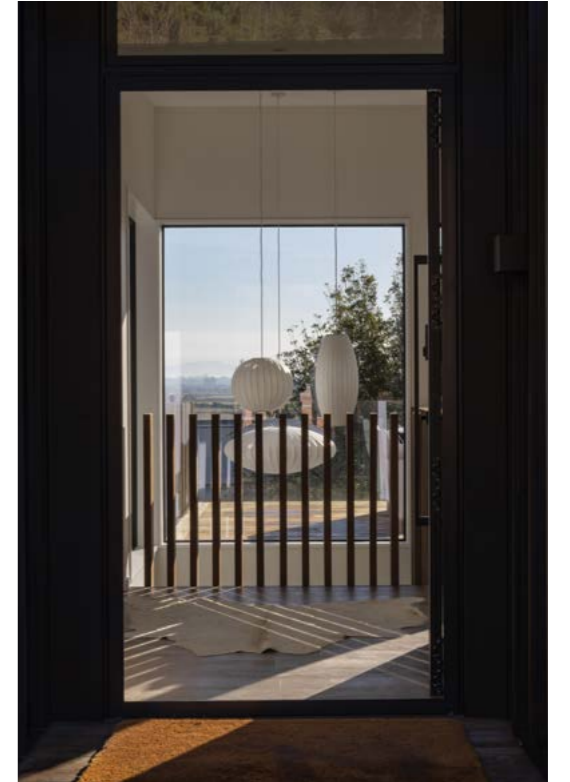


A MODERN MASTERPIECE

This new build on the outskirts of Ōtautahi saw Barry Connor Design turn a challenge into a triumph.

WORDS KATHY CATTON PHOTOGRAPHY ANNA MCLEOD



When the world first went into lockdown in 2020, few could have predicted the massive impact it would have on almost all industries. For Barry Connor, architectural designer at Barry Connor Design, the global pause marked the beginning of a unique collaboration that led to the creation of this modern marvel.

"It was a bit of a weird one," Barry recalls. "The clients were looking to build a new home and interviewed me on the first or second day of New Zealand's first Covid-19 lockdown. But instead of in-person, it was online. It seems so normal now, but it was all new back then."

Despite the forthcoming restrictions, Barry managed to get out to the site for a sun evaluation just before the lockdown hit. He responded to the clients, the interview was a success, and the project began in earnest while New Zealand remained closed down.

The design process, conducted almost entirely through virtual meetings, was an unusual but effective way to collaborate. "Meeting online was different at that time. I'm used to picking up on subtle cues in face-to-face meetings, but the awkwardness of Zoom actually helped break the ice. We all embraced the situation and made it work. It's so important for me to capture the homeowners' personal lifestyle and their family's needs, so it was a learning curve at that time to do this all via Zoom."

The homeowners' brief was clear: they wanted a modern, family-oriented home that took full advantage of the views of the Southern Alps and the expansive North Canterbury plains. The section itself was situated off a peaceful laneway close to Halswell Quarry Park, among established gum trees and in a park-like setting. "The homeowners were particularly keen on having a bold home that maximised the views and was low maintenance," Barry says.

The custom joinery in this clean and fresh kitchen was made and installed to precision-perfect standard by Handcraft Kitchens. The benchtops are Neolith in Estaturio and all fronts and panels are Laminex Melteca Melamine in Snowdrift and Patina.



Canterbury Clay Bricks supplied all the brick cladding on this home, adding depth and texture to the simple exterior.

The design focused on orienting the house towards the panoramic vistas and creating a spacious, open-plan layout that seamlessly connected indoor and outdoor living areas. "The challenge was to fit all their needs into the space while dealing with the constraints of the site," Barry says. "We designed a two-storey home that blended well with the sloping hill, incorporating areas for the kids, guests, and practical elements like a boat park."

One of the standout features of the 390sqm home is its simple, clean-cut design. The house comprises a straightforward two-storey rectangle, with the main living areas situated upstairs to capture the best views. A welcoming entry and an open area integrates the kitchen, dining and living spaces, with the added convenience of a spacious walk-in pantry. These main areas open up to expansive views, which, on clear days, extend all the way to Kaikōura. The master suite, located across a bridge from the main living areas, enjoys northern views and includes a thoughtfully designed ensuite. The downstairs level has bedrooms for the children and additional guest space, with bathrooms and a laundry.

Barry highlights the design's focus on practicality and aesthetics. "We had to be clever with our choices due to the challenging site conditions. The driveway serves seven different houses, so space was a premium. We used off-form tilt panel concrete for the main structure, which posed some insulation challenges. But with careful planning, we managed to mitigate thermal bridges and maintain a comfortable indoor climate."

There's also a nod in the design to the 1970s Christchurch modern style of architecture, led by Warren and Mahoney Architects, with a detailing where the roofing profile runs seamlessly into the wall cladding with no guttering. "It's called a Canterbury prickle, or prickle detail," says Barry. "The cladding pinches into sharp peaks, which was a detail prominent at that time."

The front of the house features another unique design element: a bridge leading to the entrance. "The bridge was necessary due to the home's position on the hill. It creates a striking entrance while adhering to setback requirements," Barry says. "We framed the front door with a pergola structure, making it a subtle yet elegant feature."



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The material palette of the home was chosen for both its visual appeal and durability. “The brick cladding is rendered to create a clean, modern look with minimal maintenance,” Barry says. “We also incorporated thermally modified timber for a vertical balustrade in the entranceway. This timber is treated via a thermal modification process and drives the resin from the timber to provide a durable and natural appearance, adding a sophisticated touch and, again, keeping things low-maintenance.”

This project is an example of the way that thoughtful design and resilience can turn challenging circumstances into a beautifully realised home. The completed home is a reflection of Barry’s expertise and the collaboration between him and the homeowners. “Seeing the house finished and walking through it for the first time is always a rewarding experience,” Barry says.

“There are always little surprises and moments that make all the effort worth it. For instance, it’s not until we went downstairs and looked back up that we saw the light and the shadows dancing across the stairwell void from underneath,” he says. “But it’s not just about creating something visually appealing, it’s about making a space where the clients can truly live and thrive. Seeing their genuine happiness and excitement is the ultimate reward.”



Involved in this project

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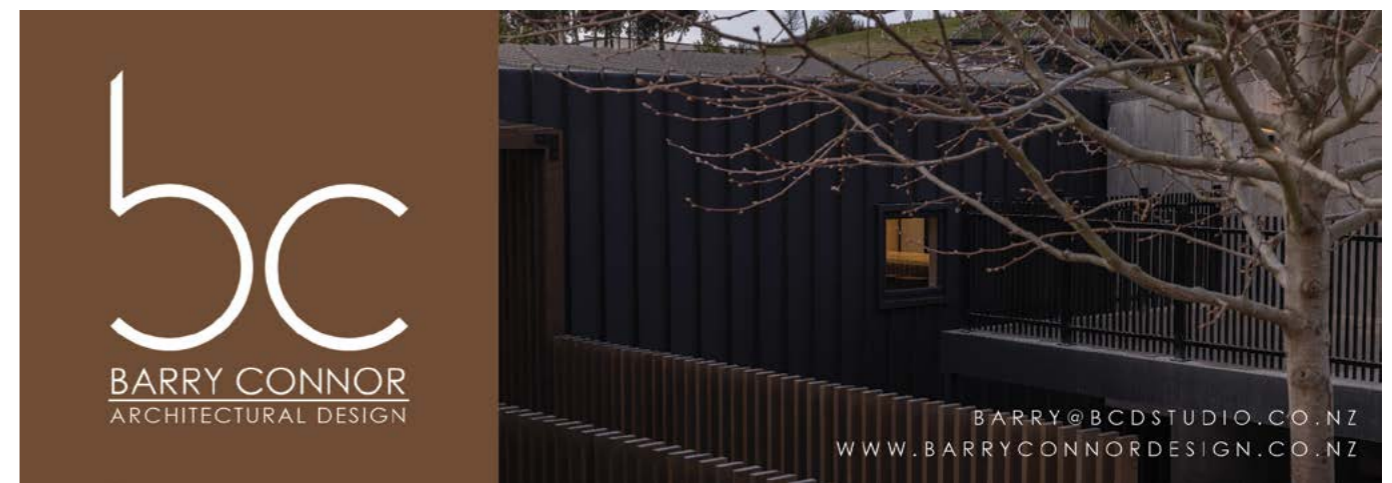
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The Canterbury prickle detail on the roof, which was installed by Metalcraft Roofing, perfectly blends into the surrounding landscape.



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