

green



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Here's to the designers, builders, innovators, growers ... and readers

Industrial Strength

text: Claire McCall photography: Patrick Reynolds

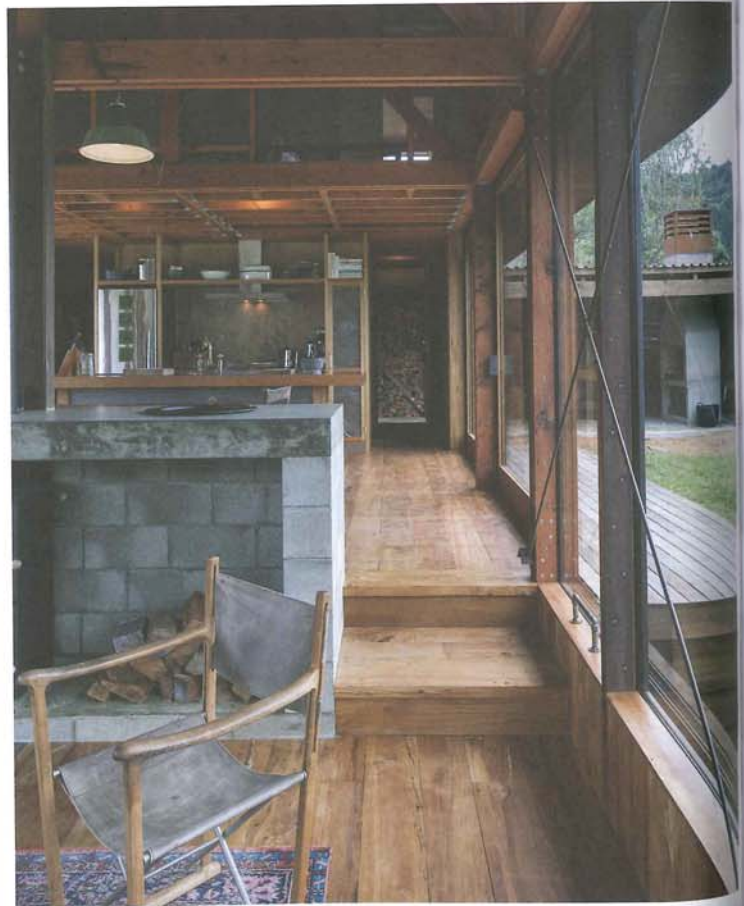
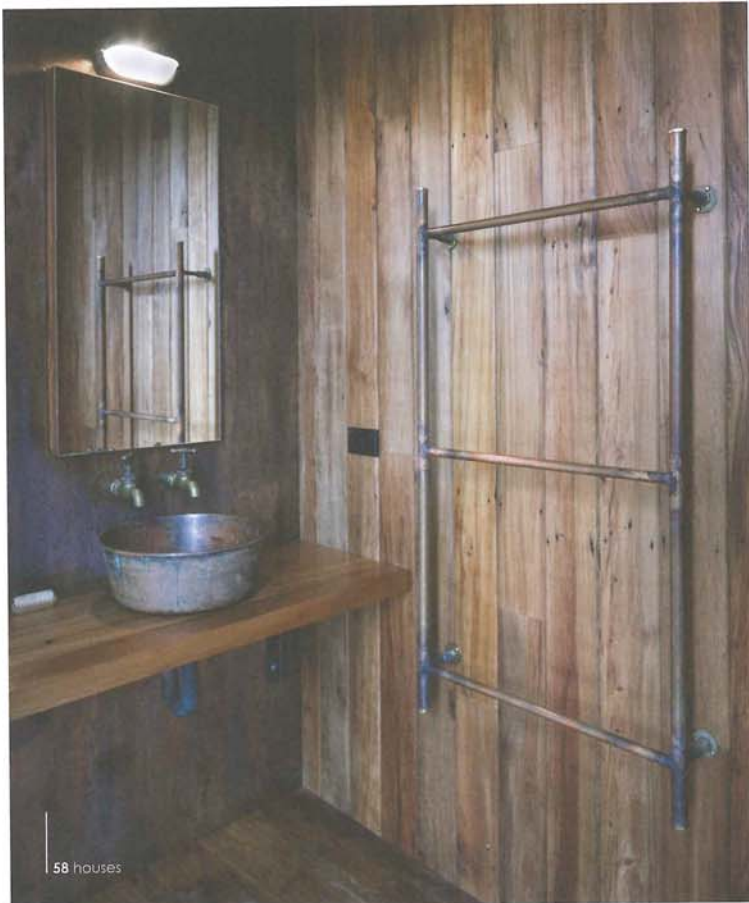
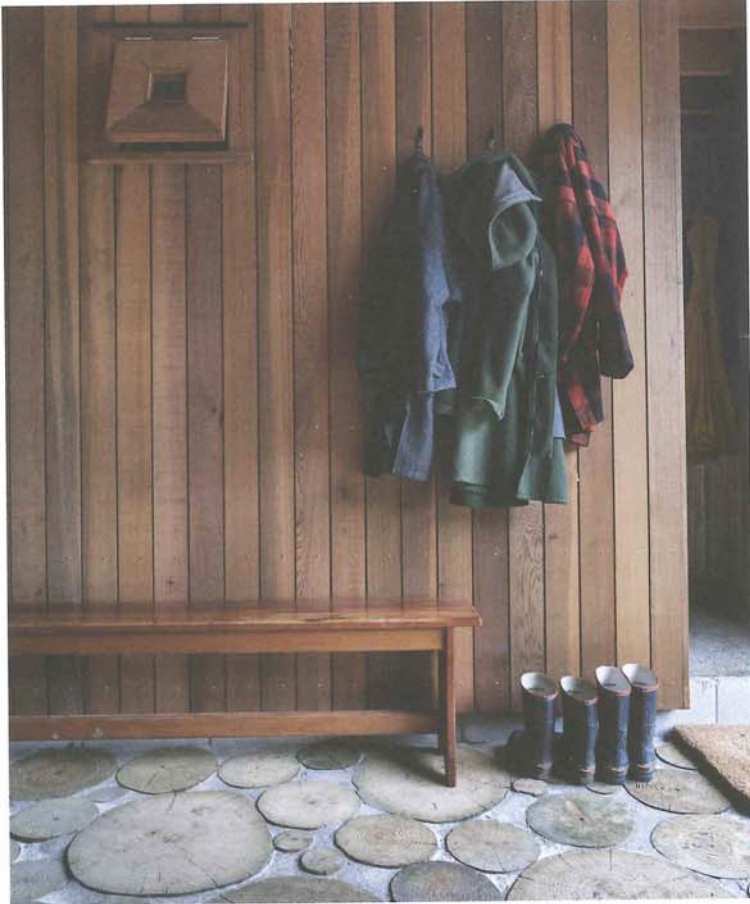
Agrarian influences collide with contemporary architecture in this New Zealand property, where pastoral peacefulness has settled on the land.

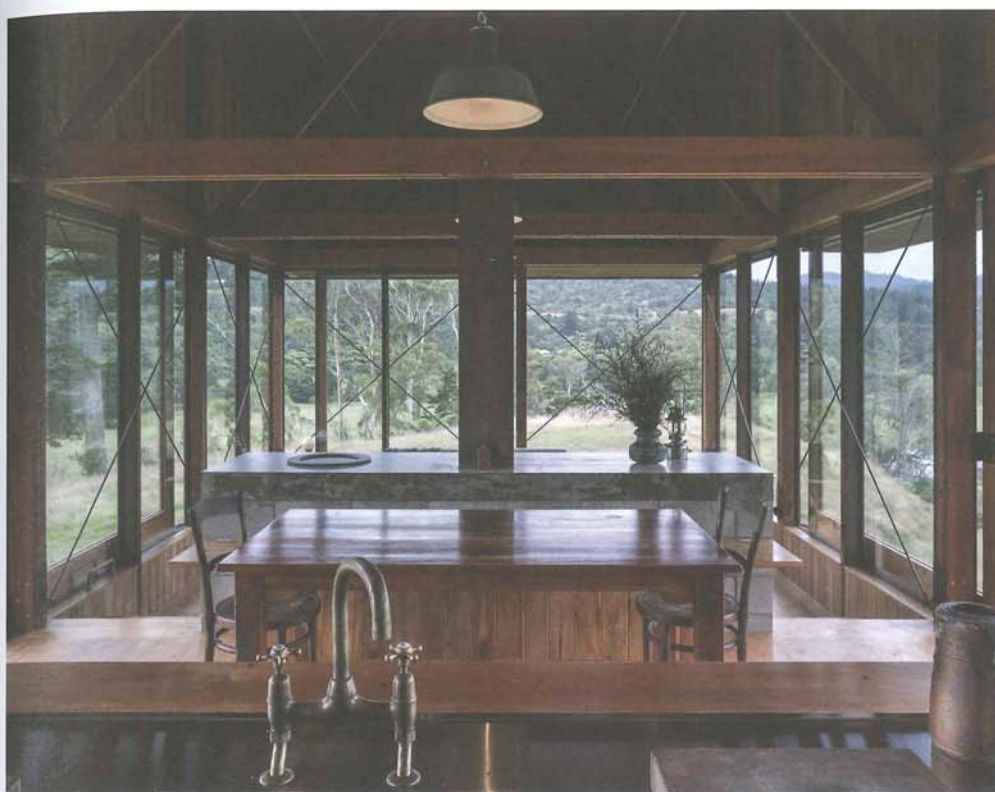


Houses

Lance and Nicola Herbst designed this home on the Coromandel Peninsula as an authoritative object within the landscape, its rusted skin is stark against the wide sky.







The kitchen bench delivers wrap-around views to the cook. Oregon beams and recycled rimu lining lend warmth to the industrial style. Fittings such as the kitchen taps were sourced online through Trade Me and eBay. **opposite page top left** Rounds of pine retaining logs form the floor of the mud room at the entrance to the home where an ocular window punctures the façade and allows natural ventilation in the bathroom. **right** Much of the furniture and fittings were sourced secondhand or are vintage pieces, including the dining table and the pendant lights. **bottom left** The intriguing sink in the bathroom began life as a jam pan. "It belonged to one of our Grandmas," says one of the owners. "It was important to us to find ways to integrate our family history into the building somehow." **right** The indoor and outdoor fireplace surrounds are formed from no-nonsense concrete block; in front of the super-efficient Studio woodburner, designed in the late 80s by Peter Haythornthwaite, a folding leather chair by Skagerak is from Design Denmark.

Such a bucolic scene belies the activities that took place

here 150 years ago. Then Kauaeranga Valley echoed with the grunts of robust bullock teams as they dragged gigantic felled kauri across the terrain. The steamy hiss of traction motors punctured the air, and dammed streams provided the liquid impetus for log flows down to Thames.

Now this home, by Herbst Architects, stands statuesque within the quiet, green paddock. Hills rise to the east and west, a murmurous river passes by, and only abandoned tramlines and tunnels reveal the areas industrious history.

"This particular farm was owned by Dalmatian settlers," explains Nicola Herbst. Archival documents note that the Devcich family embarked on "mixed agriculture" with dairy herds, an orchard and vineyards. Buildings for gum sorting and winemaking dotted the grounds.

The current owners are film-makers who bought into this rural sub-division three years ago, with a view to one day make this their permanent abode. "We love feeling isolated. There's comfort in being able to step away from the city and let the complexities of modern life drop away," says one of the owners.

Gradually planting native trees and keen on the sustainable practice of permaculture, they imagined a home that reflected such restorative principles. They set their architects a mission: to conceive a place made of materials that were characterful and aged – not shiny, perfect and new. Their brief included a photo of a dilapidated shed.

In their research, Nicola and Lance Herbst were captivated by the utilitarian structures of rural New Zealand. "The landscape is littered with rusty outhouses. Their beauty is partly the nature of the metal, partly their simplicity. They have no accessories, such as spouting or gutters, and few windows to detract from their form," says Nicola.

The architectural cue apparent, the pair devised a rectilinear home over two levels. They positioned it on a spur of land, hunkered into a hill facing the view. "Within such a large landscape, you can feel fragile. Having your back to the hill gives some sense of protection."

The ground floor, open-plan and glazed on three sides, frames a panorama – a careful crop of the sky and scenery. The lounge, two steps down from the kitchen and dining zone, is defined by a low timber wall so the windows are set at elbow height. "It becomes a 'trapped' space with edges that anchor it," explains Nicola. Above it, a void, lined in Oregon pine, features triangular king post trusses – although they soar in geometric greatness overhead, they simultaneously bring intimacy to the space.

The upper bedroom level has a more ponderous presence than that of the glazed living zone. In essence, it's a plywood box, painted black, overlaid with fixing rails and a rain-screen of recycled corrugated steel. It's one thing to conceptualise a star-of-the-show cloak of pre-worn metal, it's quite another to source it. That's where the owners came in. "They wanted to use the real thing so that the materials had integrity and weren't just for effect," says Nicola. →



They started their search online, with little luck. What they found was often too thin, too perforated and just too far gone. Sometimes the very process of removing the long-run would cause too much damage. Undeterred, the owners drove the winding country roads door-knocking at farms until they stumbled upon a brewery in Thames with the perfect palette of thicker-gauge roofing. Fate smiled. The roof was due to be replaced.

Carefully lapped rusting sheets are now the crowning glory of this 115-square-metre home. Though the Herbsts ordinarily create light-on-the-land buildings, this home has a muscular presence on its exposed site. "This project called for a different response," says Nicola. Industrial elements meet timeless, substantial timber and secondhand fittings in an unpretentious marriage.

While not as delicate as those timber baches the architects are known for, the details still have time to shine – bolts and all. Downstairs, rusting steel-rod cross braces shore up the skeleton against the wind; some posts that make up the frame are strengthened in a steel-plated "sandwich". Upstairs, matte black fin windows are slivered behind peeled-back sections of the iron to allow pencil-thin views.

The Herbsts worked closely with the inventive, energetic owners and more than half of the materials are recycled. Tapware, door handles and coat hooks were all secondhand finds. Other materials were pre-aged: the mild-steel mesh balustrades and cabinet fronts are a fantastic example, as is the shower-box lined with patinated copper. One of the bathroom basins is a jam pan inherited from Grandma and a family member helped out by building the wooden joinery. Aiming for a small-footprint lifestyle, it goes without saying

that furnishings are a modest, cobbled-together mix wholly in keeping with the laid-back style.


The entrance takes the form of a mud room – a place to park gumboots and hang up a hat. While this is by no means a novel idea in a rural property, it is re-invented here with a floor that is made up of rough rounds of retaining logs, levelled and set painstakingly in cement. Also used for wood storage, the room can be closed off with sliding doors to double as a dog-run for when the weather is too inclement for the couple's hounds – a blue and a red heeler.

At night, a shaft of light falls onto the mud room floor from a tiny ocular window that provides natural ventilation to the downstairs loo. It looks like a cat's eye in the gloom. "The owners didn't want to heat or cool the house by mechanical means," says Nicola. They also collect rainwater from the roof for drinking while grey water is reserved for watering plants. The couple has installed a worm-based sewage system and the worms in their bins make compost of all the food scraps.

Leading off the mud room is a covered deck, dubbed "the cave". It's furnished with an outdoor fire, smoker and BBQ. Over early morning coffee, the couple often sit here to watch the mist roll into the valley. "We feel more connected to nature because the house is designed to let you experience the land, sky and river in a very elemental way."

After a day's planting, they can relax and cook with ingredients gathered from the land, as the moonlight silhouettes the trees. Away from the hubbub, time seems to slow. "Being able to focus on simple things like chopping wood, lighting fires and preparing food is an incredible privilege."



A photograph of a modern, two-story house. The upper level is clad in weathered, rusted metal panels, while the lower level features dark wood horizontal siding. Large windows with dark frames are visible on the ground floor. In the foreground, a group of sheep of various colors (black, brown, white) are grazing in a grassy area. The background is filled with lush green ferns and trees.

The owners collect rainwater off the roof for drinking, a worm system breaks down sewage, and they have solar hot water and a wetback woodburner. "Essentially we want a small-footprint lifestyle; because this was a new build we were able to incorporate elements that fitted with this philosophy." **opposite page** Sheep graze in the paddocks alongside this rural home with its gutsy, yet rustic, presence.

The linear form runs into the hillside, with living below and a bedroom level above.

Specs

Architect

Herbst Architects
herbstarchitects.co.nz

Builder

Doug Fleming

Passive energy design

There is glazing to north, east and west on the ground floor. There is a deep overhang of the upper floor on the north-west façade and there are external steel eyebrows to the east and west. All will assist in summer shading. In winter the sun penetrates into the living room. The block and concrete fireplace will, to an extent, act as a heat sink in winter. Windows and doors are positioned for effective cross-ventilation. The design provides comfortable living with low-energy use year-round.

Materials

The ground level has a suspended timber floor with a concrete slab to the rear, where the service spaces are. The main volumes are of highly insulated, lightweight, mainly timber-framed construction, with limited steel work. The first floor interior walls and ceilings are lined with recycled rimu, a NZ native timber. The interiors feature expressed solid recycled Oregon pine king post trusses. The clear sealant to all the timber is Organoil. External finishes include recycled rusty thick gauge corrugated iron to the first floor, with western red cedar cladding to the ground floor. The exposed structural posts on the ground floor are recycled Oregon pine. The timber joinery is western red cedar. Concealed Zinalume roof sheet is fixed to all roof areas. Roof drainage runs to a large in-ground storage tank.

Flooring

Ground floor – recycled rimu.

First floor – plywood floors with a rimu overlay.

Glazing

Windows are western red cedar double clear glazed. Black frost anodised aluminium windows to the first floor.

Insulation

Roof: Autex Green Stuf R3.2 ceiling pads

Wall: Autex Green Stuf R2.5 pads

Under floor: EXPOL ThermoSlab

Heating and cooling

Ground floor – sliding doors and windows.

First floor – black aluminium ventilators that are narrow side-hung floor to ceiling windows. The three ventilators open against the peeled back corrugated iron sheets. Wood-burning studio fire by Warmington wetback provides the heating. It has a small oven below the firebox and the flat top of the firebox can be used to cook on.

Hot water system

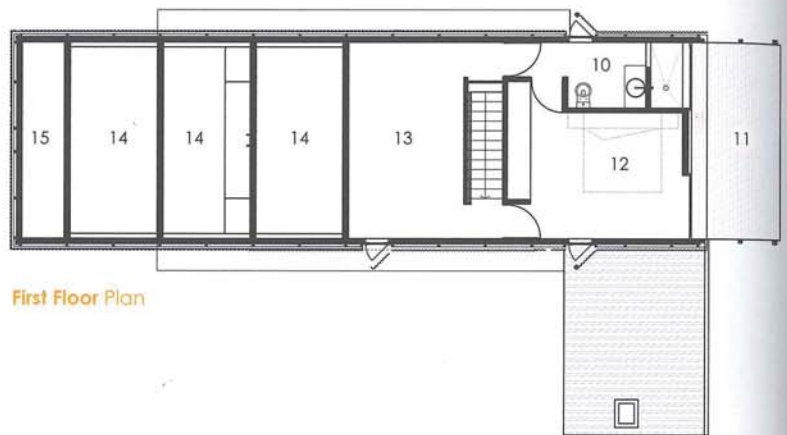
Hot water is by an electric HWC that is solar assisted.

Sewerage

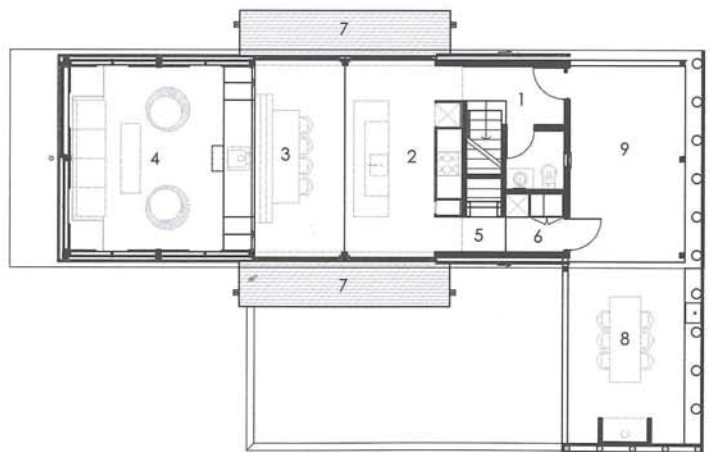
On-site sewerage system with dripper fields.

Water

Roof water is gravity fed into the buried 3000 litre 'capture' water tank below the house and then pumped up to the two 25,000 litre 'header' tanks.



First Floor Plan



Ground Floor Plan

1/ entry

2/ kitchen

3/ dining

4/ lounge

5/ pantry

6/ laundry

7/ deck

8/ the cave

9/ dog run

10/ bathroom

11/ bath deck

12/ bedroom

13/ study/bedrom

14/ void

15/ sleeping ledge

