

# MAKE IT LUXE



Sleek, low-maintenance  
and with a five-star  
hotel vibe was the  
design brief for this  
family home  
in Omokoroa

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## home profile

### MEET & GREET

Andrea Howden (construction business manager), Steve Howden (operations in construction industry), Thea, eight, Phoebe, three, and Riley the dog.

### THE PROPERTY

A three-bedroom house in Ōmokoroa.

**W**hen the pandemic happened in Aotearoa in 2020, Andrea and Steve Howden hit on a genius idea and used the time wisely. The Bay of Plenty-based family had recently moved into a new home they'd built in Pyes Pa, but with months spent at home juggling work and parenting, it led them to think about what they would have done differently if they were to build again.

"We lived in a great neighbourhood but we realised our criteria would be different if more lockdowns were to continue. We wanted to be able to walk to the beach, have a dedicated WFH space, we wanted a pool, a spa, a coffee machine," says Andrea. "Essentially, what we wanted was to create a luxe five-star hotel feeling at home, so it would feel like a treat to be in lockdown."

Although it wasn't a firm plan, the idea of a luxe hotel at home continued to be a part of Steve and Andrea's conversation during that time. When lockdown lifted, Andrea, who works in the construction industry buying and selling land, got in touch with a developer at Ōmokoroa, a quaint seaside community, a 20-minute drive from Katikati. Discovering there were only a couple of sections left for sale, she bought a 560sqm site near the golf course and skate park.

"I bought the land on the spot as I knew how quickly it would sell, but I didn't tell Steve until I got home. We'd had conversations previously so I knew he would be okay with it. When I brought the Sale and Purchase agreement home, he laughed. We've been together for 16 years so he knows how I work, and he said, 'Okay, looks like we're building another house.' He rolls with the punches and is always up for the ride."

### The vision

The couple wanted to create a luxury hotel-style home – sleek, high-end and low maintenance with all the bells and whistles. Being so close to the skate park and walking/biking tracks, the family didn't need a big yard, preferring to focus on enjoying living in the home over having to look after the gardens. Having built three houses already, they wanted all of the details to be well thought out.

"I spend my days looking at house plans and client projects so I wanted our house to be unique and feel



### KITCHEN

The bespoke kitchen cabinetry is by Mastercraft and Bayform Engineering and looks beautiful with the polished concrete floor in a salt and pepper grind. The brushed brass tapware is the Progetto Buddy X collection from Plumline and the bone white matte tiles are from Tile Space. Neolith Mont Blanc was used on the benchtops and splashback.



**MEDIA ROOM/OFFICE**

The plush leather and canvas Emmett sofa is from Cintesi and the throw is from Weave. The Song C LED wall light by Flua is both functional and beautiful. This is where Thea and Phoebe like to relax and watch TV and, with a see-through door, Andrea or Steve can wander past and keep an eye on them.

**THE EXTERIOR**

The Howden house is clad in Linea Oblique Weatherboard by James Hardie and features wire cut painter bricks painted Dulux Black.



different,” says Andrea. “Having built before, we had always got to the end of a build and thought, ‘We wish we’d done this and that’, this time we didn’t want to have any regrets. We’ve learnt over time that you’re going to look at those little regrets every day and won’t always remember the \$1000 you saved.”

**Expert help**

The final plans resulted in a 215sqm three-bedroom house with a media room/office on a small, easy-care section. “We didn’t want a large home that would require more cleaning. We wanted a smart layout that would give us all of the things we wanted and more free time.”

It was a challenging time to build with supply issues and delays, and with busy jobs and a young family, having GJ Gardner doing the construction made the project run smoothly. This was also helped in part by Andrea’s brother, who was working for the company at the time and project managed the build.

To keep the design decisions moving along quickly, the couple engaged interior designer Chantelle Shaw from Shaw Design. “Chantelle was awesome. I would tell her what I liked and didn’t like and how I wanted it to feel, and she would come up with suggestions I could choose from.”

With Andrea keen on using a dramatic black palette, it helped having an expert to ensure the home felt restful and soothing, rather than dark or oppressive. Chantelle incorporated black elements throughout the home with the right balance of contrasting textures, furniture and specialty lighting details to add softness, ambience and warmth.

**The entrance**

From the street front, two gabled sections are separated by a connecting flatter middle section, with a dramatic black exterior in timber and brick. Entering this beachside home, it’s clear this house is something special. Golden timber battens line the ceiling and far wall in the entrance with



**READING SPACE**

Andrea and her children are bookworms and this sunny, built-in nook comfortably fits two avid readers.



#### BEDROOMS, OFFICE AND LAUNDRY

Opposite: Thea's bedroom features Hovia Rodoute Green wallpaper and a bedhead from Boheme Home. Above: A built-in desk runs the length of the media room/office. Right: Phoebe's wallpaper is Jimmy Cricket Woodlands. Below: Whitehall Blanco Matt tiles from TileSpace feature in the laundry.



hidden LED lighting adding a unique design element. Black built-in seating perches along the left-hand wall provide a stylish storage solution for shoes and jackets.

#### Lounge and dining

The couple imagined cosy nights by the fire playing games with the kids and enjoying family meals together when it came to their living space. Dark timber panelling surrounds the fireplace with open and built-in shelving for storage. The open-plan dining room is a dramatic focal point, with hanging ball pendants above the dining table. Generous windows and sliding doors ensure a light and bright feeling, with floor-to-ceiling linen drapes softening the darker palette.

The black moody theme continues in the kitchen, with dark black cabinetry adorned by floating steel shelving and an extra large benchtop in white, with light timber shelving keeping the darker space balanced.

The giant scullery is what dreams are made of. Of note is the window in the scullery providing delightful views of the park while dishes are scrubbed. "It's actually a place you want to be in doing chores. Often the scullery and laundry are afterthoughts when building a home, and I spend so much time in these spaces that I wanted to invest in quality. I used the same porcelain and brushed brass tapware in the laundry as I did in the kitchen."

Beside the kitchen, a large scale 2.2m-high glass steel door leads into the media room and WFH office space with a large built-in desk running the full length of the back wall. This is where the kids watch TV and, with its see-through door, the parents can keep an eye on them.





#### ENSUITE BATHROOM

Luxe, organised and dramatic, this area has all the bells and whistles including a large black concrete bath (opposite), double shower, double vanity and switchable privacy glass on the full-length window by the bath.



#### The bedrooms

The key focus for this build was the main bedroom. “We spend a lot of time in this wing, sleeping and getting ready for work and winding down, so we wanted a generous walk-in wardrobe. It’s a monster.”

Wanting a dark black room, Chantelle’s skills came into play to ensure the room didn’t feel like a cave. “In the main bedroom we used exterior cladding in a textured finish for the headboard wall, so that it had depth rather than being a flat black finish. We left the ceiling white and added white floaty curtains to add softness,” says Chantelle.

The ensuite is the ultimate wind-down space, with a large black concrete bath, double shower and double vanity. A full-length window runs alongside the bath, with the glass able to be switched from clear to opaque to allow garden views, or privacy at the flick of a switch.

A large steel-framed glass door leads into the dressing room, a long space with one side each, lined with built-in drawers, smart LED lighting and a make-up table for Andrea. “In my industry, I see that most often kids’ bedrooms are 3m x 3m on the southern side of the side, either side of the bathroom with white walls, basic curtains and carpet and wardrobes. We wanted these rooms to feel different, which started with the positioning,” says Andrea.

The kids’ rooms look out to the pool area with sliders leading out to the deck. The girls chose their own paint colours and wallpapers from a curated selection that fit the house. Thea went for a woodland creatures theme and Phoebe opted for tropical-themed wallpaper. Their bathroom has a double shower, with dusky pink mosaic tiles and two pink concrete sinks on a double vanity.

An exterior timber product, Axon Panel by James Hardie, was used on the walls in Phoebe’s room (except for the wallpapered walls), while Thea’s room features half-height battens with a smooth finish behind her bed.



#### KIDS’ BATHROOM

Pink concrete sinks on a double vanity feature in this feminine space, which also has a full wall double shower with dusky pink mosaic tiles.

#### Outdoors

The focus outside is centred around the pool and spa pool, which the family use every day. The Narellan Pool is a MagnaPool, treated with magnesium instead of chlorine, which helps ensure Andrea’s sensitive skin doesn’t react. “It makes the water feel really soft when you swim in it, and the magnesium makes your body feel so relaxed.”

Having landscaper Hamish Brooks develop a low-maintenance, irrigated garden ensured the outdoor area feels private and cohesive. “Some people love gardening but we aren’t those people. We don’t have a lot of spare time so having Hamish talk through how we wanted it to look and feel made a huge difference.”

#### The result

It took 14 months from the land purchase until they moved in this April and the Howdens have no regrets about what they’ve created. The location has been amazing for making neighbourhood connections and the girls enjoy going to the local park together on their bikes. “We love that we can go for a walk and stop to chat to our neighbours, it feels like you’ve stepped back in time.” ●