

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2011

your weekend

Blonde ambition

Gin Wigmore on the blues, a black sheep – and Sinatra's chair

The sands of time

Kiwi beaches now and then

Plus: Book bonanza

A bumper crop of reviews and interviews

THE DOMINION POST



A small modern-day bach has scooped residential honours in the Waikato and Bay of Plenty regional New Zealand Institute of Architecture awards. In the first of a three-part series on the awards, **Sarah Catherall** goes inside to check it out.

An understated beach house hiding behind a giant pohutukawa tree on the Mt Maunganui waterfront stands out for being very different to the sprawling multimillion-dollar mansions nearby.

This week the house was announced as one of five residential winners in the annual New Zealand Institute of Architecture awards for the Waikato and Bay of Plenty region.

Its owners were keen to build a small house that didn't dominate the site and was tucked back from the street to give them privacy from passers-by crowding the busy beach over summer.

They also wanted to respect the original beach cottage on the site, where they had spent the past few summers holidaying. They have retained the 100-year-old timber bach – one of those treasures that is becoming rare on the Mt Maunganui beachfront. Although other similar timber baches have been pulled down to make way for glass and plaster palaces, the cottage at No 73 Marine Parade

and the big pohutukawa tree out the front are both landmarks.

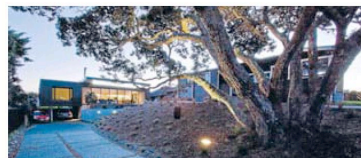
Says architect Evan Mayo, of Hamilton-based Architecture Bureau: "The owners didn't want the new house to dominate the old cottage. The cottage is very much part of the character of the street, and the owners wanted to be respectful of it."

The new bach was designed to give the owners more space because the cottage is only 70 square metres and has two bedrooms, so it wasn't big enough for the friends and family they wanted to accommodate over summer.

The end result is a beach house that is simple and relaxed, allowing them to continue to enjoy the laidback holidays that they treasured in the original cottage.

They also wanted a small house that could be divided into two zones – a main living and bedroom area just for them, and a secret wing running horizontally behind it with three extra bedrooms for guests. When the couple are there on their own, they can close off this wing, living in the smaller zone which is oriented towards the ocean and views.

Just 135 square metres in



The living area and exterior of the bach, sited on the highest point of the property.



Ply lines the hallway of the bach.

size, the beach house is intentionally small – the bedrooms at the back are only 2.1m by 2.3m in size. The materials and products have been chosen to show that this is a simple, robust and sustainable home.

"They wanted the space but they didn't want it to feel like a big house. There seems to be a belief that building big is better, but as a house gets too big, it can't function as well."

One of the challenges that Mayo faced was the site itself. Half of the section at No 73 is a low-lying sand dune, so the side and rear used to be a dark backyard which was a storey

lower than the rest of the land. Mayo cleverly sited the new house on top of the highest point – held up by a retaining wall – cantilevering the master bedroom out towards the fence line.

A deck and lawn connect the two houses, where friends and family gather to socialise when the weather allows.

The owners wanted a house that was in stark contrast to their Ron Sang-designed home in Hamilton, which is minimalist in its design, boasting white walls and floor-to-ceiling heavy glazing. In Mt Maunganui, they're surrounded by timber and ply cabinetry in their kitchen and living area. Similarly, ply covers the walls in the hallway behind the kitchen, and in the rear bedrooms.

"Unlike the surrounding homes, the design of this house is intentionally relaxed and holiday-like. There is no front entry, the living area is open to the outside, and like camping, everyday activities are connected to the outdoors."

Like a tent, the house is also designed to be moved if the owners want to relocate it one day. However, they are so enamoured with their "holiday home" that they have shifted permanently from Hamilton to Mt Maunganui, using the cottage as an office from which they run their business. "It really has exceeded their expectations," he says.

Next week: Canterbury winners