



Park pavilion



Herbst Architects

Hamilton, 2007

This site on the outskirts of Hamilton feels more like Scandinavia than the Waikato. Its park-like grounds in an open sapling forest make a striking setting for a family home, and architects Lance and Nicola Herbst have connected with this unique character by placing it right among the trees.

They have stretched the house along an east-west axis to maintain a narrow footprint and create a public-private divide: entry and garage to the south; living and bedrooms to the north. This zoning is demarcated by a long, black, solid plywood wall, which splits open at the glazed entry bridge, and allows a peek through to the sunny private realm.

'Using the trees as a generator, we manipulated the cross-section to showcase the beauty of the canopy through a clerestory window and the marching of the trunks through cropped low-level windows,' explains Nicola. 'The hooked form that resulted from this window arrangement lent itself to the idea of an agrarian structure, historically appropriate in the district. The structural logic and materiality of the building then simply followed suit.'

Each pavilion sits up on concrete rails, appearing as if they might have rolled in prefabricated. This idea is reinforced by the gravel driveway, which extends around the house perimeter as a narrow apron. There are no garden beds or planted borders – nothing to detract from the two main subjects: the forest and the house. On the northern side, this elevation off the ground breaks down as platforms and walls extend into the site and layer down to meet it.

The living pavilion is double height and open plan. It is detailed like a veranda, with steel portals replacing 'post and beam', while bays with glass sliding doors can be closed or fully opened. The structure marches outside to enclose a deck and outdoor fireplace. Behind these living spaces, protecting them from the southerly wind, is a black plywood box containing the kitchen, laundry and 'mud room', or vestibule. It anchors the large veranda and is mirrored in the guest room and garage wing.

To live in this house is to live with the trees and their constant dramatisation of the day and the seasons. North-facing rooms have extensive glazing, and the loft-like main bedroom and study sit at the level of the tree canopy, alive with the song of birds and insects.

LEFT A glazed link, garden wall and stepping stones subtly mark the main entry.

PREVIOUS SPREAD The house is situated in a park-like setting.



THIS PAGE Simple, elegant materials and detailing create an uncluttered home for the display of art.

LEFT Exposed steel portals recall industrial sheds from the district, and create a generous living space.

FOLLOWING SPREAD The bedroom wing sits amongst the trees; large windows maximise the experience of the site.



