



AN UNUSUAL BRIEF LED ARCHITECTS IRVING SMITH JACK TO CREATE
A CONTEMPORARY HOME THAT MIMICS NELSON'S SURROUNDING MOUNTAINS.
WORDS SAM EICHLATT / PHOTOGRAPHS PATRICK REYNOLDS

ANGLING FOR AN *INVITATION*



PREVIOUS PAGE: The angled roof helps to create distinct areas within the large open-plan living space. **FACING PAGE:** The kitchen, tucked under a triangular clerestory is lit with shards of autumn sun. **ABOVE:** The timber-lined roof wraps around the upper floor, creating a sheltered cocoon in the bedroom.



NELSON PRACTICE Irving Smith Jack started with an unusual brief for this craggy-roofed beauty, located inland from Nelson proper at Brightwater on the Waimea Plains. The owners, a couple with four grown-up children, already had a 20-year old farmhouse on the property, and a pool. What they wanted was another house halfway between the two, something contemporary and fresh that would allow them to live on the edge of their extensive garden and bring them close to the landscape of their working orchard. The old house stayed – it was passed on to the four children – and the family now meets in the middle for parties.

“They’re an amazing family,” says architect Jeremy Smith. “They’re flamboyant and creative, and the kids are there all the time. It’s kind of worn out the old house. The parents wanted something contemporary from the start, something totally new – it was never a case of getting the two buildings to work together.” In fact, the architects designed the Mountain Range House without getting a good look at the old house, as it’s completely covered in vines.

The resulting building is, says Smith, flamboyant by nature. Most of the space is dedicated to a huge, open-plan room containing the kitchen, island, lounge area and two dining areas. There’s one bedroom tucked under the eaves for the couple, and beneath that a darkened, den-like ‘retreat’: a media room with built-in couches and a flat-screen television.

Not only does the folded shape of the roof echo the mountain range behind it, says Smith, but it was also a way of articulating the open space of the main room, giving it a sense of homeliness, and aiding the transition to the garden.

The practice started with the idea of a house shaped like a veranda, a transition space to the outdoors. They also did cardboard modelling that played with horizontal planes as a way of connecting interior space to the landscape, and the relationship between different ceiling heights.

“There was a deliberate move to have a timber floor and a timber folded ceiling,” says Smith. “The two horizontal planes add warmth and a sense of containment to the space – and that’s happening without walls.” The house is glass on three sides, though the architect is quick to point out that they’re not single expanses but that the perimeter has been constructed with concrete elements for thermal mass, to add shadow and limit the full glare of the sun. “The play of light coming in invigorates the space,” he says. “It’s completely different to how it would be with a flat white ceiling.”

As they’re working in the area around Nelson, Irving Smith Jack is increasingly focusing on how their buildings can blend with the stunning natural environment that surrounds the city to create a cohesive whole, says Smith. “The landscape is really important to the feel of what is inside the building,” he says. “Our buildings are not trying to compete with these beautiful landscapes, but to be strong and exist with them.” **u**



FACING PAGE: The sculptural ceiling is a focal point yet its double-height means that the dramatic folds never feel overwhelming.