

Making a home for yourself is like making a movie, says Niki Caro. Just because you don't have a lot of money, doesn't mean you can't make it look good. Caro should know. Her feature film, *Memory and Desire*, premiered on New Zealand movie screens last year. BIANCA ZANDER and BECKY NUNES visited Caro and her partner, architect Andrew Lister, at the beach.

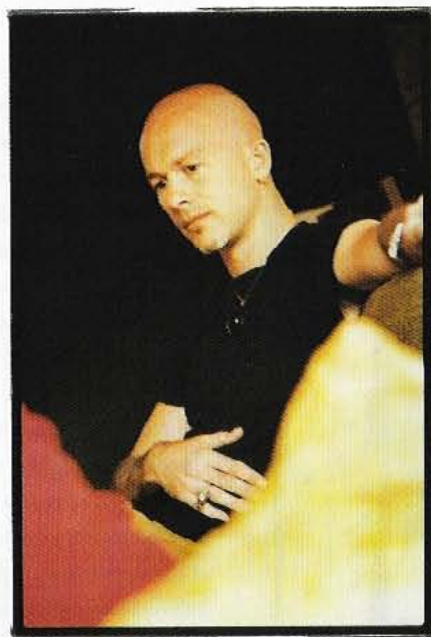
memory and DESIGN





Karekare is where it's at, according to the creatively inclined residents of this wild west coast haven. Just ask Niki Caro and Andrew Lister who have chosen it as their pied-à-terre to escape this mad, bad world. They both agree that commuting to the city from the farthest reaches of Waitakere City is a small price to pay for swimming well after sunset every night during summer.

The isolated beach of Karekare seems like an unlikely place to find Niki Caro, one of New Zealand's most acclaimed directors, and Andrew Lister, a thoroughly urban architect. They will soon tell you that they are not alone. Karekare boasts a thriving community from the film and architecture worlds. The only problem for Caro and Lister was that by the time they bought a house here, they had already stayed in the two best homes in Karekare. "Property is hard to come by in Karekare, there is not a high





Lister's architectural mission is to get someone passionate about a house and excited about living there.

turnover, so we were happy to settle with this – the 'Taj Mahal of fibrolite baches,' says Caro.

Luckily for them, Lister had some bright ideas on how to turn their rat-infested 50s bach into a thoroughly modernist muse – without Hollywood-style financing. "It's rather like making a low budget short film – it doesn't have to look bad just because it's cheap," says Caro. It still looks like a fibrolite bach from the outside, but the interior is unrecognisable. The first thing that Lister did was to pull up everything, then he stained the floor, pulled out the cupboards – and a few walls – relocated the existing bathroom to provide space for the new dining room, and rat-proofed the ceiling.

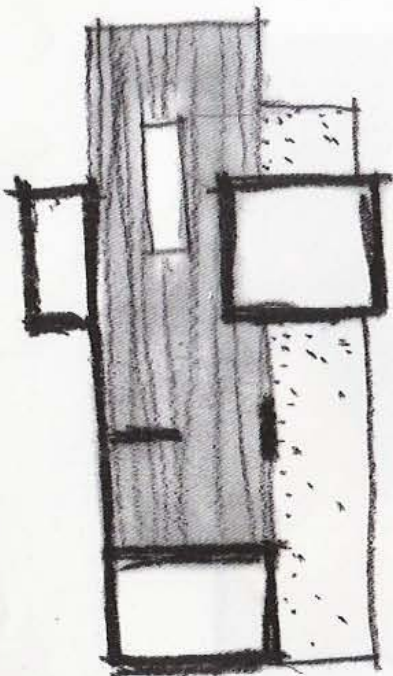
The plan was more open, but they were still left with difficult access to their lush garden. Lister removed the back wall and added a huge set of commercial aluminium sliding doors out to a new cantilevered macrocarpa deck. The doors now slice through two halves of an indoor/outdoor dining table for banqueting alfresco.

Apart from these structural changes, the rest of the transformation is cosmetic. Caro's only request was for a big bookcase and this is amply catered for in an asymmetrical arrangement of 50s-style box shelves. After this homage to 1950s design, the rest of the home takes its cue from subtle Pacific and Japanese

minimalist influences. The slopes of the roof are covered with sheets of bamboo plywood to remind Caro and Lister of their love of Samoan culture and the kitchen is painted black with translucent fibreglass cupboard doors that recall Japanese screens.

Caro and Lister developed a fondness for Japanese minimalism during the filming of Caro's movie *Memory and Desire* in Tokyo. Scenes were also filmed on nearby north Piha beach and the house they bought at Karekare has strong connections with the film. "We were spending time in Tokyo – one of the most fabulous cities in the world – and it gave us a great appreciation of what we have here. I brought the Japanese actors out here to the West Coast and they just screamed at the top of their voices, they'd never seen anything like it," says Caro.

Andrew Lister has recently left Richard Priest Architects in Auckland to go out on his own. The excitement he feels about his own home is an important part of Lister's architectural mission. "For me, it's about someone being passionate about the house and excited about living there," he says. Lister's own preferences are for pure and simple design solutions, but he realises that modernism can be frightening to some people. "Modernism is a pure idea, you don't need a lot of decoration and it answers all the questions in a simple and effective way, but I wouldn't push my style on someone else," he says.





A set of commercial aluminium doors slice through two halves of an indoor/outdoor dining table for alfresco dining.





The house takes its cues from subtle Pacific and Japanese minimalist influences, including the stunning bamboo plywood ceiling and distinctive hanging lamp.

Lister is aware that his profession can be a dirty word. "People can be frightened by the word 'architect', thinking that it's synonymous with spending a lot of money. It doesn't have to be. This house is a good example. On a tight budget all we have done is add more light and simplify everything down. The answers can often be a lot more simple than you think."

At under \$20,000, the dramatic results that Caro and Lister have achieved are well within the reach of aspiring modernists. Aesthetic solutions don't have to cost the earth.



LISTER HOUSE SELECTED CREDITS

Architect Andrew Lister **Builders** Andrew Lister, Kirby Reid **Macrocarpa timber** Paul Leonard
Milling floor finish Flooring Enterprises **Sliding door joinery** Ryan Aluminium **Bamboo ply ceiling** Woven Bamboo Enterprises **Glazing/mirrors** Sail City Glass, David White **Cabinets** Bathroom fittings American Standard **Door hardware** Halliday & Baillie **Stonework** Trethewey **Granite & Marble, Art Stone** Starck chairs Indice **Vases** Country Road

