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# To the sea

On a site that had been in the family for decades, a house with some clever spatial planning became the starting point for a contemporary concept that embraces what stood before it.

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**Words** Clare Chapman **Photography** David Straight



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The clients, a couple with adult children and grandchildren, wanted a place to entertain, and one where their extended family could come and stay; a place where they could see the sea, and one that offered a hint at beach house living, taking cues from a coastal home in which they spend a lot of time.

Access to the original house was via a steep driveway that wound around to the back of the property.

"From the old back door, though, you caught these

glimpses of the sea, which is something we set out to recreate with the new design," director of Hoxha Bailey Architects Pashtrik Hoxha explains. "We wanted to take that idea further and essentially make this home see-through so you could look right through the building to the view.

"Similarly, the main living area in the old house was already in an ideal position. With how elevated the site is from the road, the views extend across to the city



to the west — out to Rangitoto, Devonport, and the North Shore — and along the coast to the east, so these were integral to the concept."

The public spaces in the new house were pushed forwards towards the water, with the private areas — the main bedroom and en suite upstairs, and the guest wing at ground level — set back for privacy.

**Opposite** At ground level, the house is anchored by two concrete buttresses; above, glazing and vertical timber banded with stone create a linearity

**Above** The entrance is to the west, depositing visitors into the centre of the house via a glazed entrance gallery



**Left** A second living area was pushed forwards, creating a sunroom of sorts that feels closer to the water

**Opposite top and left** The kitchen is located on the eastern side of the house, with strong connections to the main living/ dining area, as well as the rear courtyard, pool, and garden

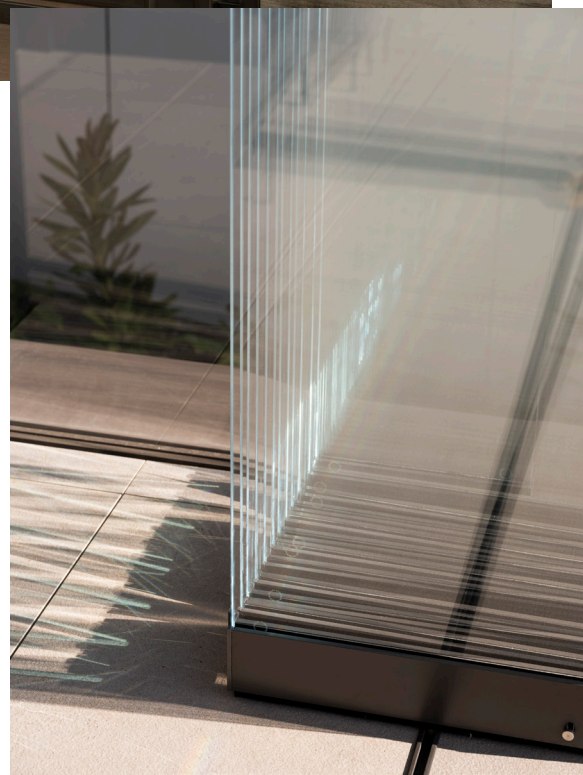
**Opposite right** Trinity Interior Design's Jayne Tolley explains that the vein-cut travertine linear feature for the fireplace "was a considered choice to further enhance and soften the concrete walls ... a soft neutral palette was chosen to enhance the ever-changing colours brought in from outside"

The street-facing elevation is simple and rectilinear: a smaller box on top of a larger box, which sits above a basement anchored to the ground with two concrete buttresses either side of a recessed garage door.

Vertical timber edged with basalt banding delineates the storeys, while a glass balustrade runs across the full width of the central living pavilion. Behind it, on the western end, is a room enclosed by a system of pivoting, concertina glass doors, allowing it to be an outdoor or indoor living space.

In the centre, a more contained, intimate second living area is pushed to the north, creating a sunroom of sorts. On the other side, a small deck is cut out of the form. Behind it, the kitchen is set against a wall closed to the east, allowing for strong connections between the rear courtyard and pool area and the main indoor entertaining spaces.



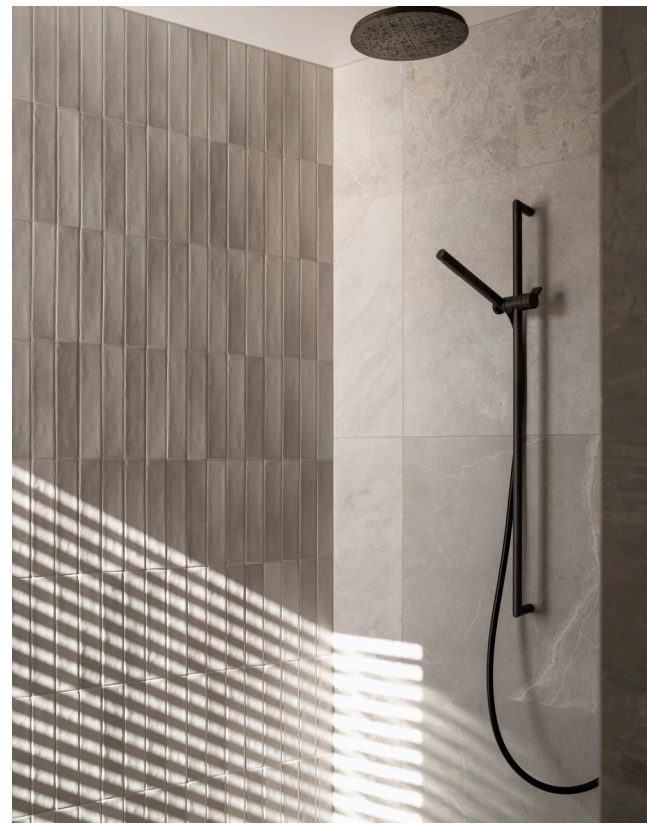


Full-height glazing across the northern elevation draws in the vibrant views of the city and sea. Here, materials are dark and simple, and set against walls in Resene Half White Pointer, echoing the tonal synergies of the exterior.

The pedestrian entrance is at the centre of the building; a pivoting full-height timber door opens to the main circulation space, where board-formed concrete from the exterior wraps inside. Opposite, a slatted oak wall conceals cabinetry, while dark timber flooring sits beneath a skylight overhead.

"It is the meeting of light and materials in a very minimalistic way that makes this area really special. The focus is purely on the textures of the materials; they are the main protagonists in this play," Pashtrik says.

"The circulation space is where everything in the house leads to. Floating timber stairs wrap around a lift that accesses the basement and upper level; to the right is the guest wing, a media room, and the services area. Straight ahead, you get a glimpse of the kitchen through a Crittall door; to the left is the main living and dining area, where you are met with the strikingly beautiful views out to Rangitoto."



**Above left** The living area reflects a refined choice of furnishings, with no piece becoming the hero of the space. Instead, each is attuned to the next and exists with a rich but subtle tonal melody

**Above** Light falls into the en suite shower through a splayed window that allows for views to the sea and a beautiful play of light and shadow on the tiles

**Left** Glass concertina doors allow for the northern outdoor living space to be open to the elements or completely closed and an extension of the indoor living areas

**Opposite** A timber stair wraps around a lift that accesses each of the three levels; upstairs, the main bedroom occupies its own private level





**Top** Switchable glass provides privacy in the main en suite where a freestanding bath sits below a window that frames a view of a neighbouring pōhutukawa

**Top right** A Crittall door separates the main entrance and circulation space from the kitchen and living area

**Right** Light falls onto tiles in the main en suite; curvature and angularity are juxtaposed in the choice of mirror, tapware, and tile

**Opposite** The pool house at the rear was built first, with the main home echoing its form and materiality



At the rear, a louvred courtyard along the eastern boundary offers a second outdoor living area with a connection to an in-ground ‘pool with a view’.

“We positioned the pool so you could get glimpses of the sea through the house,” says the architect. “The pool and a pool house behind it were built before the main house; a key part of what we were trying to achieve with these was that concept of the see-through house, so, from right at the rear of this long, narrow section, you would still be able to look out to the water.”

Upstairs is the main bedroom, designed with inferences of the coastal house that the clients particularly enjoy — where the boundaries between bedroom and living become blurred. Here, there is a versatile space that can be used as an additional guest bedroom, along with a kitchenette, a window seat, and a seating nook; together, they create one space, no part of which commits to a certain function.

The en suite has a large picture window that frames a view of the pool house and a mature pōhutukawa growing in the property behind that encroaches beautifully into the site.

“Having that window in the en suite looking out to the tree, and with the neighbouring house in view, we used

switchable glass, which frosts at the press of a button for privacy,” Pashtrik explains.

“The shower in this room is one of only two elements in the home that has an angle; everything else is rectilinear. A splayed window meant we could create views from the shower, and you get this beautiful light coming in that falls across the tiling.”

The aim, as Pashtrik puts it, was to “create something pure and simplistic”. This house is definitely that, with the perfect dose of elegance and calm, achieved with an artful combination of material; light; and, of course, the overarching element: the sea. **H**



# Orakei House

Auckland  
Hoxha Bailey Architects  
Trinity Interior Design  
Frontline Projects



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|---------------------|----------------------|
| 01. Entrance        | 16. Garage           |
| 02. Gallery         | 17. Wine cellar      |
| 03. Lift            | 18. Workshop         |
| 04. Living / Dining | 19. Covered patio    |
| 05. Kitchen         | 20. Pool house       |
| 06. Scullery        | 21. Gym              |
| 07. Media room      | 22. Pool / Spa pool  |
| 08. WC              | 23. Pool Terrace     |
| 09. Laundry         | 24. Lawn/Garden      |
| 10. Bathroom        | 25. Service corridor |
| 11. Bedroom         |                      |
| 12. Dressing room   |                      |
| 13. Study           |                      |
| 14. Landing         |                      |
| 15. Casual lounge   |                      |

