

COTTAGE INDUSTRY

A classical guesthouse by newcomers Penny Hay and Jason Whiteley marries contemporary aesthetics and age-old charm

TEXT by Elisabeth Easther PHOTOGRAPHY by Patrick Reynolds



THIS PHOTO Designed to complement the old homestead on the property, the guest house features high gabled ceilings and an open-plan living and kitchen area. The symmetrical design features bedrooms and bathrooms at each end of the cottage and doors opening to a terraced courtyard on this side of the building and a timber deck on the other.



ABOVE Hay adjusts an ornament on the concrete fireplace she salvaged from a convent. The pitched roof reaches 4.7 metres at its highest point and has been used to create parallels with the colonial house next door. The 'Marine Bean' bean bags on the deck are from Coast.

LEFT In the kitchen and dining area, a 'GT 5' light from ECC Lighting & Living hangs over the dining table, which features a silver table bowl from Indice and vintage dining chairs reupholstered by Hay in fabric available through Penny Hay Ltd. The kitchen features cabinetry in stained cedar and stainless steel.

When Penny Hay was invited to design a guest house in Torbay, one of the most picturesque pockets of Auckland's North Shore, she had an important neighbour to keep happy. The guest house shares its site with a colonial masterpiece that dates back to the 1860s – a home that gazes out over an acre of verdant grounds that sprawl their way down to an enchanting little beach.

The property's owners asked Hay and her former business partner, Jason Whiteley (who is now working for the famed architectural firm Herzog & de Meuron in Switzerland) to design a cottage that would function primarily as a short-term boutique rental – fully furnished and self-contained, with both utility and luxury in mind.

The clients, who have lived on the property for almost 30 years, wanted the new building to complement the existing surroundings. "It had to fit with the main home's mood yet still have personality and edge," says Hay.

In other words, the guest house needed to be discreet, but also have a strength of its own. "With so much heritage, the new project couldn't impose on the main house, or distract or dominate," says Hay. "It needed to be subtle, but have its own personality." It was a delicate balancing act which Hay, a graduate of Victoria University's School of

Architecture, has completed with a deftness that belies the fact that she is relatively new to residential architecture.

The original family home is situated at the bottom of a narrow ribbon of driveway, fringed with native bush and generous terraced gardens. Hay decided the guesthouse should have its own entrance as well, to give it a sense of independence and privacy from the main home nearer the coastline.

The tight linear site prompted the designers to develop a long, linear dwelling with a classic gabled roof and weatherboard walls to complement the original homestead on the property. It may be a compact 127 square metres (plus 38 square metres of outdoor space on the deck), but Hay and Whiteley didn't want the building to feel constrained. "We wanted it to be a strong, open space – light, relaxed and free," says Hay.

The final layout placed two identical bedrooms with their own en suite bathrooms on either side of the main living area, a satisfying space that combines the kitchen, dining and living room. On both sides of the room, large custom-made timber sliders roll back to allow access to the kwila deck, with a view of native bush on one side and a contained, more formal courtyard of manicured grass and white roses on the other.



Cove Cottage is a happy marriage between tradition and modernity, the old homestead and its new companion

At one end of the guesthouse, a double garage is neatly concealed behind a tilting door constructed from the same oversized cedar weatherboards as the rest of the house. It connects almost seamlessly with the rest of the dwelling's exterior.

In the main living area, Hay and Whiteley opted for pitched ceilings to give the space a sense of grandeur (lower ceilings in the bedrooms offer a sense of comfort and retreat). The dramatic ceilings of exposed rafters with tongue-and-groove sarking peak at 4.7 metres. Hay didn't want to diminish the drama of the ceilings with lights or skylights. In the end, she and builder Terry Boyes of T.W. Building created pelmets with recessed lights in them that fill the room with an ambient glow.

At one end of the living space is the dark wood joinery and tiled surfaces of the kitchen. Here, Hay worked hard to squeeze a fully functional kitchen into a small area. The cleverly designed dark-stained cedar cabinetry has a pleasing formality which blends effortlessly with the lounge.

Hay may have completed an architecture degree, but interior architecture is now her primary interest – something that shines through inside the home, where her rigorous attention to detail is clearly evident.

At one end of the living space is a concrete fireplace Hay

salvaged from a convent before the guesthouse project was even conceived. Her magpie instincts also resulted in old piano stools being used as bedside tables and junk-store handles used on the drawers in the bathrooms. Hay's grandmother's Victorian balloon-back dining chairs were re-worked and reupholstered to use in the house too.

On such a constrained footprint, it was vital that each room serve multiple purposes. To this end, the bathrooms, for example, double as dressing rooms – when the bathroom door is open, the lavatory and wet room shower are effectively shut off, lending the feeling of a heavily tiled dressing room.

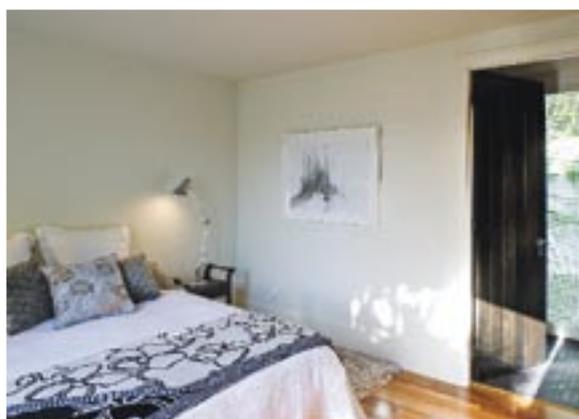
Hay had an architectural heavy hitter to turn to for advice for this project. Her older brother is Tim Hay of Auckland's Fearon Hay architects (previous winners of this magazine's Home of the Year award). "Tim and I have similar design sensibilities," says Hay. "I work independently out of Fearon Hay's offices where it's wonderful to be surrounded by other creative people for inspiration and for bouncing ideas off each other."

Yet while her brother is resolutely modernist in his sensibilities, Cove Cottage, as the guest house is named, is a happy marriage between tradition and modernity, the old homestead and its new companion. 

ABOVE The living area is afforded two sets of views, one of the manicured white-rose garden and of native bush on the opposite side. The outdoor 'Iroko' table is by Bob McDonald. An old couch from Matisse and a second-hand chair have been reupholstered and piped with charcoal felt by Hay. The Missoni rug over the chair is from Tessuti and the outdoor glass vases are from Indice. The antique black table and chairs on the terrace outside are from Eterno.

OPPOSITE The bathroom doubles as a dressing room when the door to the shower and toilet is closed off. The 'Miss K' lamp by Flos is from ECC Lighting & Living, the 'Bubu' stool by Philippe Starck is from Indice, and the tapware and basin are from Metrix. The dressing table, vanity and storage units were designed by Penny Hay.





ABOVE Designer Penny Hay.
ABOVE LEFT The cottage (at right) and the old homestead on the site.
FAR LEFT The kitchen features butcher tiles from SCE Stone & Design and a custom-made stainless-steel hanging rack designed by Penny Hay. The Le Creuset pot and pan are from Milly's Kitchen and the plates are by Maxwell & Williams.
LEFT The bedroom features flooring in Pacific Matai and an old piano stool as a bedside table. The Flos bedside lamp is from ECC Lighting & Living. The Missoni throw on the bed is from Tessuti. The artwork is by Penny Hay.

- 1 Bedroom
- 2 Dressing
- 3 Bathroom
- 4 Kitchen
- 5 Dining
- 6 Living
- 7 Fireplace
- 8 Deck
- 9 Courtyard
- 10 Garage

