

WORDS
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PHOTOS
Simon Devitt



PROJECT SUNSET

This celebration of west coast living, with its all-day sun and sparkling sea views, culminates in a daily sunset that shifts with the seasons. But beyond the light and landscape, is a remarkable depth of thought, care and communication that was poured into its making.

From the moment it was dubbed Project Sunset, this home overlooking New Plymouth's Fitzroy Beach promised to be something special.

At the heart of the build were homeowners Trish and Ian, and builder Chad Niwa, who Trish describes as an indispensable partner across two and a half years of collaboration.

"We couldn't have done it without him. Not just from a building perspective, but because he kept our spirits up when it sometimes felt too hard."

Together with architectural designer Kyle Ramsay of KR Architecture, Annika Rowson of Rowson Kitchens, and a close-knit team of local tradespeople, they have created a layered and luxurious coastal home that despite its high-end finishes and attention to detail, feels somewhat "simple-special".

"We didn't want anything too fussy, because we're pretty unfussy people," says Trish. "But we still wanted it to feel special."

From the outset, Kyle's design embraced the setting without overwhelming it. Cedar and stone were selected for their organic warmth, and a sense of flow was prioritised over visual noise.

"We were able to achieve that by using honest materials, scaled forms, and a calm, cohesive palette. We wanted a 'wow', but a subtle wow. A home that would feel like part of the landscape, and not imposed on it," says Kyle.



Centre stage is a Buster and Punch pendant that was Trish's first purchase for the house. "I knew we'd have a big void to fill here and I just thought it would be perfect."



It's an ambition that has clearly been achieved, yet it wasn't without its challenges. From converting the property to freehold from cross-lease, to height restrictions, a shared driveway, and a base of soft sand that demanded serious engineering to secure both this structure and those around it. "There's an incredible amount of concrete, retaining, and reinforcement in this home that no one will ever see," says Kyle. "But it's what makes the home feel grounded — literally and figuratively."

Project Sunset's entrance is accessed from the south, where you enter into its upper-level landing to find a large spiral staircase inviting you down into the main areas of the home. Centre stage is a Buster and Punch pendant that was Trish's first purchase for the house. "I knew we'd have a big void to fill here and I just thought it would be perfect."

It's only a keen eye that would spot the two cleverly hidden cedar doors on entry that offer access to either the garage, or master suite - Trish and Ian's sanctuary. The main bedroom's large window and bench seat offers panoramic views of the Tasman Sea and a spectacularly innovative roof garden planted with lomandra shara. It's a special place for the couple to wake up each morning.

Sitting behind the master bed is an ensuite laden in large format sand-grey tiles with a bronze texture that pairs beautifully with the brushed chocolate tapware from

Robertson Bathware. A large mirror with complementary edging and wall lighting from ECC finish the space beautifully.

A key stroke of genius is the sliding reeded glass doors that separate the master bedroom from the ensuite, and when open, afford an unbeatable view of the coast from the shower. A round skylight hovers above the bath, too, which Trish particularly loves at nighttime when accompanied by a candle and glass of wine.

Descending the steel staircase, you're met by a striking composition. A double-height wall of stone anchors the volume, while a picture window frames the ever-changing view beyond. At the base, curved stone and cabinetry walls guide you into the heart of the home. It's a soft, sculptural threshold that balances drama with warmth. Step into the main living area, and the use of materials wows again. Cedar ceilings stretch overhead in the lounge, while the kitchen is subtly defined by a wavy Cerano plaster ceiling sitting slightly lower at 2.5 metres, compared to the 2.7-metre height of the adjoining space. It's a thoughtful, layered transition into what Trish proudly calls her favourite part of the house.

"I love to cook," she says, "and this kitchen just works." A five-metre island in Sensa Vancouver quartzite anchors the space, flanked by cabinetry in Querkus Robusta, integrated spice drawers, and a well-used coffee nook. Bi-fold windows open to a sizable eastern barbecue area making it easy to pass food, drink, and dishes both ways, when entertaining.



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Designed by Annika Rowson, the kitchen blends beauty with precision. Many of the materials were selected early and then applied consistently throughout the bedrooms, bathrooms and living areas by the team at Rowsons. “We tried not to go for too many different finishes,” Trish says. “That helps keep it calm.”

Across the expansive open-plan layout, the lounge, dining, and a pair of more intimate seating areas have been carefully composed to follow the light and frame the view. With 11 metres of front-facing glazing, and a dramatic picture window drawing the eye west, every corner of the space offers a moment to pause, whether it’s for morning sun, or to catch the day’s final light spilling in from the coast.

Lighting plays a quiet but powerful role in this space, too. Nearly all fixtures are LED, installed by local firm Electro Plus, who ran over seven kilometres of wiring through the home. At night, hidden strip lights illuminate joinery, curved bulkheads, circular skylights and stairwells. “The

lighting transforms the house after dark,” says builder, Chad. “It’s a whole different experience.”

With 265 square metres of living, the three-bedroom home is surrounded by Millboard decking, blurring the line between inside and out. On the western side, the decking softens into a series of circular steps, while on the eastern side, a pebble design of a huia, created by a close friend, sits engrained in the deck, grounding the home in something personal.

For Chad, Project Sunset was the kind of job you could wait your whole career for, and one that might not come along again.

“This was such a privilege to work on. It reminds you why you do what you do.”

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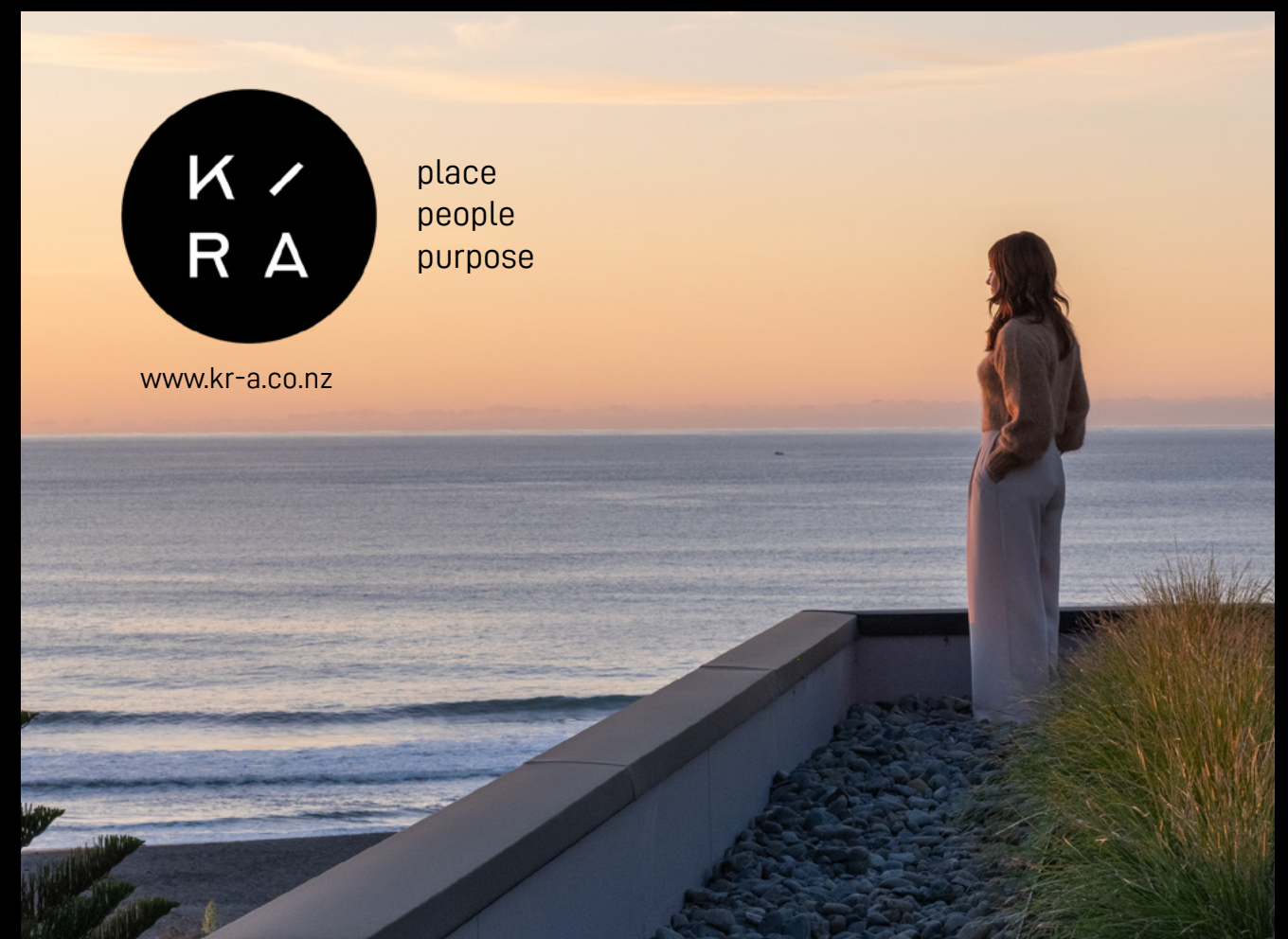
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Brought into the project early after a friendly recommendation, Chad quickly became the steady presence navigating everything from structural complexity to daily decision-making.

He describes the build not as a single big challenge, but a series of micro-decisions that each shaped the integrity of the final result.

“There were so many moving parts to this build. You just have to take it one detail at a time. One curve, one window, one surface. And then it all comes together.”

Some moments in particular stand out, such as craning a 600-kilogram picture window into the living room, and doing the same with the staircase. Or co-ordinating product and trades down a narrow shared driveway, and collaborating on the custom circular skylights that now illuminate the roof garden at night.



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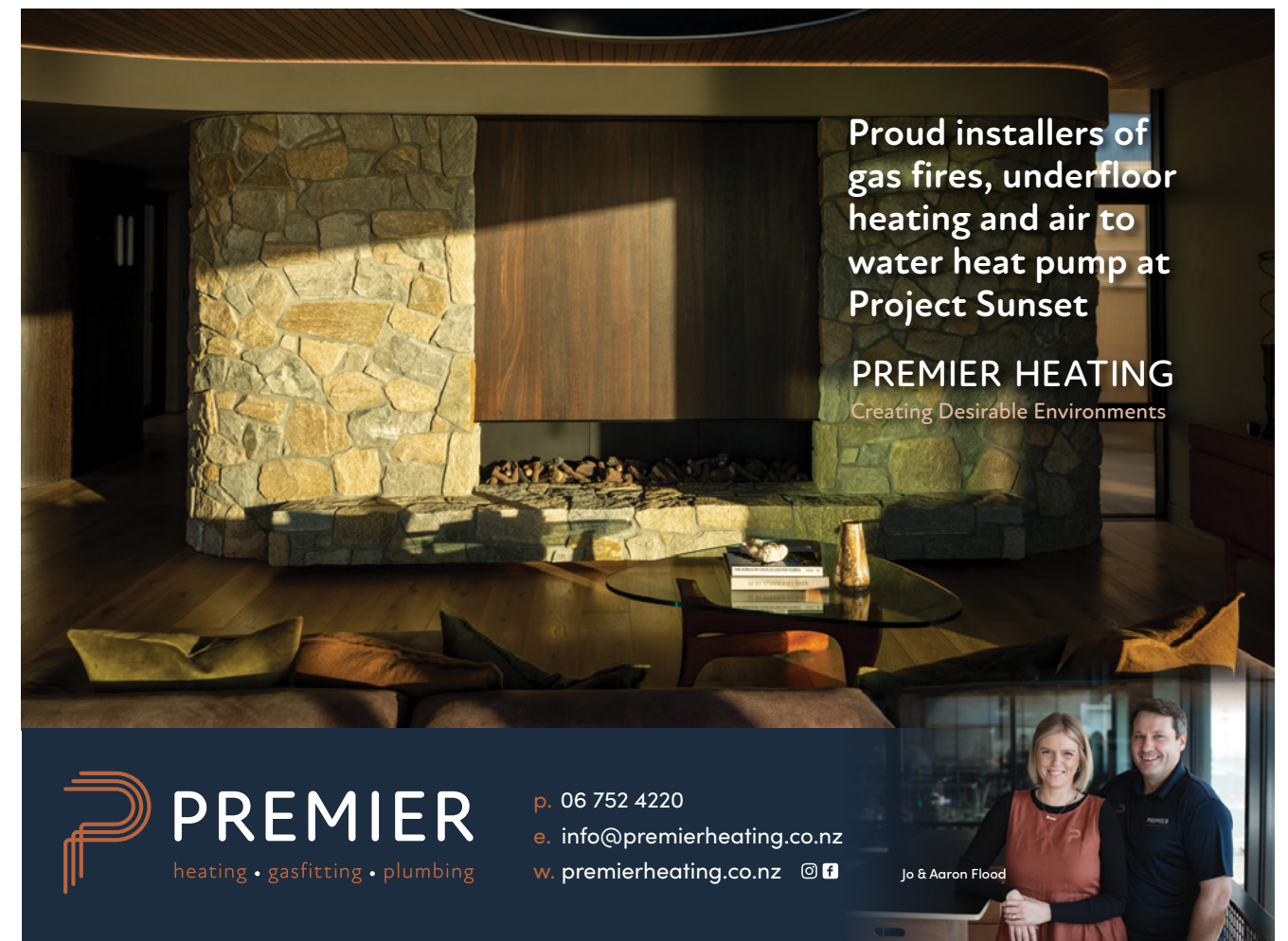
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“It’s calm. It’s grounded. There’s so much texture, but nothing feels heavy. It’s like the house knows it’s exactly where it’s meant to be.”

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“Building a home isn’t always smooth sailing,” says Chad, “but with the right team and clear communication, every challenge turned into progress.”

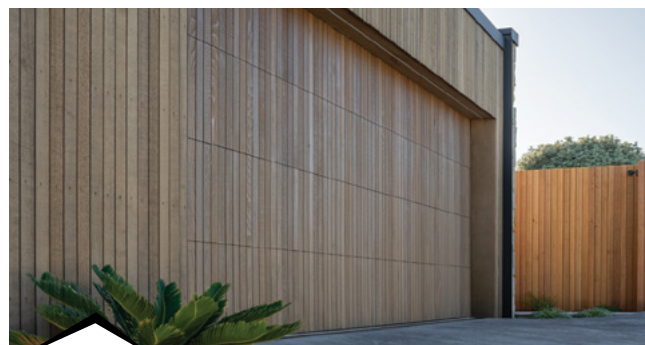
When costs spiked, or when unexpected delays loomed, they regrouped, adjusted, and moved forward together, adds Trish.

Standing in the finished home, Chad is proud of the feeling you get by just being there.

“It’s calm. It’s grounded. There’s so much texture, but nothing feels heavy. It’s like the house knows it’s exactly where it’s meant to be.”

Even utility spaces and bedrooms towards the south of the ground floor have been thoughtfully executed. The laundry, for example, includes built-in drying systems, overhead hangers, and generous storage. While a guest bedroom also doubles as a media room or office, depending on the need.

While the overall feel of Project Sunset is calm and effortless, the road to achieving that clarity was anything but simple. From the shadowline skirting boards and Cerano plaster walls, to the hidden power points and curves aplenty, almost every element demanded precision and perseverance from the build team.



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CONCRETE ELEGANCE. CRAFTED TO LAST

There’s something undeniably captivating about a home that feels both modern and timeless.

This stunning residence from the team at Chad Niwa Builders, designed with precision by KR Architecture, achieves exactly that—its interior surfaces defined by the subtle sophistication of hand applied ROCKCOTE Cerano.

Applied with artistry by Plastering Professional Jamie Tapara and his award-winning team at Textured Plaster Ltd, Rockcote Cerano delivers a smooth, coloured concrete inspired finish to the walls and ceiling that instantly elevates the home’s architectural form. It’s a look that is both bold and refined—urban in style, yet warm and welcoming in presence.

What makes Cerano so special is not just its on-trend aesthetic, but the way it performs. Tough, flexible, enduring, and coloured by Resene to compliment other interior surfaces. It brings the strength of Rockcote Artisan coloured plaster innovation together as a surface that feels beautifully natural to the touch. It’s this harmony—between function and feel—that transforms walls into living, tactile surfaces that enrich everyday spaces.

At Resene Construction Systems, we believe plaster isn’t just about protection—it’s about creating environments that inspire. The gentle play of light across a finely textured wall, the sense of permanence in its finish, the craftsmanship behind every stroke of the plastering professional’s hand—these are the details that make a house feel like home.

This project is a true celebration of collaboration: visionary design, trusted materials, and the skill of craftspeople who bring it all together.

For more information, contact:

Jamie Tapara – Textured Plaster Ltd | 021 514 192

Todd Martin – Resene Construction Systems,
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Subtlety was the goal, but executing it required countless hours of planning, revising and fitting on-site. Trish knows she pushed the team.

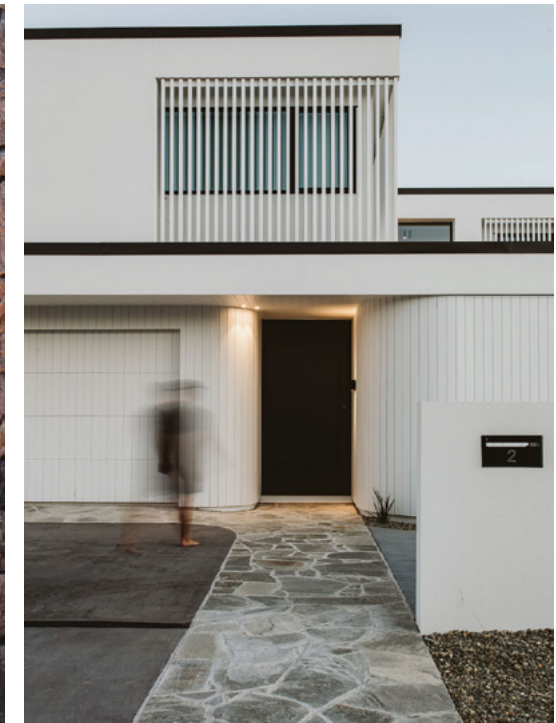
“Sometimes I’d ask for something and think, ‘Oh no, they’re going to kill me,’” she says with a grin. “But they just made it happen. And now, even the smallest things, like how the light catches the plaster finish, or the power points hidden in the island, bring me so much joy. You live with those details every day.”

Today, Project Sunset feels fully lived-in and is fitted out with furniture Trish and Ian have carried with them from previous homes. There’s a quiet rhythm to its rooms and spaces that offer comfort at every hour. Whether drinking coffee on the deck in the morning sun, or sitting by the outdoor fire on a winter’s evening, there’s always somewhere to be.

For Trish, the joy is ongoing. “Sometimes I come home, walk down the stairs, and just go, ‘Wow.’ People say it looks really small from the entrance, but then you come down the stairs and it just opens up. That’s what I love. And it really does just feel like us.” ..



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