

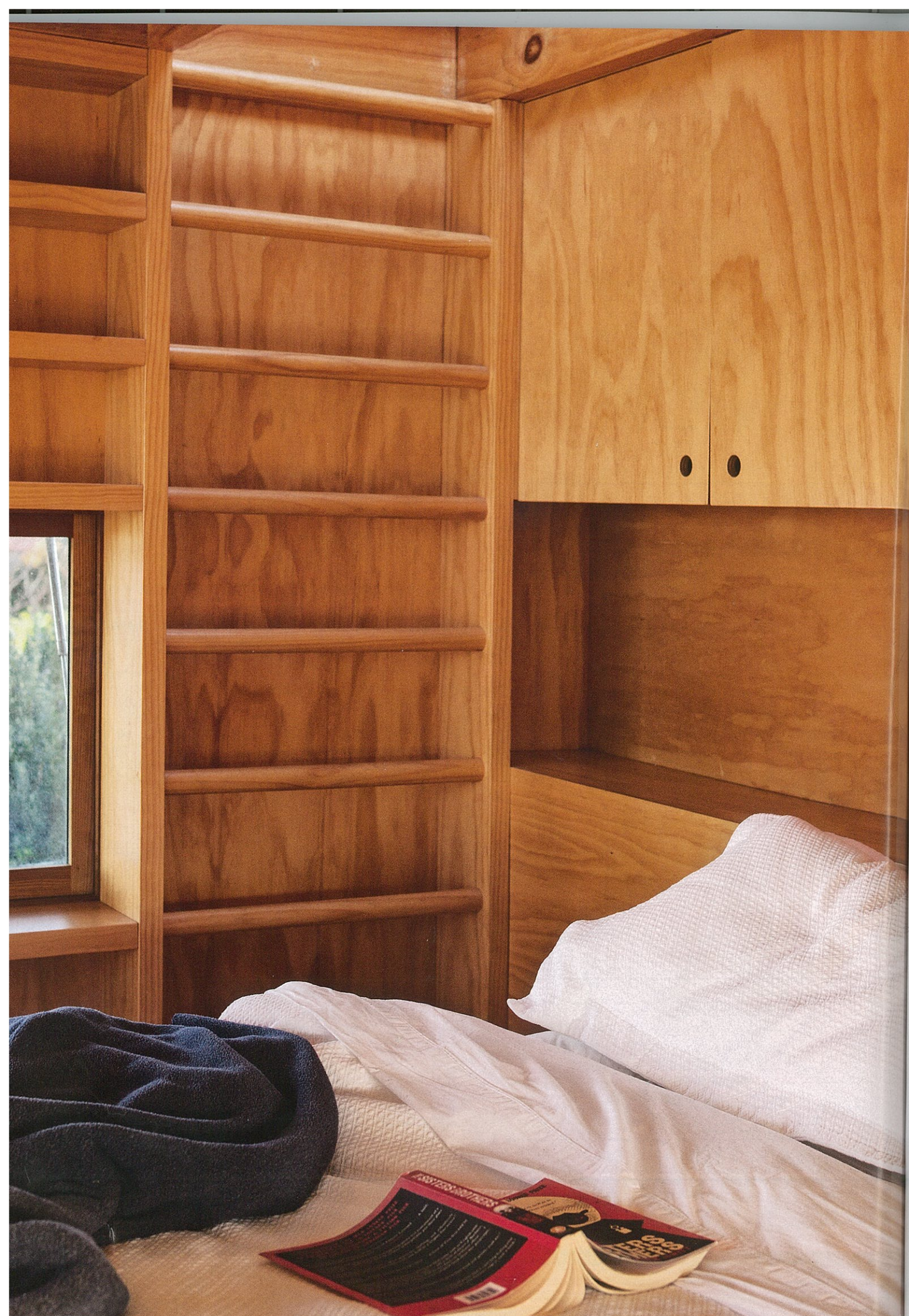
# THE NEW BACH

*In spite of its tiny footprint, this award-winning holiday house on New Zealand's Coromandel Peninsula has a big personality.*

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Nicknamed the 'Hut on Sleds', this holiday home on New Zealand's North Island, designed by Crosson Clarke Carnachan Architects, sits on just 40 square metres. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** the 'everything-room' is simply furnished with a circular dining table by the architects, 'Laleggera' chairs by Riccardo Blumer for Alias from Corporate Culture, velvet vintage Parker chairs bought online, and a 'Studio' wood-burning fireplace from Warmington Fires. **Details, last pages.**



The parents' loft-style bedroom, *OPPOSITE*, is on the mezzanine level with a view of the beach. A custom-made ladder in radiata pine leads to a roof terrace. The deck, *RIGHT*, leads straight to the beach, while the water tanks at the back, *BELOW*, collect rain and grey water.

KEN CROSSON MUSES on the origin of the New Zealand word 'bach' (pronounced 'batch'). It's Kiwi slang for 'beach house' — not the German composer. "I think it has to do with bachelor," says the Auckland-based architect. As with all 21st-century uncertainties, we clicked to Wikipedia mid-interview to investigate. Indeed, the online resource tells us that the word comes from 'bachelor pad' but usually refers to a family holiday home. (Crosson and Wikipedia agree that in the South Island, a bach is called a crib.)

Crosson owns a bach on the Coromandel Peninsula. His holiday home floats like a perfect wooden raft on the land overlooking the ocean. His clients had seen his take on the New Zealand bolthole and asked his firm, Crosson Clarke Carnachan Architects, to create their own bach on the same North Island finger.

"As clients, they are fantastic," says Crosson. "Very knowledgeable from an architecture point of view." The brief from the family of five was to create a structure like an artefact, so that it feels like it's appropriate to the dune setting, "like a surf life-saving tower that didn't feel out of place".

There was a year's gestation until the 'Hut on Sleds', as it became known, was born (or assembled on site by a local builder). The construction is specific to the area; a coastal erosion zone. All new homes on this section of Whangapoua beach must be moveable or demountable. And so, the abode was built on two wooden sleds, inspired by Crosson's childhood growing up on a farm where hay bales were gathered on sleds and pulled behind hay balers.

The house is true to the idea of a holiday retreat. "Baches are commonly built with cheap materials," says Crosson. In this case it's ply and timber and the custom fixtures are raw and industrial.

Crosson explains that, typically, a bach is built bit by bit; as the family's resources and needs grow, so, too, does the bach, with extensions and additions. "We wanted to reference this way of building traditional holiday houses. It's really elementary and simple. They [the family] may do a larger house down the track."

At present, the Hut on Sleds is incredibly space efficient and measures only 40 square metres. "It has a very small amount of embodied energy," says Crosson. For 'extra eco-cred, there's a wastewater treatment system of worms that converts waste into irrigation water. And, at the rear, there are water tanks to collect rain and grey water.

When not in use, the house is essentially a box that can be closed to the elements. There's a two-storey shutter on the front that levers open to reveal the 'everything-room' — kitchen, dining, lounge. >



The ply and timber Hut on Sleds is essentially a box, which can be closed to the elements. A two-storey shutter on the front of the bach opens to reveal the kitchen, dining and living area and is opened with the turn of a wheel. Beneath the water tanks, the exterior is clad in Eterpan fibre cement. **Details, last pages.**

< The furniture in the space is deliberately light so it can be moved about and reconfigured. Behind the kitchen, there's the bathroom and then a triplex bunk structure for the children and a ladder to a mezzanine for the parents.

Not surprisingly, the Hut on Sleds has picked up a raft of awards: a winner in the 2012 NZ Wood Resene Timber Design Awards; shortlist for the World Architecture Festival Awards; commended in the Architectural Review House Awards. Is Crosson tempted to make replicas and dot the stark but playful wooden boxes along New Zealand's shoreline? "We've been asked all around the world," says Crosson. "This was designed for a specific site for a specific brief — our view is that it's theirs, the clients'."

So what's Crosson's favourite part of the Whangapoua commission? "When you have a client that you have worked hard for and they get it and their life has changed. It's another way of looking and living at the beach. It's not about architecture — it's about people's lives. There's a Maori proverb '*He tangata, he tangata, he tangata*'; 'It is people, it is people, it is people'." **VL**

