

# THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT: A BEAUTIFUL COLLABORATION BETWEEN CLIENT AND DESIGNER

WORDS: MARIANNE FALCONER | PHOTOGRAPHY: AMANDA AITKEN



**On an expansive piece of land with a woodland vista, a family of five embarked on a three-year project to design and build their forever home. Sited in the heart of rural Waikato, yet accessible enough for Uber Eats deliveries, stands a spectacular piece of contemporary architecture that's a testament to the power of collaboration between a trusting client and a talented architect.**

The proud homeowners approached the project with an open mind and a relaxed attitude, providing Lee Turner, the creative genius behind Turner Road Architecture, with ample freedom.

Their patience and commitment to getting the design right set the stage for a truly remarkable partnership. As the client aptly puts it: "We set Lee free on a creative adventure."

Lee Turner, a firm believer in a client-centric approach, emphasises the importance of understanding clients' desires. "For me, it's about what the client wants, finding out what they like, and giving the client confidence that our job is to come up with ideas they haven't thought of while expanding on what they already have in mind."

In this spirit, Lee shared an initial sketch with the client for a timber ceiling, which would later become the project's crown jewel.

The result of their collaboration was an intricate cedar-slatted ceiling in the living room, boasting a unique inverted valley shape accentuated with integrated LED strip lighting.

The client's unequivocal admiration for this ceiling speaks volumes: "The living room ceiling, it's like a butterfly – a piece of art that I still love to look at."

"Lee and his team need all the glory for the design of the ceiling, plus the builders, Cambridge Building Services, who executed it."

Lee says: "The walls splay outwards, and the ceiling forms an inverted valley, mirroring the roof lines. It's a strong sensory experience; you can't help but go 'wow' when you look at the ceiling."

The interplay of the ceiling's lines, shooting out and upwards, and the splayed walls extending outward and upward, is captivating.



**"THE WALLS SPLAY OUTWARDS, AND THE CEILING FORMS AN INVERTED VALLEY, MIRRORING THE ROOF LINES. IT'S A STRONG SENSORY EXPERIENCE; YOU CAN'T HELP BUT GO 'WOW' WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE CEILING."**





Lee's practical experience, acquired early in his career, came from stints in joinery, building and detailing. "That's where I forged my early technical understanding and 'good habits' to ensure my designs were not only aesthetically pleasing but also buildable, which is an ethos I like to think I have passed on to my team over the years."

The clients' brief was clear: a contemporary, durable design that could withstand the rigors of family life with three energetic boys. Lee's response incorporated cedar cladding, Eurostyle standing seam iron, and precast concrete tilt panels that anchor the residence and provide thermal mass. These materials not only enhance the home's durability, but also seamlessly blend with the natural surroundings.

The 460m<sup>2</sup> home features an angular form that developed organically in response to the view and the clients' desire for distinct spaces, including a private master suite, an exceptional living area for entertaining, a guest wing, and a separate pod for the three kids' bedrooms.

A suspended cantilevered box is striking on the horizon and is home to the three boys' bedrooms. Lee delivered on the clients' request for a degree of separation and privacy while encouraging inclusiveness in communal spaces.

The main living area offers a sensory experience of its own. The ceiling's lines gracefully extend outwards, leading the eye to a double-height void and a glazed wall overlooking the rural vista. This space seamlessly connects to a north-facing deck with adjustable vertical louvres for year-round entertaining and protection from summer heat.

The outdoor space offers an exceptional hosting experience and includes a fireplace, dining and lounge areas, plus a covered BBQ suite, all seamlessly linked to the indoor bar, scullery and kitchen.

The bar, a unique feature, offers dual access from the kitchen scullery and outdoor dining, complete with a beverage fridge, wine racks, and a bi-folding window that opens onto the covered BBQ area. As the client humorously recalls, "The bar is the room we didn't know we needed."

And the couple put it to good use when the second Covid-19 lockdown restricted them to a "staycation".

The client's steel fabrication business played a role in manufacturing a bespoke feature fondly dubbed the "blue steel", a dining table designed by Lee Turner. This table serves as the central pivot point in the home, where daily life revolves around cooking, serving, eating, and homework.

Another favourite feature is the functional design of the laundry and mud room. Lee's "utilities passage" cleverly divides the entertaining spaces from the "back-of-house" spaces, maintaining order in the communal living areas. It links the garage directly to the mud room, laundry and the scullery - creating a clear path for the kids to deposit their school bags and shoes as they head towards the pantry.

The combo of a down-to-earth couple and a talented architectural designer who prioritises client needs has resulted in a sanctuary where the home owners simply love being and can see themselves living for many years.

In this case, the butterfly effect is many design facets coming together to create a home so beautiful they never want to leave. ■

A SUSPENDED CANTILEVERED BOX IS STRIKING ON THE HORIZON AND IS HOME TO THE THREE BOYS' BEDROOMS. LEE DELIVERED ON THE CLIENTS' REQUEST FOR A DEGREE OF SEPARATION AND PRIVACY WHILE ENCOURAGING INCLUSIVENESS IN COMMUNAL SPACES.