

# ***STRONG SYMMETRY***



# AND SIMPLICITY



THIS IS THE FIRST **WILL TATTON ARCHITECTURE** DESIGNED HOME WE HAVE FEATURED IN **UNO**.

OUR REPORTER TALKED TO WILL ABOUT THE DESIGN PROCESS BEHIND THIS OPEN PLAN CONTEMPORARY HOME SITUATED ON THE FRINGE OF TAURANGA.

ALTHOUGH YOU ARE BETTER KNOWN FOR YOUR MODERNIST HOMES AT MOUNT MAUNGANUI, YOU ALSO DESIGN HOMES IN THE COUNTRY.

OUR READERS WOULD BE UNAWARE THAT IN FACT YOU GREW UP WORKING ON A FARM IN THE KING COUNTRY. HOW DID THAT UPBRINGING INFLUENCE YOUR DESIGN IDEAS ON THIS PROJECT?

I grew up helping my father break in 400 acres of steep hill country into farmland, and planting and pruning 600 acres of one of the country's early farm-forests. We are now on our second crop of trees so this is a lifelong connection for me.

Those years working on the land, exposed to all the elements, have given me a keen sense of how to relate human needs to the elements and the land forms.

As a result the design for this home has a strong connection with the land, particularly with indoor outdoor flows and the feeling of spaciousness which the land demands.

FOR THIS HOME WE ARE LOOKING AT, WHAT WAS THE CLIENT'S BRIEF?

Having come from England where they lived in a traditional English farmhouse, they wanted a design that was light and airy with much more of a connection between indoors and outdoors.

The clients showed us a house in Europe which was inspirational to them; a large mono-pitch pavilion with one long side able to be completely opened.

They wanted strong and simple forms. The apparently opposing challenges were to retain the feel of openness the site offered while still providing sheltered outdoor spaces, and to give wide open views out from the house but still have privacy as well.

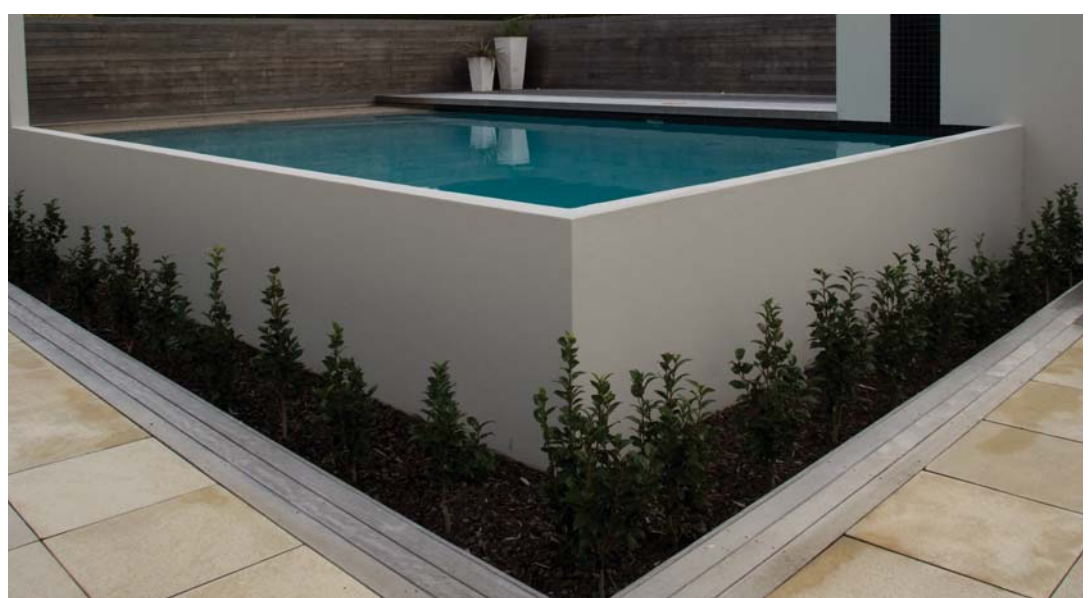
WHAT SITE PREPARATION WAS NEEDED?

This is an interesting site in that it is a larger size than town subdivisions, but is not on a farm or lifestyle block.

So there was some, but not total, freedom. A restriction line affected the house location and the bank behind was formed to give a sense of enclosure to the sheltered outdoor areas.

WHAT IS THE 'ARTICULATION' OF THE HOUSE?

I like strong and simple design. The forms making up the home are proportioned carefully as part of an overall composition and express clearly the different parts and activities inside. For example the main living spaces are in a kind of glass pavilion, the guest spaces in another pavilion, and the main bedroom suite another again, all readable by their distinct roofs and forms in relation to each other.





They come together in a unified whole, emphasised by strong symmetry and by a simplicity which I think has a welcome humility to it. Particularly at the courtyard side it is almost plain in its simplicity. The front of the house has solid wall forms guiding us into the entrance, and interweaving the two separate end roof forms together. The result is a controlled and refined, almost European aesthetic.

*THE OPPOSING ROOFS WORK WELL, GIVING GOOD PROPORTIONS AND A SIMPLE FORM. WHY WAS THIS DESIGN CHOSEN?*

Initial ideas started with building in two stages. I have been working for some years now, wherever there is room, to attenuate the plan of country houses, both contemporary and traditional. These spread-out single-level layouts are great for ease of living and access to outside from most rooms. The two roofs here serve to formalise and frame, by vertical elements, the 'wandering' nature of the plan layout.

*WHAT EXTERIOR CLADDING MATERIALS DID YOU CHOOSE?*

We used dark stained band-sawn ply soffits all round, and aluminium facings to the large glass walls for the living pavilion. The joins are emphasised to match the door spacing and they give a crafted feel and help add to the sense of order. Plastered brick veneer is used also with lightweight concrete panels over the large openings.

*HOW HAVE THE PREVAILING WINDS BEEN DEALT WITH FROM A DESIGN AND A LIVING PERSPECTIVE?*

The prevailing Westerly winds and cold South-westerlies affect the site more than blustery Northerlies which are more heard in the shelterbelt trees than felt. The extension of the main bedroom and living pavilion forms are to create a sheltered courtyard between - away from the Westerlies.





*THERE ARE THREE SEPARATE OUTDOOR SPACES - HOW DO THESE WORK?*

The house is designed so activities can follow the arc of the sun from the courtyard in the morning, then to the deck outside the main glass living room wall, and then later from the Western deck, the longer view down towards the river and sunsets in the evenings.

Kids can enjoy making a lot of happy noise in the pool while parents relax further away on the Western deck, and still watch through the glass pavilion living-room. There are many choices and combinations here, to suit the wind direction.

*ONE OF THE STAR FEATURES OF THE OUTDOOR AREA IS THE WONDERFUL ELEVATED SWIMMING POOL WITHOUT A FENCE DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF IT. HOW WAS THIS ACHIEVED?*

Regulations state that you need a wall at 1.2 metres so this was achieved by having a large garden around the front perimeter which is 1.2 metres wide and the wall of the pool is 1.2 metres from ground level. The end result of the Mark Cashmore designed pool is a wonderful feature that has a real connection with the outdoor space, and with the house due to the careful placement on the living room axis. Once the trees get some growth up to pool height, it will be a visual masterpiece I think.

*WHAT ASPECTS OF THE EXTERIOR ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?*

I'm very pleased with the way the building contrasts lightweight, open shapes with

heavy, closed shapes - they work so well together.

*THE HOUSE FEELS VERY WELCOMING. I ESPECIALLY LIKED THE VIEW STRAIGHT THROUGH AND OUT TO THE OUTDOOR AREA AND SWIMMING POOL.*

It was important to give visitors something special on arriving, and especially the owners who are the most frequent visitors! As you enter you actually look right through a courtyard garden to the pool - a nice surprise. A 'crossroads' is created too so there are choices and this feels good as a meeting space.

*ON THIS PROJECT, THE OWNERS HAD MUCH INVOLVEMENT WITH THE INTERIOR DESIGN WHICH I BELIEVE IS THE ENGLISH WAY. I PARTICULARLY LIKED THE USE OF A MIRROR AS THE SPLASH-BACK, AND USE OF AMERICAN WALNUT IN THE KITCHEN.*

Yes and they have done a great job. They brought back their treasured furniture from the United Kingdom which all had to fit in somewhere.

*EVERY GOOD HOUSE SHOULD HAVE A GAMES ROOM AND HOME THEATRE SPACE! WHAT WAS THE BRIEF FOR THIS?*

I had to achieve three things. First it had to accommodate a full-sized billiard table and home projector system. Second it had to be able to be made dark easily for watching movies and for billiard games, but then also have light during the day. Thirdly it had to be able to be opened up, or closed off. We've met all three criteria.

*I WAS SURPRISED TO SEE AN EXTERNAL WINDOW AT THE END OF THE HALLWAY AND THOUGHT THIS WORKED VERY WELL, ADDING TO THE CONNECTION OF INSIDE AND OUT. IS THIS CONNECTION A FEATURE YOU COMMONLY USE WITH YOUR DESIGNS?*

I'm exploring a pavilion country home theme with this house and by 'pulling apart' the forms, the residual spaces between become very interesting. In this case the hall end can now look into one of these garden courtyards.

The brief called for no dark hallways so this brings light in very well.

With a single level home of this size a hallway is inevitable and rather than being timid about it this creates a bold axis.

*I ENJOYED THE GENEROUS GUEST WING.*

Yes. This was a must and it had to provide guests with their own space as sometimes they have extended stays and this works very well.

It's great to see how by everyone having autonomy they enjoy each other's company more.

*WHO DID THE LIGHTING PLAN?*

Firefly in Auckland and it looks especially great at night with green neon mood lighting down the hall way and great outdoor lighting.

*FINAL COMMENTS?*

I have thoroughly enjoyed working on this home relating people to the land and to each other effectively, and evolving the concept and the format of the pavilion country house. ■