

RK RESIDENCE

SEEAR-BUDD ROSS

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Styling by Seear-Budd Ross and Simon James • Landscape by Xanthe White Design • Structural Engineering by Focus Engineering and Construction



Bookended by the ocean and the foothills in Wellington's harbourside suburb of Eastbourne, RK Residence by Seear-Budd Ross is superbly suited to its surrounds. Designed for a young family, the home effortlessly embraces public and private conditions, which are experienced with welcomed informality and ease.



Crafted largely from weathered timber and light, sand-coloured materials, this home imitates its native surrounds through texture and tone whilst reflecting the neighbouring vernacular in form. Alluring in its equanimity, it settles into the landscape with great repose, to which there are several contributing factors. Firstly, the stretched hip roof form, inspired by the typology typical to the area, creates an appealingly wide, low-slung profile. “The neighbouring houses are all fairly modest but with prominent roofs – either hipped or gabled – so across the street, there’s this stacking of different forms, and [this house] blends quite well into that context,” says Thomas Seear-Budd, Co-Director of Seear-Budd Ross. This roof structure was integral in the pursuit for a highly unified exterior, as it neatly encompasses the garage and the dwelling, creating a sense of continuity and calm in keeping with the landscape at its edges. Also, the heat-treated New Zealand pine cladding, selected for its likeness to the driftwood found on the shores nearby, expresses a rough-textured finish and greyish hue attuned with the environment.

The seamless exterior expression denotes little of the home’s sense of volume within – a feeling enhanced by the arrival sequence – and its pavilion-style layout. Clad entirely in New Zealand-grown macrocarpa, a timber that omits a fragrant, spicy scent, the entry nook is a “cave-like” space. This consideration for scale, materiality and haptics is a neat example of Seear-Budd Ross’s sensory approach to architecture. As Thomas says, “in a lot of our projects, we think quite carefully about the atmospheres we’re trying to create.” He adds, “the scent of the timber injects a lovely smell into the house, which you get as soon as you walk through the front door.” The entrance also features a low ceiling and dim lighting and, as such, the initial impression of this home is potent and compressed. In contrast, the adjoining living pavilion, featuring an exposed vaulted macrocarpa-clad ceiling, opens with a sense of overwhelming release.



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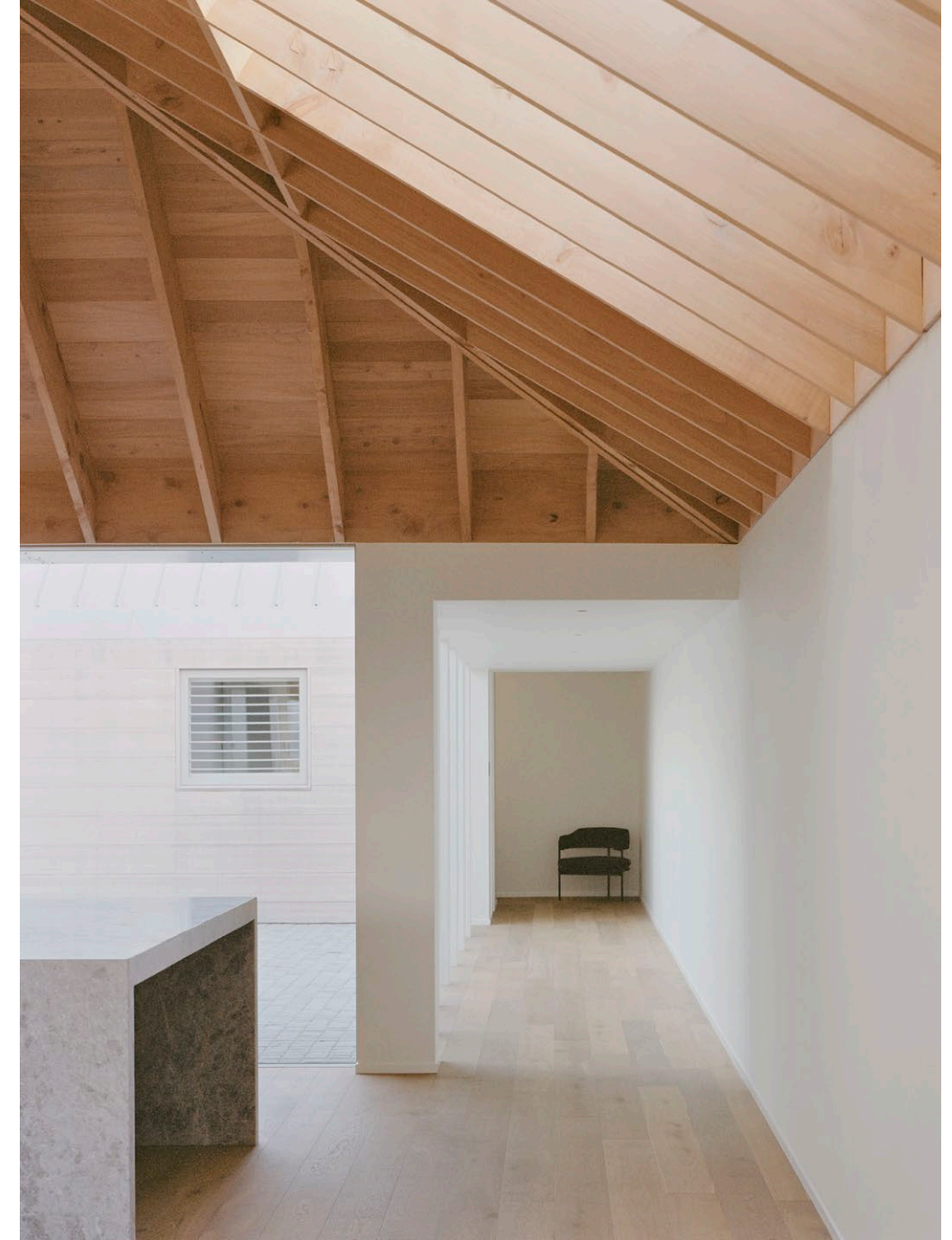
Here, generous views to the ocean draw the interiority outwards and natural light is plentiful; it is lofty and dignified yet the resounding feeling is understated and inviting. As James Ross, Co-Director of the studio, reflects, “one of the words we were thinking about at the start of the project was informal – we wanted it to be the type of house you could walk through barefoot with sand on your feet and not be super fussy about it.” The flooring is a band-sawn oak with a matte finish; there is limestone throughout the bathrooms and kitchens, and the macrocarpa is an essential part of this story, too. As James offers, the materiality is an “extension of what we were trying to achieve with the project, which is simplicity and clarity through the careful use of high-quality materials.” In addition, a notable level of craft has been employed throughout the home. For example, skylight frames, internal rafter fixings and roofing elements such as downpipes and flashings are all expertly detailed and concealed to enhance the idea of a distilled piece of architecture.

As well as the living pavilion, there is a two-storey sleeping pavilion at the back of the site with a roof terrace capturing the evening sun. These two structures are separated by an internal courtyard with a glazed

passageway running its length, connecting the front to the back. As James explains, “the house has a range of conditions depending on how the clients want to use it, with a public landscaped space at the front and a private landscaped space in the middle.” The front is deliberately exposed, with visible connection to the street and the harbour, whilst the courtyard and sleeping quarters are progressively more private in expression and experience. Thomas says it was crucial to create “porosity” to enhance connection between the three volumes, specifically by dissolving some of the boundaries. Thus, in the living pavilion, glass doors slide away across two elevations, creating links through the site as well as unobstructed sightlines from the centre of the home to its wider context.

Among RK Residence’s many pleasing features, its greatest appeal lies in its ability to – as James says – “flex depending on the occupancy [and] be dynamic in relation to what’s required of it.” This exists with thanks to interesting spatial sequences and sensorial qualities that direct the experience and inspire curiosity. Yet, Seear-Budd Ross’s balanced approach ensures the focus never strays too far from a palpable ambience of resonant restfulness.







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