

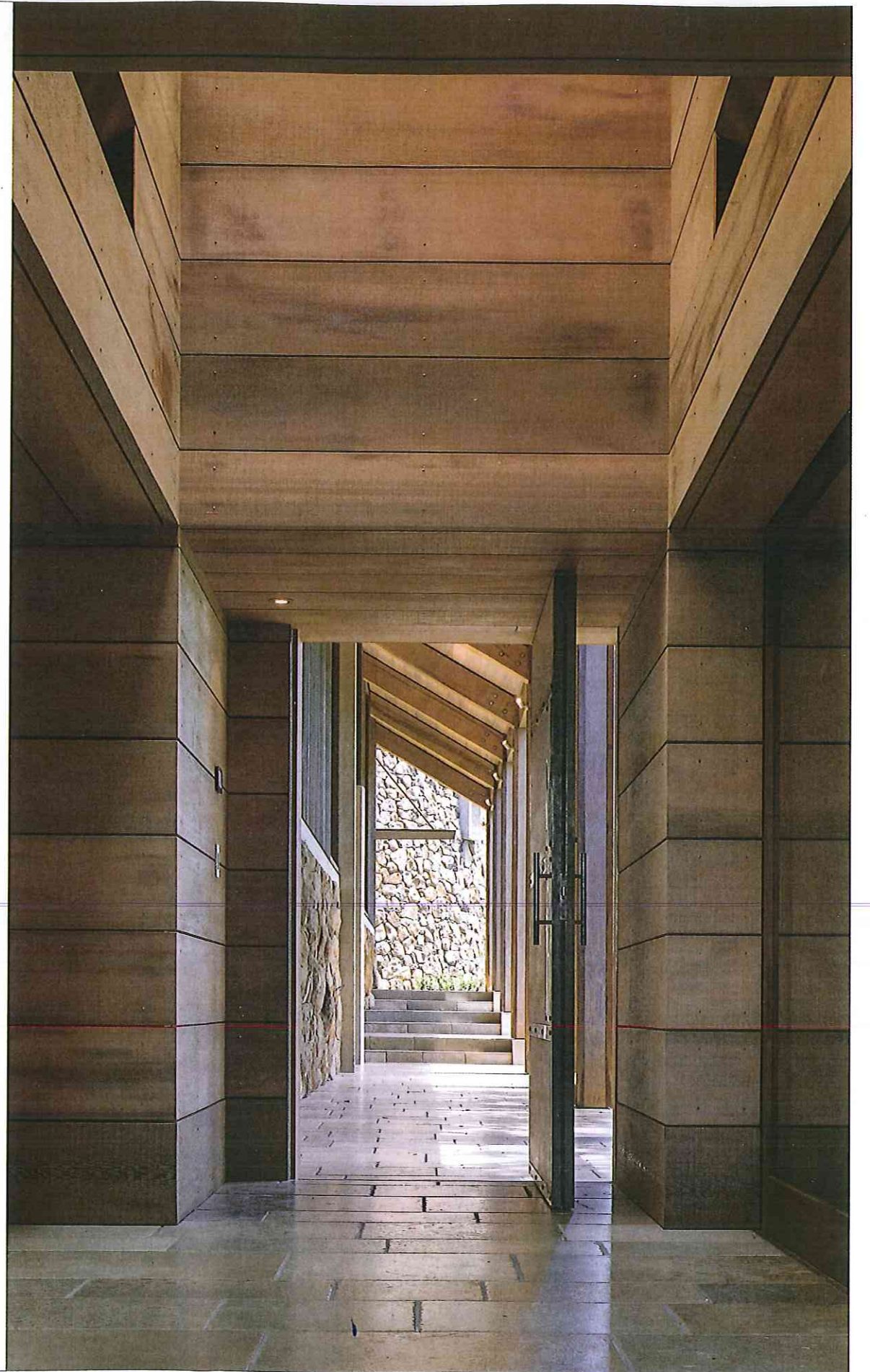
interiors

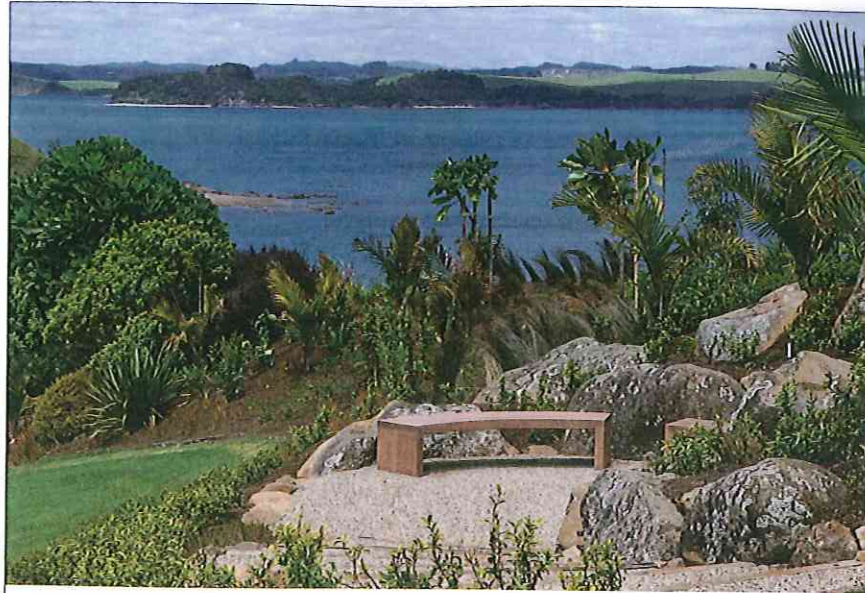




HOUSE OF LEARNING

ARCHITECTURE: PIP CHESHIRE
INTERIOR DESIGN: TERRY HUNZIKER
TEXT: JORGE S. ARANGO
PHOTOGRAPHY AARON LEITZ





WHARE-WANANGA (SOMETIMES WHARE-KURA) IS MAORI for "house of learning." It refers to the oral tradition of New Zealand's indigenous people, the method by which cultural knowledge, history and ritual travel through generations in story. Conceptually, this six-bedroom, six-bath residence, perched on a dramatic promontory overlooking the country's Bay of Islands, is a kind of manifestation of *Whare-wananga*. "The purchase of this land and its restoration is part of my client's re-engagement with New Zealand and his Maori roots," explains architect Pip Cheshire. His client is New Zealand-born developer Peter Cooper, whose permanent residence is in California but who descends from a *paheka* (white European) paternal great-grandfather and a Maori great-grandmother.

By returning this 1,000-acre former cattle farm to a pristine state—linking wetlands and planting over a million trees for starters—Cooper is healing and preserving it and retelling its past. "It is very spiritual land," says Cooper, who has registered 43 historical sites on the property. "Whalers regarded this area as the capital of New Zealand because of its intense pre-European Maori occupation." When those Europeans did arrive 200 years ago, this became their first settlement.

The house's structure itself was conceived as a form of narrative correlating with the trajectory of the site's history. "We wanted to suggest it had been built over time," says Cheshire. A barrel-shaped component made of volcanic stones unearthed from an adjacent farm "might have been a watchtower for the original inhabitants." The second stage of settlement, adds Cooper, "would have been a farm building," represented by a more vernacular long barn-like connection between the tower and two perpendicular glass pavilions that visually signal the presence of contemporary occupants. The whole thing unfolds like a story.

Inside, Cheshire collaborated with Seattle-based designer Terry Hunziker on materials. (This was their second project together, as they had built Peter and Sue Cooper's Auckland residence some years before.) "The house is very open, so we decided not to switch materials between inside and outside," observes Hunziker.









THE VOLCANIC STONE IDEA IS CARRIED INDOORS

with Dalle de France limestone floors. The metal of the home's standing-seam roofs reappears in window framing, a custom chandelier over twin dining tables surrounded by Gulassa chairs and, most prominently, in the living room's fireplace surround. Horizontal planks of fragrant macrocarpa wood, a coastal cypress, constitute most walls. "Horizontal boards are soothing," says Hunziker.

Subtlety was essential to preserve views and provide an unobtrusive backdrop for the Coopers' extensive art collection. Designer, clients and art consultant-gallery owner Kathlene Fogarty had devised a "library concept" for the Auckland home, which Cooper says they amplified throughout these living quarters. "We always knew there would be displays of artifacts and large paintings," explains Hunziker. So shelving and niches in almost every room were "designed with the intent that there be lighting to display the collections."

Appropriately, the distinctive thread running through Hunziker's work since establishing his firm in 1984 is precisely the way he views the spaces he designs in artistic terms. "A room is a composition, much like a painting, with elements of landscape: line, horizon, form, color and scale," he observes. "I see all rooms in my head this way, and that's how I work them out. Art and the practice of drawing and sketching have been a part of my life since childhood."

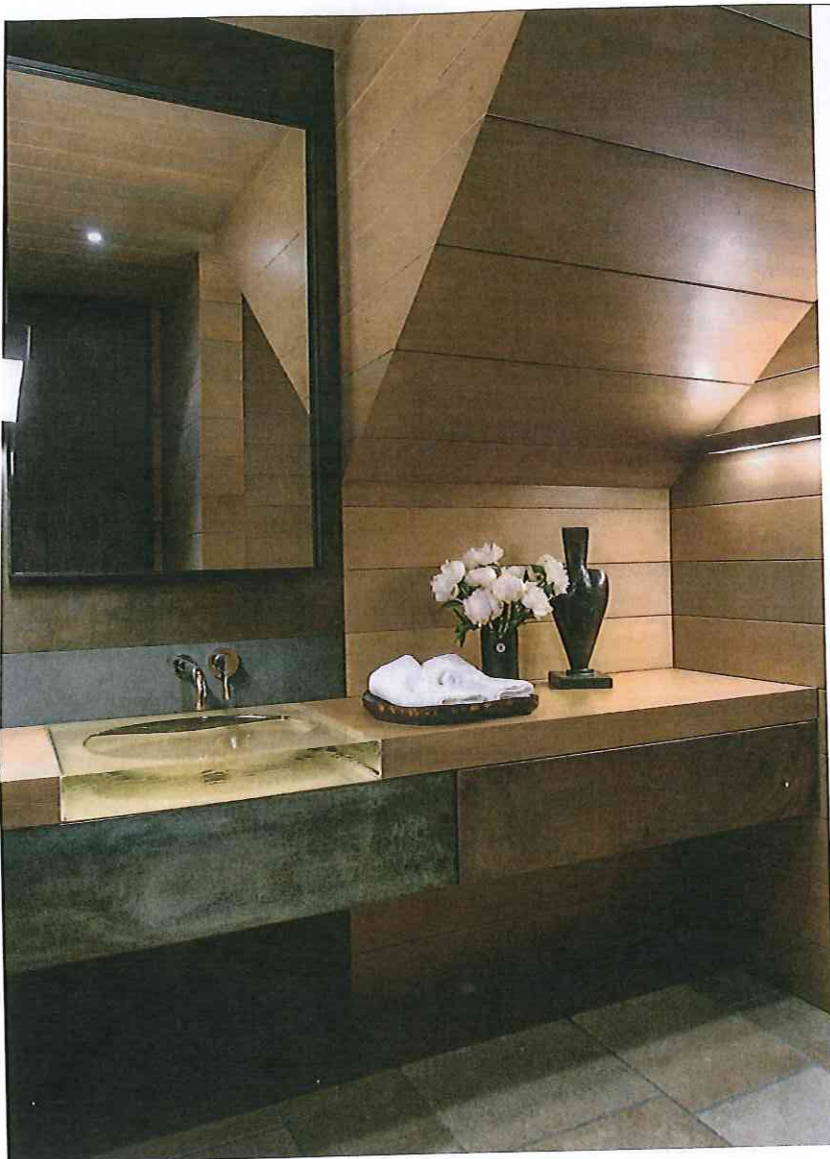
The Coopers' collections further accentuate the *Wharewananga* soul of the house. They include works by famous Kiwi artists both living (Shane Cotton) and gone (Colin McCahon), rare books

about Maori and *paheka* cultures and their interaction, as well as Maori sepiä portraits and artifacts of every variety—ceremonial objects, iridescent fish hooks made of *paua* (abalone) shells, *ketes* (woven bags for holding healing herbs). Every space is an invitation to pause and contemplate New Zealand culture, and to do so in a location central to its evolution.

Hunziker's artist's palette is intentionally muted to complement these factors. The living room's Michaelian & Kohlberg carpet is one of the few patterns present in the home. "To me, pattern is not actual designed pattern," observes Hunziker. "It's about texture—the cerused oak on the cabinetry, the Garrett Leather pony hide on the living room chairs, the Great Plains mohair on the sofas and lounge chairs."

Most everything was specially designed for the environment to telegraph what Hunziker characterizes as "a sophisticated, slightly rusticated interior." Some exceptions are Richard Wrightman's leather Lambert folding screen behind the master bed and the room's Lapchi rug; Christian Liaigre chairs at a table in the library atop a Decorative Carpets sisal rug; and Sutherland outdoor furniture on various terraces Cheshire created as respites from sun and wind (though these, too, are from Hunziker's collection for the company). Even spectacular features, however—a mahogany Alegna tub in the master bath, or the way a guest bath is swathed in honed travertine marble—convey the exquisiteness of materials and craftsmanship rather than over-designed flourishes. If these rooms are Hunziker's paintings, they are more Agnes Marlin than de Kooning or Pollock.





IT IS ALL, OF COURSE, UNQUESTIONABLY LUXURIOUS. However, one senses a deeper spirit thrumming beneath the aesthetics. Fogarty puts her finger on it when she says, "Peter doesn't see this as a possession. It's about preserving the land for future generations. The land will tell you what to do. If people walk in here and feel they go beyond themselves, then we've done our job." ■

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