



Linking the elements

With its soaring, multi-layered roof and series of interconnected pavilions, this house mimics the topography of the ridge line and frames key aspects of the sea view

It's a dilemma facing many architects and designers – how do you maximise the view and the sunlight from a cliff top site that faces away from the sun? Throw in height restrictions and the design becomes even more of a challenge.

Architect Les Dykstra was faced with such a scenario for this coastal holiday home. He also had the added complication of clients with differing tastes.

“One of the owners is keen on traditional Tuscan hill-town architecture, while the other prefers strong, contemporary

design and cubist, linear forms.”

Dykstra says the solution was to create a cluster of modern pavilions, linked by a gallery and arranged in an arc that allows different views to be explored as one moves through the house.

“In some respects, the arrangement is similar to a Tuscan hill town, with its mix of densely located buildings,” he says. “The house also provides the differing roof shapes typical of such a village.”

As the house is on a ridge line, local bylaws posed height restrictions.

Above left: This clifftop house spreads along the ridge line, its layered roof shapes echoing the topography of the land. A soaring roof marks the entrance at far right, while wedge-shaped roofs in opposite directions reinforce the formality.

Top: With the front doors open, there is a view through the lobby to the landscape beyond.

Above: Outdoor fireplaces – one on each side of the deck – can warm this courtyard in the evenings.





"The house could not exceed the height of the ridge line or its associated planting, so the site was excavated to provide a building platform," says Dykstra.

The ridge line also determined the shape of the roofs – their soaring, curving shapes follow the topography of the land. In a welcoming gesture, a banana-shaped roof opens up the entrance, then drops down to compress the lobby space, before rising again to open up to the view and outdoor living area beyond.

"Two wedge-shaped roofs either side

of the entrance soar in opposite directions, setting up a formality that is appropriate for the front of the house," says Dykstra.

There are also roofs with a subtle S shape, such as the roof above the formal living area, which serve as linking devices between the front and rear of the house. Connections between these areas are further emphasised by a series of water features between each of the pavilions.

At the entrance, however, large aluminium doors block the view for guests, helping to create a sense of anticipation. The

doors open to reveal the full extent of the view through sliding glass doors beyond. With all the doors open, the pavilion-style design is even more apparent – the living room, for example, effectively becomes an outdoor room.

High windows follow the angled roof lines throughout the house, making the roof appear to float within the space.

"This was a way to bring the morning sun into the west-facing living areas," says Dykstra. "The windows ensure sunlight filters in throughout the day."

The building materials enhance the contemporary design. The roof soffits and fascias, for example, feature composite aluminium panels, while the sleek, plastered walls reinforce the uncluttered, streamlined look.

"The shapes within this house add to its complexity, so it wasn't necessary to add further adornment," says Dykstra.

As well as the varying rooflines, there are tapered chimneys adding a strong, sculptural element. These are double-sided, providing fireplaces in the living

and family rooms, as well as on the outside walls of these rooms, where they sit either side of an outdoor dining courtyard.

While the formal living and family pavilions are linked by the entrance lobby, a long gallery connects two separate bedroom wings, with the master bedroom at the far end of the house. A separate, self-contained guesthouse is located beyond this pavilion.

All the main rooms open onto decks or patios. The kitchen has a pass-through window to a sheltered north-facing terrace.

Preceding pages: Both the formal and informal living areas open to an expansive deck and elevated swimming pool.

Facing page, top: Although this sunny, sheltered seating area is at the front of the house, it is enclosed by attractive landscaping.

Facing page, lower: A series of water features run between the pavilions, linking the front and rear of the house.

Above: Exposed aggregate concrete floors enhance the beach house feel of the open-plan interior.



Left: Large sliding glass doors enable the formal living area to become an outdoor room. The high windows that follow the roofline make the roofs appear to float, and also allow sunlight to filter through to all areas of the house.

Above: Grouped seating in the formal living pavilion is positioned to make the most of the sea views.



Above: The spacious master suite pavilion features bifold doors that open up the room to the view.

Right: Red sofas and dark wood panelling introduce a strong graphic element to the family living pavilion. The chimney has a double-sided fireplace.

Legend for plan: 1 entrance, 2 kitchen, 3 formal living room, 4 study, 5 family room, 6 gallery, 7 bedrooms, 8 master bedroom, 9 deck, 10 swimming pool, 11 guest house.



With outdoor seating areas on three sides of the house, there is always a sheltered place to sit, says Dykstra.

A swimming pool was built at the side of the cliff – the slope dictating the need for a built-up rather than in-ground design. Its elevated position and cantilevered deck enhance the sense of drama.

“The house was designed to provide a variety of indoor and outdoor spatial and visual experiences that make it an enjoyable place in which to live and entertain,” says Dykstra.

Architect: Les Dykstra NZIA, and Ricardo Jimenez, Architects Les Dykstra (Auckland)

Interior design: Owners

Builder: Mitchell Homes

Landscaping: Terry Witchman, Palmers Pakuranga

Landscaping supplies: Skapes Landscaping

Construction: Concrete block and plaster

Swimming pool: Designed by Architects Les Dykstra, built by Frontier Pools

Exterior balustrading: Metro Glass

Water features: Freedom Furniture; Contemporary Water Sculpture

Outdoor furniture: Deck chairs from DeDeCe; concrete furniture and planters from Sanstone

Soffits, fascias and front doors: Composite aluminium

Windows: Miller Design

Doors: Exterior – Saad Joinery; interior – Best Doors

Flooring: Peter Fell coloured concrete

Fireplaces: Living Flame

Lighting: Platinium Projects

Dining suite, TV wall unit and curtains: Bos Design

Formal living room cream sofa: Lounge Ponsonby

Kitchen manufacturer: Fyfe Kitchens & Cabinets

Appliances: Autel Appliances

Bar stools: ECC Lighting

Photography by Kallan MacLeod