Hard landscaping** Visual Statement **Security system** Coast Guard Alarms

**TIME SCHEDULE**  
 2 years

**SITE SIZE**  
 827m<sup>2</sup>

**PHOTOGRAPHY**  
 Patrick Reynolds



- 1 Entry
- 2 Living
- 3 Bedroom
- 4 Bathroom
- 5 Laundry
- 6 Storage
- 7 Deck
- 8 Garage
- 9 Kitchen
- 10 Dining
- 11 Outdoor room