



This page The view from the dining room overlooks the Hape stream.

Right A bamboo grove near the home.

Full Circle

A classic home in Thames is nursed back to health by a long-time admirer.

TEXT / *Jeremy Hansen*
PHOTOGRAPHY / *Toaki Okano*



Far left The entrance reveals the home's original tawa ceiling. Beyond hangs an 'Octo' pendant light by Seppo Koho for Secto Design, and 'Crimson/Red', a work by Max Gimblett.

Left Looking through to the dining room from the kitchen, where an Art Deco teak table from Singapore is paired with 'Eiffel' chairs by Charles and Ray Eames for Herman Miller. The butler's pass is an original feature and the dining room can be closed off from the kitchen.

Right The artwork at the end of the hall is 'Romeo and Juliet' by Arthur Boyd. To the left of the low landing wall is 'The Belief II' by Wang Guangyi. Two antique temple lions stand guard inside the entrance to the home. An antique rug is placed in the entrance.



Dean Sharpe never forgot the first house he fell in love with. He grew up in Thames, just up the road from a home designed by the modernist architect Franz Iseke in 1971 for the town's chief surgeon, Philip Lane, and his wife Meg. He remembers his childhood admiration for the daring feat of building a home on the edge of such a steep hill, "like a pohutukawa that hung off a cliff". Getting to know the Lane family and their house only increased his ardour. "It has beautiful bones – it's a house with a very calm soul," he says. Dean went on to become an interior designer in Thames and then in Auckland. While there, he met his partner Bentley de Beyer, a senior executive in the healthcare industry who had been posted to New Zealand from his home town of Sydney. After a year in Auckland, Bentley was transferred to Asia and Dean moved with him, rising to design director at interiors firms in India and Singapore (where the couple now lives) before striking out on his own.

Seven years ago, they were visiting Dean's family in Thames and noticed the Lane house had come up for sale. Bentley liked how the home felt "a little bit Palm Springs and a little bit brutal – the combination of timber and concrete block is really joyful, and there's a real lack of pretension". That said, the home had been unoccupied for the previous 18 months, and while it

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hadn't fallen into disrepair, it was certainly in need of some work. Its original shagpile carpet had not weathered the decades well, and the garden had grown to block the view down the valley to the Firth of Thames. Nevertheless, "because it was still so original you could tell it would be easy to bring back the love," Dean says. So the couple decided to buy the property, and embarked on the task of restoring it.

Soon afterwards they discovered Iseke's original blueprints for the house in a cupboard, documents that Bentley says "were highly instructive for me – they showed how pedantic Iseke was". (Iseke died in 2010; Dean and Bentley never met him but spoke to him on the phone after they purchased the home,



Left Dean walks past a photograph entitled 'Circle' by Rohan D Souza, while above him is 'Constellation', a mounted sculpture by Kevin Osmond, a bespoke piece created for the home while the artist was in residence. The art work on the lower wall is 'Stonefields', an image by P J Paterson.

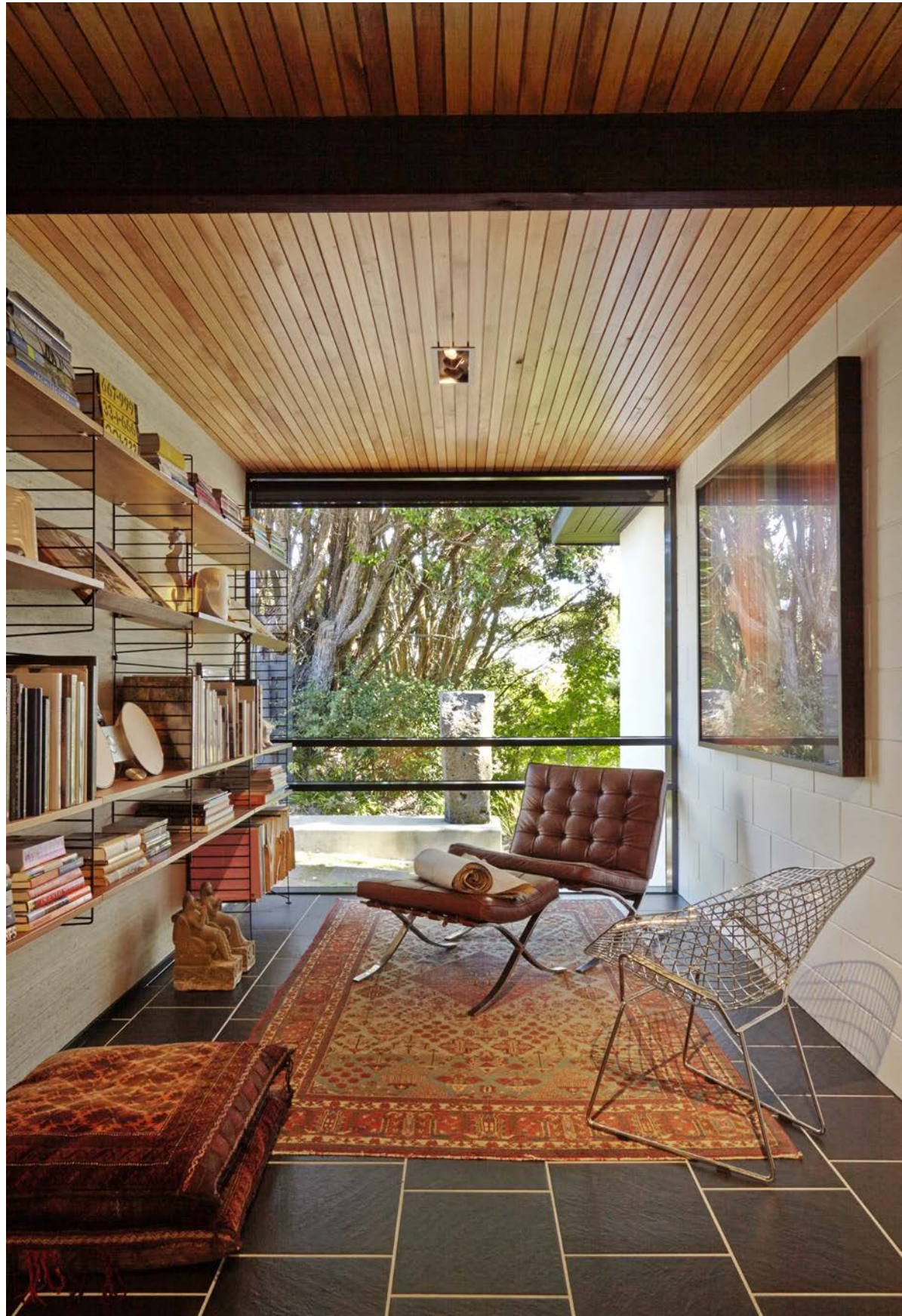
Right Max Gimblett's 'Crimson / Red' hangs over a mid-century buffet by Parker Furniture, with vases by Peter Collis, John Parker and Keith Murray. Dean and Bentley bought the Australian mid-century wingback armchairs in their original vinyl from Bondi markets in Sydney.



The home is uniquely tailored for its site, with rooms strung in linear fashion along the edge of the valley. There is a sense that one is floating in the trees.

Below String shelving lines one wall of the library. On the facing wall is 'Conversation of Momentum' by Annika Koops. A 'Barcelona' chair by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich, and a 'Diamond' chair by Harry Bertoia for Knoll sit on an antique Kashmir rug. Outside is a sculpture by John Edgar.

Right The terrace off the living room feels as if it is suspended in the trees over the valley, and is furnished with 'Butterfly' chairs and a side table from Magis.





Facing page The sectional sofa, covered in its original 60s fabric, was purchased from Auckland's Mid Century Design. The coffee table is by Peter Hvidt. On top sit a Gandhara head from India, a Peter Collis orb, and Jonathan Adler candles. The artwork above the Art Deco teak bookcase is 'The Machine Replaces the Man' by Amol Tote. An 'Arco' floor lamp by Achille and Pier Giacomo Castiglioni for Flos presides over the living area.

Top left An urn from Thailand stands inside the garden gate.

Top right At the top of the landing, a Max Gimblett piece hangs above a temple lion.

Bottom left A view of the back garden.

Bottom right Vintage skis are propped up in a corner of the guest room. Above the bed is a piece from John Weeks' 'African' series.

prison for disobeying orders, and survived an attack on a U-boat in the North Sea. After the war ended, he studied architecture in Munich and was awarded a scholarship to study at Harvard with the great modernist Walter Gropius. He later migrated to Australia, where he met Patricia, a seamstress from Whangarei. The couple married and moved to Auckland, where Iseke made a splash with the design of their own family home in the suburb of Kohimarama. His deft pairing of concrete block and timber in homes, apartment blocks and commercial buildings became something of a trademark. He used this combination of materials in the design of the Rolleston Motel in Thames, the building that caught the eye of the Lanes.

It is wonderful when a piece of architecture meets a pair of appreciative custodians, which is exactly how Dean and Bentley describe themselves. They have sensitively reinvigorated the house without substantial changes. They quietly renovated the bathrooms, keeping the original tiles, and delicately opened the main bedroom upstairs to the view. A space that once housed the home's central heating system is now a library. The garden's foliage has been trimmed, which means light once again fills the home. The home generously hosts the couple's art collection, which combines works by New Zealand artists Michael Parekowhai and Max Gimblett with pieces by Australian photographer Tracey Moffatt and pieces collected during their time in Asia. The experience of restoring the home has been so satisfying that it has led Dean to start developing a business that he plans to launch this year that will allow more people the opportunity to enjoy architecture like it.

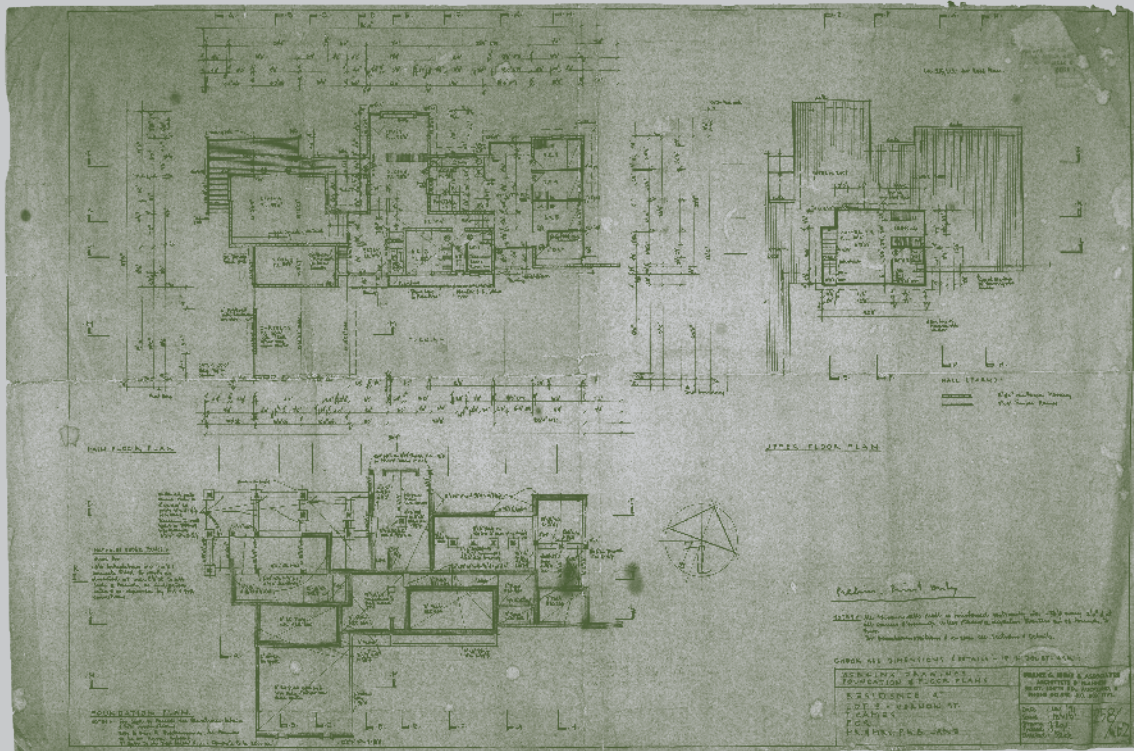
Dean and Bentley visit the house three or four times a year. Otherwise, Dean's parents, who still live up the road, keep an eye on the property, and friends and siblings regularly use it when they're in town. It feels like a lot of people are caring for the house when they're away. "It's such a pure design from that period," Dean says, "and if you talk to people in the community it's a really well-known property. People have such a sense of ownership of it that if anything happened to it there would be an outcry." It appears the love Dean has long held for this exemplary piece of modernism is widely shared in the town in which he grew up. 📍

when he told them that the house was one of his favourites, and that he hoped they weren't tampering with too much). The home is uniquely tailored for its site, with rooms strung in linear fashion along the edge of the valley. Inside, there are subtle changes in level and a sense that one is floating in the trees. It is a home that is highly rational but full of subtle complexity, a winning combination of machine-like Bauhaus-style modernism and humane artistry.

Iseke was born to German parents in Shanghai in 1926, where his father had a business that delivered mail and freight by air. Greg Smith, the curator and writer who manages the architecture website *Lost Property*, says the family was visiting relatives in Germany in 1939 when the escalating conflict that led to World War II prevented them from returning to China. Franz joined the navy aged 16, served time in

Right Modernist architect Franz Iseke, who died in 2010, built numerous homes in New Zealand.

Below Soon after buying the Thames home, Dean and Bentley found Iseke's original drawings for the 230-square-metre home in a cupboard.



DESIGN NOTEBOOK

Q&A with Greg Smith of Lost Property, lostproperty.org.nz.

Who was Franz Iseke and what elements characterised his work? Iseke was born in Shanghai in 1926 and gained his diploma in architecture at Munich University, before studying at Harvard. It seems Franz spent a little time in the US before setting out for Australia where he met his wife-to-be, Patricia, a gifted seamstress. Shortly after their marriage and arrival in New Zealand, he joined Thorpe, Cutter, Pickmere & Douglas, prior to starting his own practice in the late 1950s and designing a number of stunning steel and concrete Bauhaus-influenced houses – the earliest with steel outriggers supporting a minimal pitch or flat roof.

He seems to have been best known for designing commercial buildings. How extensive was his residential practice? Franz's structural knowledge and design ability meant he quickly became involved in large-scale building for the government and commercial developers, although throughout

his career in New Zealand he also designed a large number of residences – they probably number in the hundreds. Some, like the Lane house in this story or those in Meadowbank's Dover Place in Auckland, were expensive builds, but many were smaller, always well-sited single-storey houses or units, usually in concrete block with flat roofs.

What do you like best about the home on these pages? The Lane house in Thames is both a wonderful example of Franz's astute handling of site, planning and materials. It has warmth and spaciousness, and a great flow and ease of movement between rooms and levels, while also offering areas of seclusion and intimacy. The craftsmanship and detailing apparent even in the expansive decks and large glass doors and windows all contribute to the house's sense of being generous but not excessive; one is very much 'open' to the elements but also securely embraced by the structure.