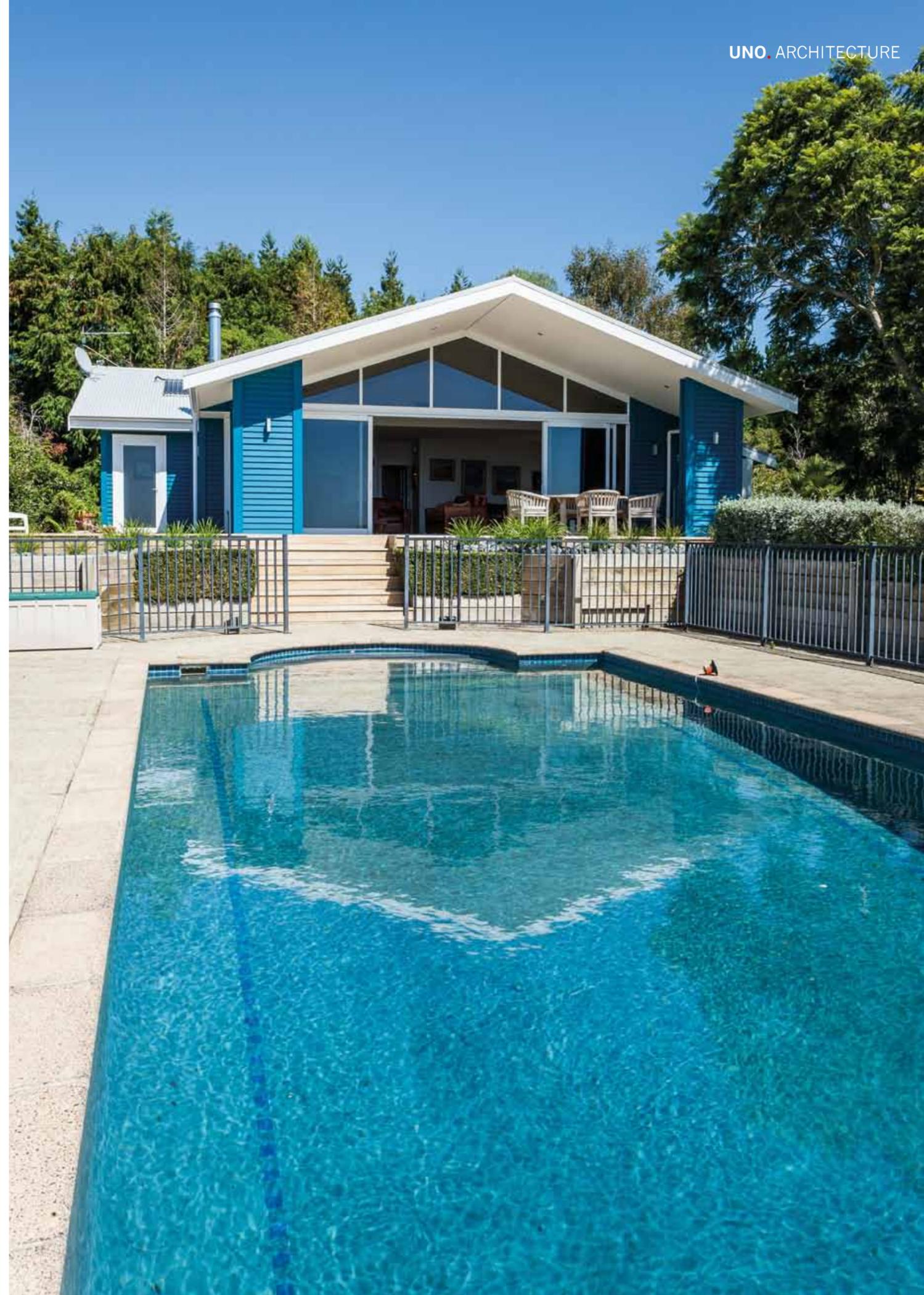


# hilltopescape

WORDS ANDY MARTIN / PHOTOS AARON BRYANT



'WILDHAVEN' IS NESTLED IN THE HILLS OF WHAKAMARAMARA ROAD IN THE BAY OF PLENTY. IT IS A RECENTLY REBUILT B&B WITH ITS OWN SENSE OF SPACE AND TIME.



In a park-like setting of spacious lawns and gracious mature trees, Wildhaven enjoys elevated uninterrupted views of Tauranga and Mount Maunganui.

Whitehaven's origins stretch back some 100 years when this building started life as horse stables. Numerous and varied transformations were undertaken over the years before the current owners enlisted the help of local Architectural Designer, Brendon Gordon, to breathe some much needed new life into the old house. This required being sympathetic to the history of this wonderful site.

I talked to Brendon about the design process.

**What was the client's brief to you?**

The design brief was to tidy and open it up - create open living areas and private spaces that linked the outdoor room on the northern face with the heated swimming pool below. We wanted to maximise natural light as much as possible and capture the great views. We also needed to create new private sleeping spaces downstairs. The KISS philosophy was utilised to the utmost - 'Keep It Simple Stupid!'

**What key elements drove the design?**

The design was contexturally to respect the existing dwelling, although we didn't end up retaining much in the final design. We wanted to create symmetry by adjusting proportions appropriate to the architectural language of the building. First and foremost, I wanted to deliver a contextual response to the setting. When I first drove up the owners had already started stripping back the existing

building. I've got to say it was a bit of an eyesore! At first we did some concept plans for a separate stand-alone contemporary house, and were just going to freshen up the structure. This soon took over as the primary focus.

**What used to occupy the site?**

It was the original horse stables, later turned into a house with varying renovations along the way.

**What exterior cladding materials did you choose and why?**

The owners emigrated from the UK and had very traditional tastes so that dictated what materials we chose. Their pick was cedar weatherboards with traditional facing boards with attention to geometry and proportion to create elegance and timelessness.

**Who chose the bright colours?**

That was the owners. The weatherboards came pre-painted and were toned down a little with the final coat of paint. I was a bit surprised when I first saw the colour but it has grown on me and works perfectly with the contrasting leafy colours!

**How many outdoor zones are there and how do they all work?**

There is the main sheltered outdoor space at the front for the morning sun and to capture the views, and an evening deck to capture the last of the light. It is important in a design to have surprises - everything is not immediately obvious. This deck offers a completely different feeling looking out onto the garden and trees and is a real sun-trap.



**What aspects of the exterior are you most proud of?**

I actually like the fact that we have been able to achieve some elevation, but also have a flat space coming off the second storey and living area opening out onto the front lawn. It gives the impression that the house is hunkered into a hillside and works really well.

**How was the internal design approached?**

It was quite simple really. Unlike many old houses that have a lot of small spaces, we wanted to create a large space which fed the rooms off it. The kitchen is the hub - the social centre where the house is enjoyed. It does a great job of linking all the other spaces around it. This is considered design.

**What internal aspects pleased you especially?**

Two things really; I really like the old original Rimu floorboards that we were able to use. They brings together a nice blend of old versus new. Secondly the big aperture windows' slider that opens up the view. Looking back from the kitchen towards the Mount there is a stunning framed landscape which would be as good as it gets I reckon. The client has furnished the house superbly with their collection of antiques, artworks, and furnishings which bring a nice balance of old and new, with the building creating a backdrop or gallery.

**Final comments?**

I think praise where it's due and that is to the Shaw Builders' team who did a stunning job working with an enthusiastic owner who was never short of ideas. The house proves that done well, a bit of the old and a bit of the new can work in harmony. ■



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