



# SMALL WONDER

Bigger isn't always better — and the proof's in this jewel box of a dwelling, rich in luxurious detail.

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## THE PROJECT

Architecture practice Bureaux and Alistair Raw of Raw Landscape & Build renovated this three-bedroom home in Auckland's Herne Bay for a couple and their two-year-old son.

Although a causal link between a '90s Smashing Pumpkins concert and the award-winning renovation of this heritage home can't definitively be made, neither can its influence be ruled out. A getting-to-know-you phase usually comes first in any client-architect relationship, but when collaborating on the update of this circa-1906 villa in Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland's Herne Bay, Bureaux's Maggie Carroll was able to skip all that. Maggie reckons she and her client Tim have known of each other since she was about 14, thanks to him being mates with her family friends' sons and her latterly working on properties for his parents. Including that night at the gig they both attended, he was always in the background, and then one day... "Tim called me almost as soon as he bought this house and said it'd always been a dream of his to work with Bureaux, and asked if he could book us in," says Maggie.

With the pair's long-term connection ensuring a certain shorthand and level of trust, all that was left to do was welcome Tim's wife Paige into the fold as an equal part of the process. The couple had bought their home knowing it needed a bit of a facelift, and the >

**OPPOSITE** An unexpected highlight of this project was the fireplace surround. Bureaux had proposed an updated design that spoke the new build's language, but when the wall lining came away, the original brick structure was revealed — and Tim loved it, so they opted to retain another bit of the original house. Bureaux is a full-service practice offering interior design and styling services as well, so the team assisted the couple with a few selections. Here in the living room, the furniture — including a Take a Line for a Walk swivel chair by Moroso from Matisse — is arranged in a conversational way and can be turned to focus on the fire or TV. The Abstract rug it's sitting on is from Loom.

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shared-history shortcut saw Maggie and her Bureaux team respond to their brief for a larger dwelling with 'wow' quick smart. But when their initial plans for expansion were scuppered by the council due to heritage constraints, they were forced back to the drawing board.

In what was ultimately a fortuitous twist, they began dreaming smaller. Out went the proposed second-storey addition and other enlarging elements, and in came something even more special. Rather than focusing on going up and out, they turned their attention inwards, to creating the most exceptional spaces possible within the villa's existing footprint.

Starting from scratch to reorganise the rooms, the team gutted the interior. Their design moved most of the typical central hallway to open up the living areas, and refitted the three bedrooms and two bathrooms to support them. The handsome, curved bank of cabinetry that now leads you into the living zones came from altering the size of the bedrooms and position of the main bathroom, while softening the transition into the kitchen and carving out a spot in the living space in which to display Tim and Paige's collection of precious objects as a vitrine would. >

**RIGHT** "I popped by the house the other night to find Paige had the pendant lights on, and there was beautiful evening light coming through the living room windows, which felt so restful and serene," says Maggie. "I was almost surprised by how gentle it felt; despite the fact they've got some really strong features with the cabinetry and the stone, it just felt really comfortable. There was a lot of character in the villa and I love the way that it's all come through in the new interior. I thought the evening light was really lovely because it was highlighting all of those things — you could see the depth of the detail and the relief we added."



**ABOVE & OPPOSITE** The living space cabinetry in bleached American white oak with a white oil finish is joined by aged brass shelving (visible on the previous pages) in this area lit by Mei 90 pendant lights by Bover from ECC. "They're stunning when they're turned on — like oversized lanterns," says Maggie. Bureaux worked in association with ECC on the home's lighting, which both sets the mood and enhances the couple's art collection. "We always try to avoid lots of downlights in homes because I find it's a very commercial look, so for us it's all about the balance of light through a space and taking the opportunity to change the mood through different settings, so you can turn off the pendants but have your art lighting on, or turn on a floor lamp and have a table lamp somewhere else," says Maggie. "I think your light should be convenient for the body and not just coming from above, and this adds a warmth to the experience as well."



**ABOVE** “Behind the dining table are a couple of chairs that face west, and Paige tells me Tim just loves sitting there in the evenings with a drink — he can see and talk to her in the kitchen and look at the fire as well,” says Maggie. “As a mother myself, who likes being able to keep an eye on things, I think it’s important for those spaces not to feel like they’re all one open plan, yet still have a good sight lines. It means you can have friends on the couch and chat to them, without feeling like you’re preparing dinner in the living room.”



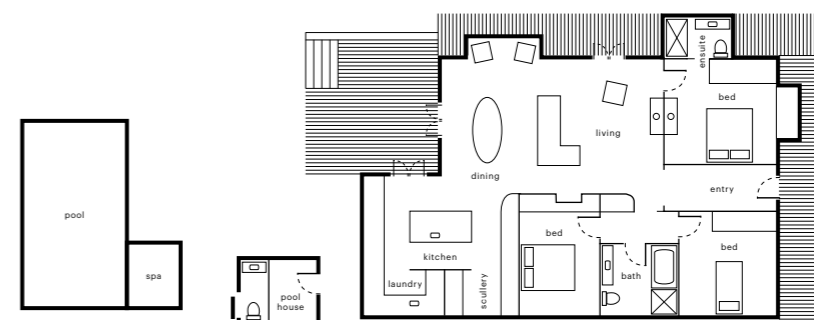
**KITCHEN** Stealing some space from the still-big bedrooms made the kitchen more spacious and allowed for the inclusion of an island. The idea behind the feature wall “was that it would feel like a blade of marble magically standing there,” says Maggie of the Invisible White marble from SlabCo, cut by PSP Stonecraft. “It’s a really sneaky wall in a way, because it’s hiding a lot of function but it’s also an incredibly beautiful backdrop.” Below a sculptural Cercle et Trait pendant light by CVL from ECC, the benchtop is Pukekawa Honed Prime Stone from Prime Panels.



**ABOVE & OPPOSITE** With the laundry also tucked into this space, it turned into more of a European-style kitchen, to which Bureaux added new appliances. Here and in the bathrooms and bedrooms, the 385 Drawer Pulls for the cabinetry by DBJ Furniture are by Halliday & Baillie and the brass Buddy tapware is by Progetto from Plumblin. Minor details like these handles let you know the interior is all one story. "It's a very complete package," says Maggie.



**ABOVE** The colour palette elsewhere in the house is quite chalky, so Bureaux purposefully went dark in the main bathroom. "It's quite a shift to take yourself into a very different space like this — it makes it much more interesting and rich," says Maggie. "I remember being on site and saying to Tim and Paige, 'Are you guys going to be okay with this?' But we did it and they were like, 'Wow, this is amazing.' Apparently everyone comments on it." The couple say that the dark palette paired with the deep bath creates the perfect space in which to relax.



Another key design move avoided the standard villa experience of glimpsing into the private spaces when proceeding down the hallway by creating discreet access points into the bedrooms. Now as you enter the house through the original leadlight door, there's a short corridor retaining the character detail that then becomes a lobby from which two bedrooms and the main bathroom are accessed, concealed by a cavity slider to form a suite-like sanctuary. Meanwhile, secluded entry to the couple's sleep space was established beside the living room fireplace where shelving once stood, giving Tim and Paige a lovely slip-away moment without compromising the size of their room.

Continue down the hallway, past that tall, curved cabinetry and bam! You're met with a breathtaking full-height wall of marble, another trick that added both form and function — this time to the kitchen, with a scullery tucked around one side of the slab and the laundry on the other.

Achieving the project's aim to maximise the luxury in the house meant every surface was re-crafted in some way, and furniture and objects brought in where necessary. The concept of the house as a jewel box became a theme with regards to colour (tonal, softened, >

**LEFT** Each bathroom has a different look but they're linked through the use of materials seen in the rest of the home, such as aged brass. In keeping with the stone in the kitchen, the custom-made vanity in the main bathroom is topped with Nordic Grey marble from Italian Stone. There's lots of detail in the mosaic Seta Fumo 5 wall tiles and Seta Cemento tiles around the bath and shower too (pictured opposite), all by Appiani from Artedomus. The steel shower doors were custom designed by Bureaux in collaboration with SaintLeo. The lighting includes a Dioscuri 25 Surface Mount Light by Artemide (with custom brass backing) from ECC.

## A FINE BALANCE HAS BEEN STRUCK BETWEEN DISPLAY AND TIDYING AWAY.

warming neutrals that instill a sense of calm), texture (a material palette favouring stone, timber and brass) and detail (lots of it in a relatively small home).

If the average villa alteration adds an extension on the back, what this project proves is you can make bolder yet era-appropriate moves without feeling compromised by a lack of scale. “Something I’m proud of is how the reinvention of spaces has improved how our clients live,” says Maggie. “I’m really motivated now to work within smaller footprints and make them the most effective they can be. It’s not necessarily the best thing to go big – you just need to be clever, and if you can add more than one function to each room without compromising, I think it works even better.”

For their efforts, the Bureaux team were rewarded with the presentation of a Gold Pin in the Residential Interior Architecture category of the Designers Institute of New Zealand’s 2021 Best Design Awards, but the real triumph occurred closer to home. Tim and Paige confided in Maggie that they’d toyed with the idea of moving house with their growing family, before realising they loved where they are too much to leave so soon. That was music to Maggie’s ears. “I think it’s a great success story,” she says. 🍷

**THIS PAGE** Ample storage has been inserted into this main suite and the other two bedrooms, including full-height wardrobes. “It’s a lot of pressure to keep everything organised when it’s out in the open,” says Maggie. “An important role we have to play as architects is to give people respite when they need it and not have everything on show.” Because it has little natural light, the ensuite was deliberately made pale, plus the glossiness of the tiles helps reflect light, making it seem roomier than it is. The vanity top is Superlative marble from SCE Stone & Design, while the wall tiles are porcelain glazed finger mosaics and the floor tiles are honed basalt tiles, all from Design Source.



**ABOVE** From the early 1900s to now, it’s been quite the transformation for this property. “We were very sensitive to what was there, so the exterior of the home just got new paint,” says Maggie. The jewel-box concept extends into the backyard, with the gem-toned pool surrounded by textured concrete by builder and landscaper Alistair Raw, who along with developing the garden plan oversaw the addition of an outdoor fire.