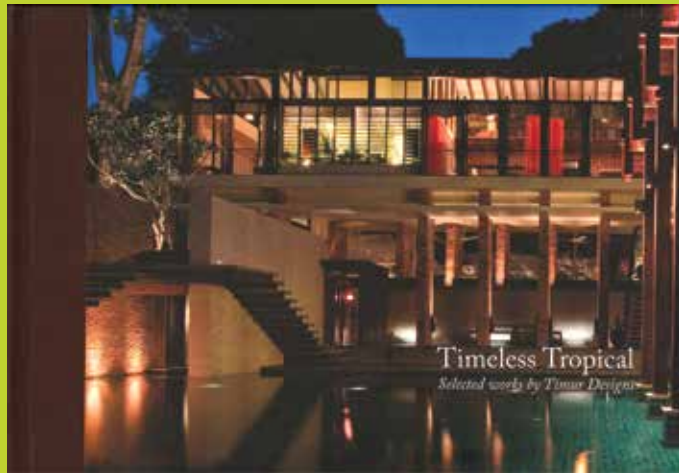




Timeless Tropical Homes is the second compilation of works by Timur Designs, an architecture practice in Singapore renowned for interweaving aspects of tropical living into their exquisite residential work. Timur Designs is led by Chan Wai Kin and Yong Ai Loon. Both are united in their commitment to the tenets of form-follows-climate and that good architecture is to be lived in and not merely to be seen.

This monograph, like their first publication, *Timeless Tropical*, shows a selection of their works where the boundaries of timeless tropical architecture are explored through various interpretations of spaces and use of materials.



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TIMELESS TROPICAL HOMES
BY TIMUR DESIGNS

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CONTENTS

TIMELESS TROPICAL HOMES	06	OPEN LIVING	84
		FRANKEL WALK	88
OUTDOOR LIVING	08	BERRIMA ROAD	96
TREVOSE CRESCENT	12	PASIR RIS ROAD	106
REBECCA ROAD	20	KINGSMEAD ROAD	114
SUNSET VIEW	30	ALEXANDRA, NEW ZEALAND	120
		SKY GARDENS	126
RAIN SHELTER & SUN SHADING	40	TROPICAL INTERIORS	130
OLIVE ROAD	44		
SWETTENHAM ROAD	50	PHOTO CREDITS	135
NATURAL VENTILATION	56		
LOTUS AVENUE	62		
SIGLAP AVENUE	66		
LORONG PISANG EMAS	72		
CLEMENTI CRESCENT	76		
THOMSON VIEW	80		

TIMELESS TROPICAL HOMES

At Timur Designs, our architecture is largely based on the main tenets of timeless and tropical design. In the fast changing world of technology and quick and easy discards, the concept of timelessness is essential to keep us anchored to our roots. A home is a sanctuary to which we retreat and recuperate and it should not have a use-by date. Architecture, as in other expressions of art and design, is frequently subjected to dictates of fashion and current styles. It is often too easy to succumb to such impulses. However, the home is a permanent space and thus should be a constant to provide us a sense of security regardless of the time and age.

How is timelessness thus achieved? As the world becomes a global stage and culture becomes universal, we should look back to our heritage and the facets of our place that makes our home special. The climate in which we live plays a big part in determining our built environment: in the days before technological advances, we had to adapt to our local climate by building appropriately. These considerations should remain important so that we do not have to merely rely on new technology to create a home that transcends its place and time. The home should tell us that we are living in a unique place rather than a universal one.

What then are the features that make up timeless tropical homes? The tropical climate primarily is dictated by sun and rain. Features to deal with the effects of sun and rain are thus important elements in tropical design. In traditional architecture, whether it is the kampong house or the colonial house, our forefathers dealt with these elements by making the roof the key element. In the development of modern tropical homes, the

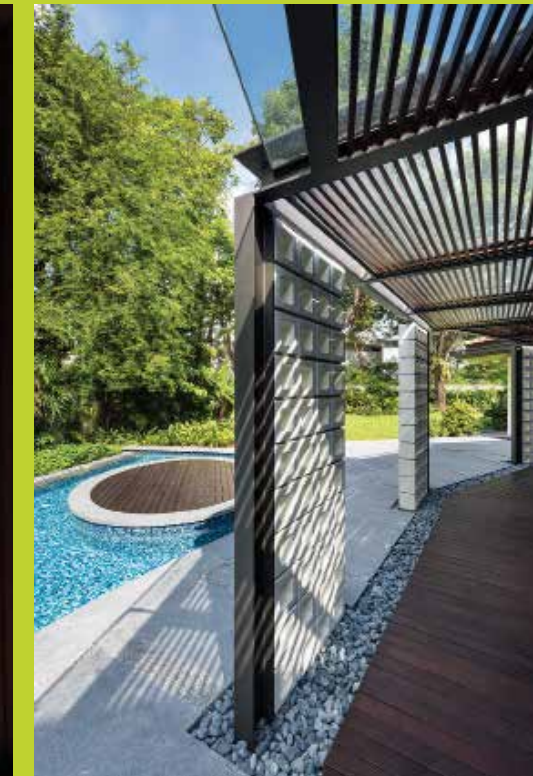
roof and other design elements are used to provide **Rain Shelter and Sun Shading**.

Traditional homes have harnessed the elements of climate to provide comfortable living. In these days of environmental consciousness, we should continue to make use of natural climatic resources instead of relying on technological solutions. **Natural Ventilation** provides a comfortable and natural living environment. We just need to understand how it works so that we can design appropriately.

Traditional living in the tropics is also equivalent to living in the outdoors. Semi-shelters in the form of pavilions and verandahs provide intermediate **Outdoor Living** spaces where its residents have the benefit of being able to constantly relate to nature instead of being shut out from it.

The benefit of living in the tropics means that we do not have to isolate ourselves in boxes. A comfortable tropical interior is about a collection of connected spaces and not a series of rooms. An **Open Living** environment allows users to enjoy visual and physical connection between spaces.

In the 25 years since the formation of Timur Designs, we have continued to hold fast to our commitment to design timeless tropical homes for our clients. The interpretation of timeless tropical has been applied in different ways and in response to different sites and briefs. The expression may differ but the tenets of timelessness in the tropics remain.



TREVOSE CRESCENT

Taking advantage of the site which is elevated one floor above the street level, we designed a large basement carpark with direct access from the street without the need for any inclined ramp. The basement also contains an entrance foyer, wine cellar and utility rooms.

The form of the house is defined by a series of overlapping boxes which emphasise the contours of the sloping site. While the expression is unconventional, the concept of tropical living prevails with light and ventilation coming in through courtyards and sheltered openings. All rooms are arranged around the courtyards which vertically connect the four levels of the house.

To enhance the experience on arrival, the entry to the main level takes the visitor through water features in a courtyard flanked by granite-cladded walls and steel posts. The timber trellis above casts shadows and light onto the water. A second entry is through the basement foyer.

The staircase and lift are positioned in a central light well, enclosed by a glass wall where sunlight is broken up by the patterns in the aluminium screen.

Spanning the width of the house frontage, the living room opens onto the pool area. As this main living area is elevated, the view extends beyond the infinity edge swimming pool and green canopy.

The house is clad in Trespa panels which act as a second skin. Besides heat insulation, the panels require minimal maintenance for the external walls while its colouration gives the house its distinctive character.



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[1] The dramatic stepping forms of the house accentuate the elevated site.
 [2] The lighting helps to highlight the box enclosure of the form.

2



[3] The warm sienna hue of the cladding was chosen to give a richness to the external elevations. [4] The living room spans the front width of the house and accommodates different seating areas.



Sectional view showing the basement at the road platform level.



5

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6

[5] The living room opens onto a patio next to the pool. [6] The elevated living level has views across to the greenery beyond. [7] Screens and water elements are used to create a play of shadows and light.



7

OLIVE ROAD

Set snugly into the very steep terrain, this house hugs the natural contours of the site. In a gesture reminiscent of water pooling and streaming down the slopes of a valley, the house features a series of three ponds. Rain water collected on the roof of the house is channelled into the first and uppermost pond which overflows into a creek down the slope into the second pond, before cascading into the third one at the bottom. At each pond, the water collected is used for irrigation of the garden.

The swimming pool is at the heart of this L-shaped house, and the path of the rainwater channelling.

In response to the existing terrain, numerous steep slopes had to be cut to accommodate the built-in components of the house. However, minimal concrete retaining walls were built, employing instead, the Deltalok system of slope retention that uses fabric bags containing soil. This system ensures lots of steep green walls that are maintenance-free, quick to construct, and in sync with the main strategy of keeping the house as eco-friendly as possible.

According to the manufacturer of the Deltalok system, its use reduces greenhouse gas emissions by 97% compared to the construction of concrete retaining walls.

Besides the use of Deltalok walls, other environmentally-friendly gestures in the construction of this house include the use of wind turbines on the roof to generate natural ventilation, recycling of granite slabs salvaged from the demolition of an office tower for the carporch and driveway paving, and reconstituted bamboo for both internal flooring as well as outdoor decks.



1



2



Section showing the sloping terrain, with a steep drop from the road level.



[1] A wide verandah with huge overhanging roof eave perched above the sloping terrain, for maximum weather protection. [2] The house sits snugly into the sloping terrain with three ponds flowing around it. [3-4] The uppermost pond, situated at the front of the house as seen from the road, collects rainwater from the roof. [5] Water overflows into a creek and gathers into the second pond before it eventually collects in the third one at the lowest point. [6-7] At each level, water is tapped from the ponds for irrigation.



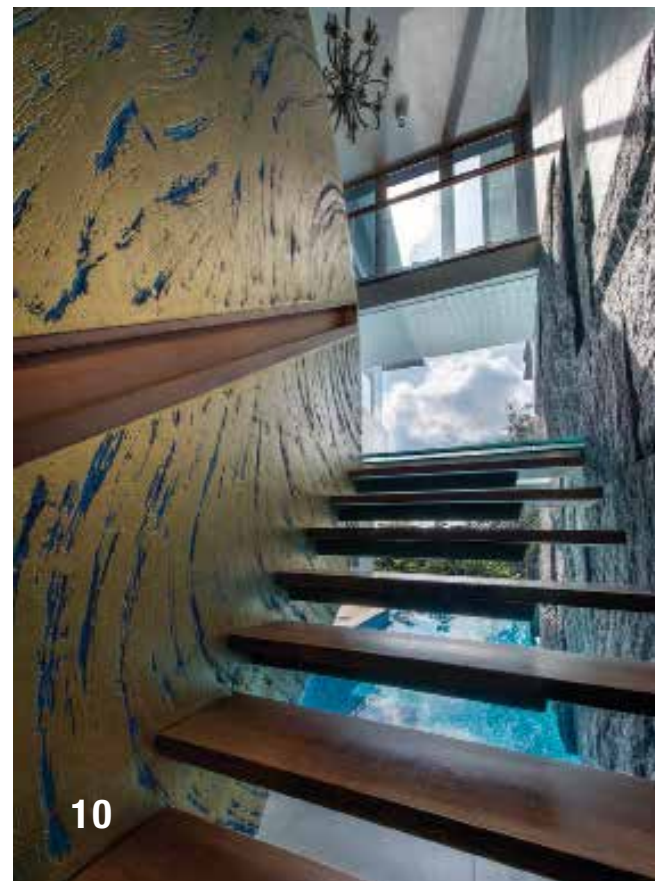


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[8-11] The central staircase features a hand-painted concrete wall, cantilever steps and a glass landing that hovers over the swimming pool below. [12-13] The verandah overlooks the swimming pool.



10



11



12



13

LOTUS AVENUE

Incorporating elements of the tropical house in an intermediate terrace house is a totally different challenge from other landed housing types because it has to depend on only the short front and rear façades for natural light and ventilation.

In many intermediate terrace houses, including the conservation shop house, the airwell is often introduced to bring in daylight and air near the middle section of the house. This house at Lotus Avenue, however, is too long for the front and rear windows to provide sufficient natural light and effective natural ventilation, and also, not long enough to introduce an airwell or courtyard at the centre, without losing too much usable floor area.

Our solution was to “pull away” parts of the side walls on both sides from the common party wall to create a narrow strip of buffer “courtyard” space that is open to the sky and just wide enough to allow natural light and ventilation to reach the inner parts of the floor plate.

The buffer space is transformed into a three-dimensional garden, with suspended pots of ferns as well as creepers and hanging plants growing from planters bracketed on the walls. From inside the house, this narrow space is deceptively spacious and gives the intermediate terrace house the ambience of a detached house with a garden.

Just with this simple gesture, all the rooms and bathrooms in the house are bathed in natural light and sufficient ventilation to encourage true tropical living.



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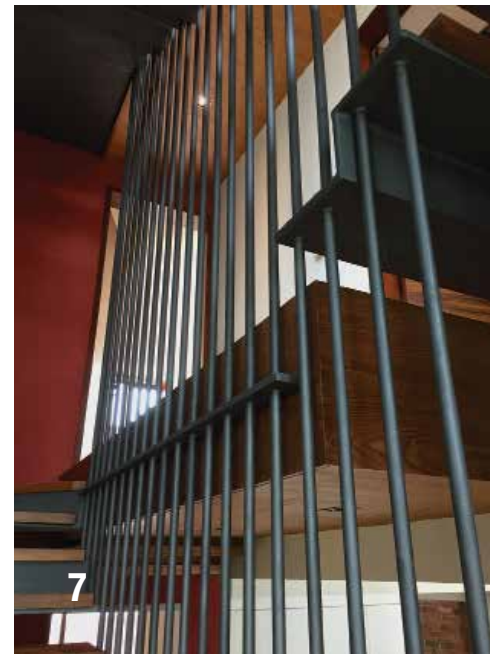


[1] The staircase is partially detached from the common party wall to create a narrow breathing space. The enclosing wall is virtually transparent, comprising panels of adjustable glass louvres framed by steel columns and aluminium extrusions making it totally permeable to air flow. [2-3] The front façade of the intermediate terrace house is detached from one side party wall to let in natural daylight and ventilation.





[4] Besides allowing natural ventilation, the narrow strip of external space also brings in natural daylight, and is transformed into a landscaped garden. [5-6] The vertical garden can be seen and experienced at various levels as one walks up and down the staircase. [7] Close-up detail of the steel staircase with teak boards. [8-10] The second strip of narrow garden located at the rear, on the opposite wall, extends the garden effect up to the second storey and the attic. [11] Front garden view of the stairwell, which has been detached from the common party wall.



SIGLAP AVENUE

The difference in levels between the front and back of the site created opportunities for a basement with entry direct from the main road, an elevated guest suite with a private garden and separate access from the rear and a first storey living space with visual privacy from the main road.

There are two entries to the main level – a homecoming one through the basement hallway and the more contemplative access up a series of garden steps flanked by ponds and planters.

The L-shaped form of the house provides a natural enclosure to a courtyard-like garden enclosed by high retaining walls at the side and rear. The L-shaped form also means that every room and corridor has openings to the external.

The living, dining and kitchen spaces form an open area across the front width of the house, spilling out onto patios and the garden. This open living area is where family and friends gather.

A central airwell with its full-height louvred windows encourages natural ventilation through the four levels of the house. This keeps the house cool without worry about rain penetration.

The guest room at the rear on the second storey opens onto a patio and garden which has a stairway to the back gate. This back gate connects the road to the house at the rear.

The highest point of the house is the attic-cum-roof terrace which has a panoramic view of the city. This roof terrace is lined with planters which serve as vegetable farming plots.



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- [1] Entry to the house is at the road level, where the basement is.
- [2] The L-shaped form encloses a garden, forming a secluded oasis.

FRANKEL WALK

This house epitomises tropical living with large roof overhangs providing ample shelter from the weather, and a U-shaped layout allowing for good cross ventilation through the different spaces. The U-shape encloses a courtyard within which is a large koi pond. All living, dining and corridor spaces on the first storey have visual connections across the courtyard.

The entrance into the house is discreetly screened from the car porch and pedestrian entry. Visitors walk down a narrow path flanked by granite-cladded walls to the main door. Upon entering the entrance foyer, one sees a feature wall and there is no hint of the courtyard behind it. One side of the foyer leads into the open living space. Beyond the folding doors on the side of the living space is a view across the courtyard to the dining space on the other end of the U.

In tropical homes, the gardens are important living spaces. The living room opens onto gardens on both side. The front garden is a secluded tropical space with coconut trees and a lily pond, and the courtyard garden is another sanctuary with outdoor seating under the shade of large overhanging trees.

The second storey houses two large master suites, one on each side of the arms of the U. A study and a guest room take up the space in the connecting arm between the suites.

The main feature of the house is a pitched roof with big overhanging eaves supported by timber and steel struts. The elements are designed to emphasise the beauty of the structure and texture of the material.



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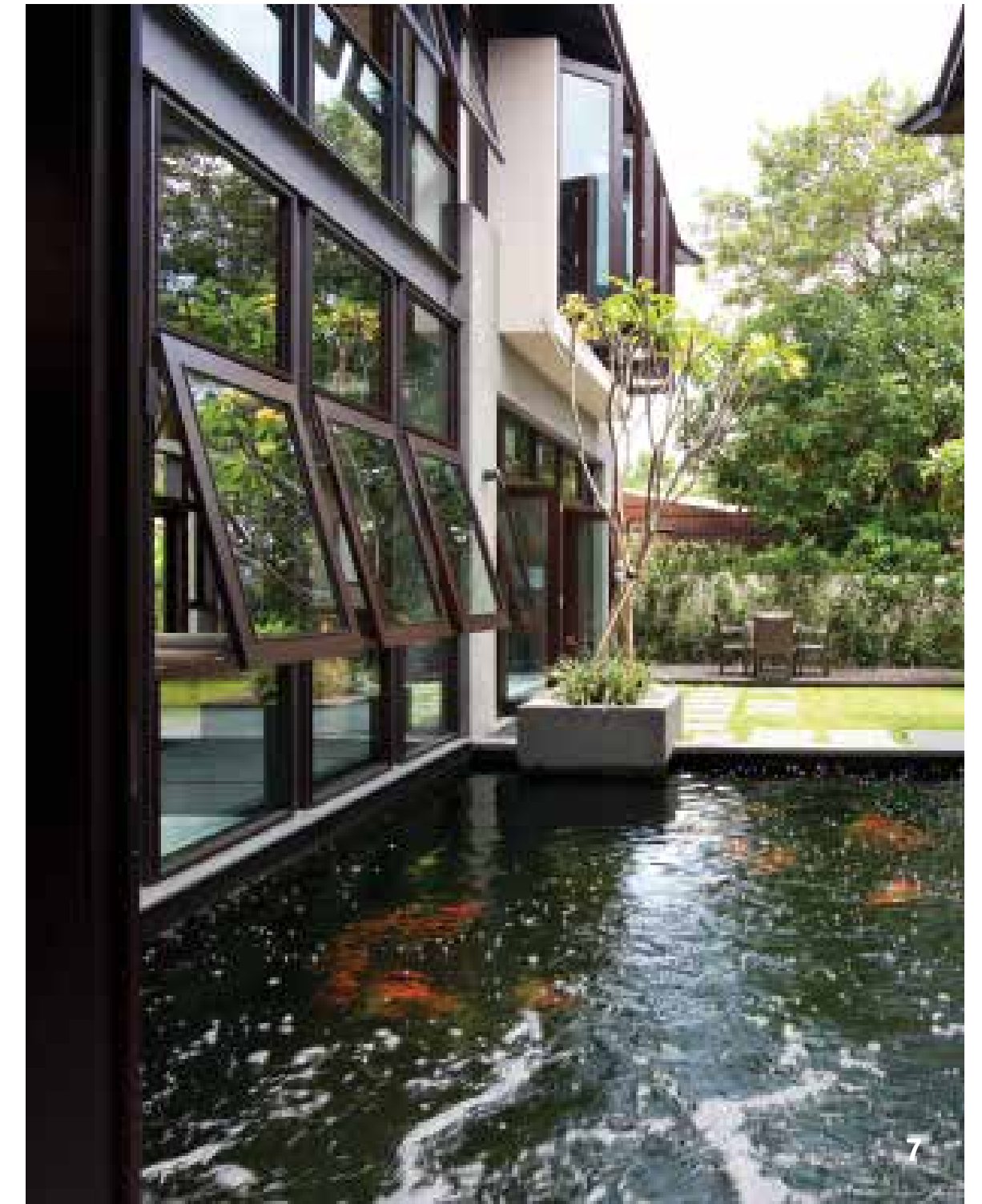


2

[1] The house's distinctive features are formed by the timber structures supporting a large overhanging roof. [2] The front of the house exudes a tropical feel with its pitched roof and timber elements.

[3] The living and dining rooms are on opposite sides of the koi pond. [4] Transparency is a key element of this house. [5] The main living spaces open into the courtyard garden.





[6] The living room is flanked by the staircase over a water feature on one side and opens up along its two longer sides.
[7] Top hung windows are used along the corridors to allow for natural ventilation and can be kept open during rainy weather.

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Our team, at our very own tropical roof terrace.



PHOTO CREDITS

Tim Nolan, Singapore.
All photographs by Tim Nolan, except the following:

Rebecca Road, page 28 (photos 15 to 17);
Rain Shelter & Sun Shading, page 41;
Natural Ventilation, page 56;
Lotus Avenue, pages 62 to 65 (photos 1 to 11);
Tropical Interiors, page 133 (photos 3 to 4).
By Chan Wai Kin, Singapore.

Alexandra, New Zealand, pages 120 to 125 (photos 1 to 7),
and page 136.
By Raj Gibson, New Zealand.

Facing page: Other projects from 2009-2016
(Clockwise from top left): Detached house at Chatsworth Road;
Three houses at Mt Sinai Road; Four detached houses at
Goodman Road; One pair semi-detached houses at Roseburn
Avenue; Semi-detached house at Jalan Siantan; Corner Terrace
house at Jalan Sukachita; One pair semi-detached houses at
Toh Crescent; Detached house near Stevens Road; Detached
house at Jalan Baiduri; Conservation shophouse at Amoy Street.

Front cover: The composition of different materials and
elements is balanced at the house at Sunset View.
Title page: There is transparency and visual connection
between the spaces at the house at Sunset View.
Contents page: The living space at the Sunset View
house is open to the gardens on both sides.
Last page: The house at Alexandra, New Zealand,
merges into the natural landscape.