



ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN

HOME STRAIGHT

PHOTOS KALLAN MACLEOD

Andrew and Mandy Sinclair's weekend retreat at Hampton Downs effortlessly inhabits the spirit of both provincial history and Kiwi motor racing. This is one Mainline Construction-led building project where you need to look especially closely to identify the dividing lines between new and old.

The idea of a new build embracing recycled materials might seem somewhat incongruous on paper. In execution, however, the results of this particular ground-up new build sympathetic to the implementation of recycled materials throughout, is simply stunning.

Oh, and it's also – of all things – a race car workshop.

Actually, it's a whole lot more than that. But owners Andrew and Mandy Sinclair's passion for motor racing not only shines through at every turn as you walk through the building, it also served as the impetus for the project in the first place.

"We live in Auckland and also have a holiday home in the Coromandel, but our involvement in motor racing means we're often in North Waikato," says Andrew.

"We looked at the idea of an apartment at Hampton Downs some time ago, but then we came up with a different take on the idea of track-side living."

That different idea resulted in what is affectionally known as "the barn".

"It's essentially a retro-industrial building that honours New Zealand's rural history," Mandy explains. "But an industrial-slash-farm house with a Bruce McLaren-style workshop at one end."

The home features open plan living, framed by three-bay workshop space at one end and an elegant large-scale covered outdoor area at the other, accessed by stunning glass and aluminium sliding doors. The glass extends the full height of the roof, letting in masses of light and showcasing a recycled brick dividing wall that is so perfectly imperfect as to look (in keeping with the rest of the building) as if it has been lifted wholesale from a 1900s-era Otago wool store.

The sleeping space in the building includes a separate master bedroom, as well as an all-important 'dormitory' room for the race crew.

Somehow the home – which Mandy and Andrew designed with Mark Rantin from MRA Limited and built in partnership with Mainline Construction – inhabits both grand elements and humble touches all at once.



"The dining room table, for example, is my mother's old table which I cherish. But we've included other, perhaps cheekier, design elements everywhere as well. We repainted the cabinet beside the refrigerator in the kitchen 'Brooklands Green', for example, which is synonymous with the Brooklands race circuit in the UK.

"And if you look closely at the birdlife decorating the cushions on the armchairs, they're chickadee birds, which have an obvious connection to our Chickadee Racing VK Commodore."

Oh, and that nicely stained-up workshop floor? In a subtle nod to modernity, it features heating underneath the concrete.

"Well, we're all getting on a bit now; you don't want to be lying underneath a car on freezing cold concrete!" laughs Andrew.

Joking aside, when it comes to working on hard surfaces, Andrew and his crew of loyal mates are no slouches. Not content with running a car in New Zealand, they've just commenced building what they hope will be the world's fastest Valiant Charger; a 500cc supercharged V8 monster that will be making the pilgrimage to the salt flats of Bonneville in August next year.

"Racing has always been about having fun with our mates; that's what is at the core of it. But we're pretty serious about heading to Bonneville. We're committed to doing as well as we possibly can; it might be a three-to-five-year programme. Watch this space," Andrew says.

Racing is clearly a passion for Andrew and Mandy. And speaking with the Sinclairs' about the Mainline Construction team that was with them throughout the entire project at Hampton Downs, executing demanding builds like this is something the company is equally passionate about.

"We've built homes before, but the big difference for us with this build, is that the entire Mainline Construction team 'got' it, from start to finish. There was so much buy-in from everyone," concludes Andrew.

"The recycled nature of it obviously meant we were setting ourselves up for some challenges. But actually, in practice, it never really felt like that was the case. Marty and Darren and the Mainline team, as well as all the Mainline subbies – the sparkies, the plumbers – everyone was really enthusiastic about this project from start to finish.

"We still have some hard landscaping to do, so the project continues. But we're looking forward to enjoying the summer racing season out here at Hampton Downs with friends and family."

Left The race car workshop is also home to a unique Piaggio 400cc three-wheeler truck

Below Left The covered outdoor area provides an external room extension on the weekend retreat

Below A mix of recycled materials and carefully selected retro furniture successfully blur the lines between new and old in this character build

The attention to detail is impressive, and it's the small details which stand out; the copper plumbing, the industrial factory lightshades, the rustic benches and tables, the classic Kiwi polished pine radiogram in the lounge (that is secretly Bluetooth capable).

"About the only truly new elements to the house are the Wilco Litecrete Precast Walls, with black oxide, concrete slab and rafters," says Mandy. "We treated them in such a way as to look as if they were original weathered construction."

"Almost everything in between, and especially when it comes to the furnishings and décor, has been recycled. It has been an absolute labour of love."

Andrew, who owns a precast concrete business Wilco Precast, says the desire for reused and salvaged materials even extended to what the concrete floor in the main workshop area looked like.

"This is a working garage and I didn't want to be precious about the concrete floor. I wanted it to have oil stains and scuffs and all the rest of it. During a race weekend, there's plenty of activity in here with our crew – who are all our mates – prepping the car and so on.

"That's the beauty of utilising materials that have had a past life: they have a story to tell and they already have the knocks and scars from years gone by. It all helps make the place feel lived-in already, which adds to the feeling of it being a home away from home."

The materials used throughout the building – sourced by Mandy with the help of Mainline Construction – have come from far and wide. A distinct through-line, though, is the industrial application of the many elements used.

The trusses, made of solid Australian hardwood and sourced from a wharf were manufactured in Clyde. The heavy-duty roller door mechanisms used between the main living space and both the workshop and the bedroom area are over a hundred years old. Sourced online from Masterton (and originally from an old barn in the United States), Mainline gave them new bearings in order to provide smooth opening and closing.

The kauri sarking in the ceiling and the heritage fire surround came courtesy of Ward Demolition, while other elements – especially the furniture – boast much more personal histories.

"We've tried to include elements throughout the building that speak to both our own shared history, and the history of motor racing," explains Mandy.

