

AN- CHOR ME

Rich Naish future-proofs a beachside retreat
for his family on a challenged site north of Auckland.

Story by Jo Bates / Photographs by Patrick Reynolds

The entrance, with the main bedroom seen above, faces north; access is through the roller door and up a gangplank. A dry riverbed beneath the house counters the flood zone.





Left: The house sits on 30 telegraph posts that are dug up to 12 metres into the ground. The orange spiral staircase is the metaphorical anchor, which connects the house and sheltered outdoor living area beneath it. Below: The gangplank entrance leads you up past a bedroom and into the living area.

“The house might not be conventional but it works well for the site.”



The Ercol Originals coffee table, sofa, dining table and chairs are by Lucian Ercolani for Ercol from Good Form. The circular artwork is from the Re/Cognition series by Oliver Roake.





At face value, the site for sale at Buckletons, a well-established bach community on the Tāwharanui Peninsula, looked like a prime spot. But due diligence would reveal it sits in a flood zone at the bottom of an overland flow path. The site would become deluged, not just seasonally, but throughout the year. With a house close by on the left, a public reserve and boat ramp at right, and the beach thoroughfare at the front, privacy was another issue. Adding to a potential buyer's woes, the south-facing site is 20 metres from the high-tide mark and sits between two and five metres above sea level.

Digging deeper, buyers would also find that the council stipulates a house cannot be built across an overland flow path. "People understood that to mean you can't build a house on the site," says architect Rich Naish of RTA Studio. "But as long as the path is free to flow, then you can." So, where potential purchasers saw red flags, red tape and regulations, Naish had a keen eye for an opportunity. He was drawn to resolving the dilemma of a damaged coastal site, and by the freedom to create a bespoke holiday home for its occupants – his family.

"The architect in me drew me to the project," says Naish, who was also attracted to the challenge of building in the face of climate change and rising sea levels. "One might say it's very indulgent to build a beach house, but architects have the ability to experiment and create exemplar buildings," he says. This isn't an overstatement when you cast your eye around what has been built, and what continues to be consented, in the name of housing – coastal or otherwise – throughout the country.

His words stack up beautifully here, with a 7.5-metre tall building that is as utterly surprising as it is ambiguous – part boat shed, part house, with an allusion to a vessel beached on the shore.

The dimensions of the section defined the geometry of the building's wedge shape. In fact, the dimensions of the section and the plan are the same. From the northern arrival point, the building is all verticality, while from the beach it is horizontal and discreet, with its face popping up above the trees. The vertical-horizontal rectangles are the same, with the roof and the floor sloping towards the water at the same pitch.

"We haven't built an over-scaled, carbon-soaked concrete-and-steel house on the waterfront," says Naish, in defence of his latest personal project. "It's small in its physical form and carbon footprint, with resilience to climate change, rising sea levels and overland flooding."

As you would a boatshed, putting the house on stilts was the only sensible solution in mitigating the site's compromising factors: 30 telegraph posts descending from nine to 12 metres into the earth anchor it in place. Should the building ever be cast adrift, it won't be for a very, very, very long time.

Band-sawn oak planks line the floor and the walls are white-washed pine. The house was built by Peter and Joe Kirkbride, the same father-and-son team who built Rich Naish's Auckland home, the E-type house. "Sadly Peter died just after completion, so this was his last house. He was a great builder and loved sailing, so building a boat house by the sea was a poignant last project," says Naish.

The metaphorical link, the nautical allusion, is the external spiral staircase – the orange buoy anchoring the building to the land. The staircase connects the upstairs living area to the sheltered living area below, where there’s also space to store the boat and tractor.

To manage the huge pools of water that used to swamp the site, a concrete blanket has been cast beneath the house and covered with stones for erosion protection. Essentially a dry riverbed, it carries rainwater to a culvert, then out to sea. Resembling a driveway during construction, it had the locals baffled.

The main entrance at the home’s northern aspect introduces informality and utilitarianism to the arrival experience. From the driveway, you enter through a roller door at the home’s vertical volume. With a gangplank and raw-steel balustrade, it’s like entering a dockside warehouse. The journey leads you past a bedroom and a switchback places you in the living area. Looking back into the main volume is a timber pod that contains two bedrooms, which are divided by the ‘curtain room’, a multi-functional space that could serve as a second living area or bedroom.

In the main living area, the latticed timber-framed windows are a nod to old-school baches. They provide screening, in the way multi-paned windows used to, and are Naish’s backlash to the multi-stacking sliders that have become commonplace. From a latticework of screening, they bi-fold up to the edges – a contrast of something to nothing. At the building’s exposed sides, tall slotted aluminium windows act as blinkers.

The timber-lined open-plan living space, with its shed-like qualities and exposed beams, is reminiscent of Naish’s Cardrona Hut, an alpine retreat he designed for his family in 2015. That was another “slightly opportunist project”, he says. “To take a challenging site, do something clever on it and increase the value means they are both investments. But that’s the justification because you build them and love them so much that you think ‘how could we possibly sell them?’”

The living area floor is lined with band-sawn oak planks and the walls are white-washed pine. The IMO cabinetry with under-bench sinks keep the kitchen recessive. The pantry, also by IMO, is a free-standing unit.

Recognising the design as a clever solution, the close-knit community has been generally complimentary of the house. “It might not be conventional but it works well for the site,” says Naish.

They probably quite like the extensive planting too, which has beautified this public site. In preparation, exotics such as invasive flame trees were removed to allow natives, including nikau, puriri and kauri, to revitalise. There has also been some serious planting to offset the building’s footprint, with 400 native plants and trees, including pōhutukawa, going into the ground. “This project is super-carbon zero in terms of embodied energy,” says Naish.

What is now affectionately known Buckletons Boat Shed works beautifully for Naish and the family. He has everything here he’d want in a coastal retreat – surfing, mountain biking, fishing, islands and beaches to explore. From deep south to coastal retreat, we anticipate his next exemplar.

Right: The timber pod, as seen from the northern aspect, contains two bedrooms and a multi-functional space that variously serves as a second living area and bedroom. The photographic artwork is by Nina Hayes. **Right, below:** The kitchen and stand-alone pantry are by IMO. Hatches in the bedroom pop open for views and ventilation.





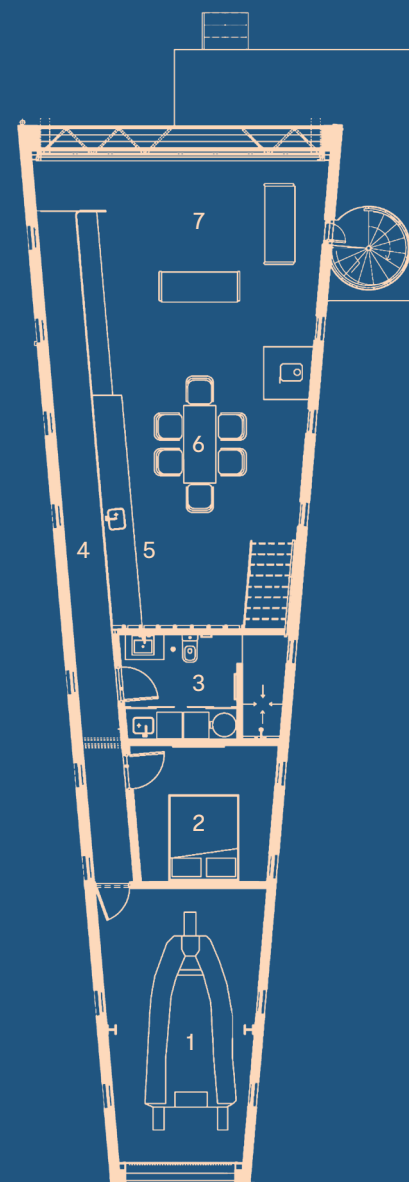
Left: From south to north, the house is a contrast in shape. Right: The slim windows are like blinkers at the public sides of the house.



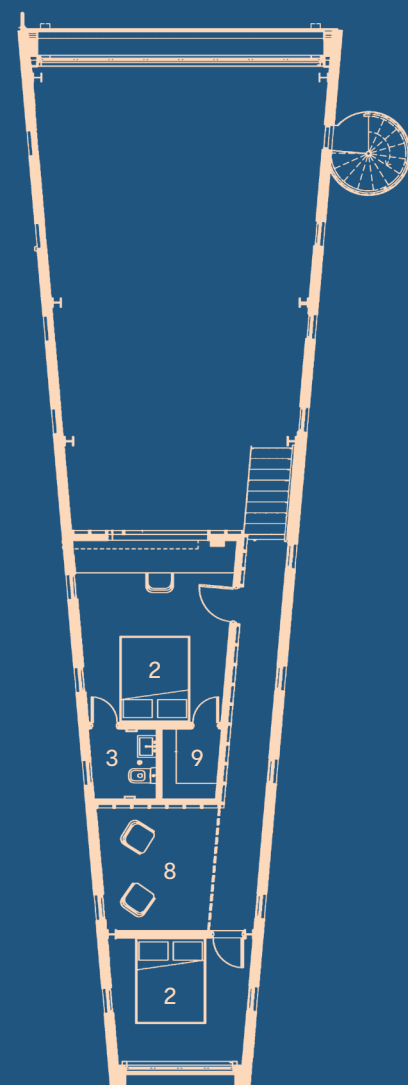
“It’s small in its physical form and carbon footprint, with resilience to climate change, rising sea levels and overland flooding.”



1. Entry/Boat Shed
2. Bedroom
3. Bathroom
4. Ramp
5. Kitchen
6. Dining
7. Living
8. Curtain room
9. Wardrobe



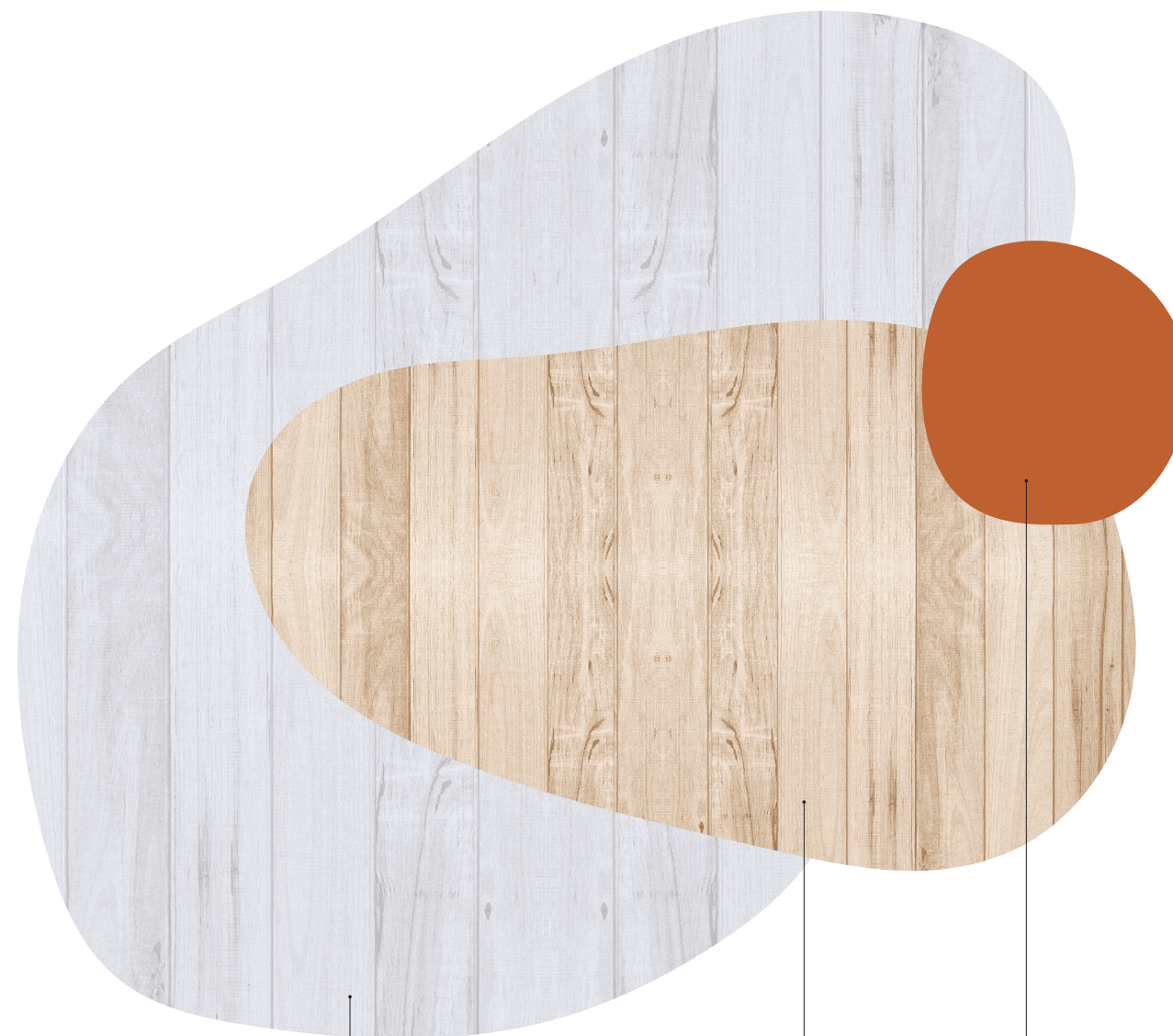
Ground Floor



Upper Floor

PLAN

Colours are as close as printed process allows – always view a physical sample before making your final choice.



Resene Colorwood
Whitewash

Resene
Woodsman Whitewash

Resene
Clockwork Orange

DESIGN IN COLOUR

**A jolt of colour to
an otherwise neutral
timber palette
enlivens a boat shed
north of Auckland.**

Here+Resene

Rich Naish's bach at Buckleton Beach, north of Auckland, is a masterclass in clever design overcoming a difficult site. Subject to flooding – of both the overland and climate-induced kind – the house sits up on poles, allowing water to flow underneath it when needed.

It's a simple but deft idea, which finds a logical expression in what appears to be boat shed. On the outside, it's clad in cedar, stained with Resene Woodsman Whitewash; inside, the pine walls are similarly coloured with Resene Colorwood Whitewash. And that jolt of colour? A staircase in Resene Clockwork Orange, a metaphorical buoy, anchoring this lightweight house to the land.