



A SLICE OF PARADISE

Big House, Small House — New Homes of New Zealand Architects is a wonderful new book by leading writer John Walsh and photographer Patrick Reynolds. In this extract we visit the Coromandel bach of a New York-based architect

Most people design holiday houses as places to get away from it all. David Berridge designed his as somewhere to come back to. Berridge grew up in Auckland but has spent most of his adult life in New York. The holiday home he has designed at Otama Beach on the Coromandel Peninsula is his means of retaining a strong connection to the country of his birth.

Berridge came to architecture in an unusually roundabout way. He left high school when he was 15 and spent years touring the globe as a yachting, eventually captaining racing boats for American businessman Bill Koch, who was later to

mount a successful bid, in 1992, for the America's Cup. Koch was so pleased with Berridge's work that, as a thank-you gesture, he set up a trust to put him through university. All the former skipper had to do was pick a course. Architecture, he says, seemed the logical choice: "I was always fascinated by buildings, and my first job was as a draughtsman." Berridge enrolled at New York's Parsons School of Design, graduated in 1986, and has worked as an architect ever since, establishing his New York-based practice in 2000.

At that time, he was travelling around New Zealand with his wife, Cathleen McGuigan, and their daughter, and came



across an 800sq m site for sale at Otama, which the couple bought soon after. A decade passed and many iterations of a beach house were discarded before construction commenced. "Cathleen said, 'How many times are you going to design this house?'" But for Berridge the house was a big deal. His work in the United States consists almost entirely of renovations, and this is the first free-standing home he has designed.

In his wife, who is editor-in-chief of *Architectural Record*, he had the epitome of a well-informed client and a journalist who is on a first-name basis with many of the world's best architects (and who reports that her husband "was not remotely intimidated" by these professional acquaintances). Because Berridge had

trained as an architect in America, he had to re-familiarise himself with the design vernacular of his native country. "I found I didn't have a mental tool kit to design a New Zealand house, so I had to dig deep into my own background," he says.

As Berridge worked through the various versions of the 130sq m building, he remembered his mother saying the best bach kitchens had a view of the sea and were located on the cool side of the house. He incorporated these insights into the architecture of a house possessing a modesty appropriate to its semi-rural location and designed in a style he describes as "abstracted vernacular for the 21st century — I didn't want to impose a strong house on the environment".

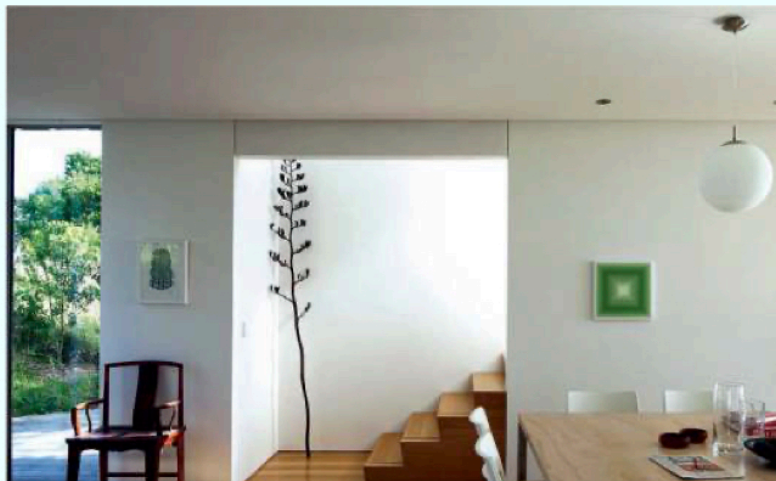
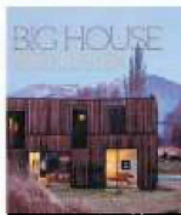
The house is clad in timber

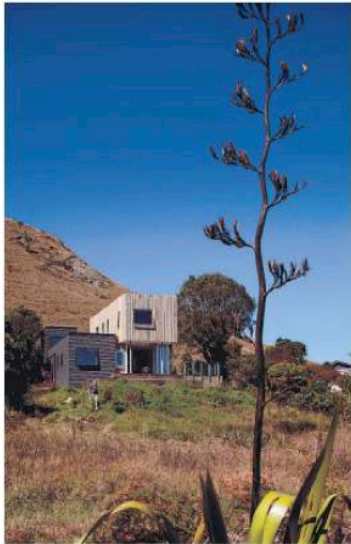
weatherboards and a pine rainscreen that, Berridge says, will "crack and weather and grey" over time. The ground floor is built on a plinth with a longitudinal living area offering views of both the sea and the hill to the rear of the house. The upper level, which contains two bedrooms, projects out to shade the north-facing deck off the living area. Behind the house, there's a free-standing bunkroom, with a desk sited to look out to sea — a lot of it, between the islands where Berridge was raised and the continent where he has made his life.

Back in New York, the house exists as screensaver images on its owners' computers, but if the architect and his family manage to secure seats on the port side of the plane when they visit New Zealand, Otama is the first beach they see.

VIP VIVA

Big House, Small House — New Homes of New Zealand Architects (\$80: Random House) by John Walsh and Patrick Reynolds will be available in stores from November 2. Viva is delighted to have 10 copies to give away. To go in the draw to win, go to www.nzherald.co.nz/vivagiveaways and enter the keywords Big House on the VIP Viva page along with your details. Entries close at 11.59pm on Sunday, November 4. For terms and conditions see the website.





Clockwise from left: The north elevation declares the house's simple stacked box form; the living room; the dining area with stairs in the background leading to the upper level bedrooms; Otama Beach. Facing page, the bach's deck overlooks the ocean.
PICTURES / PATRICK REYNOLDS



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