

PARK LIFE

A collection of linked pavilions by Lance and Nicola Herbst for a family of art lovers nestles into a grove of leafy trees on a large site on the outskirts of Hamilton

TEXT CATHERINE SMITH PHOTOGRAPHY BECKY NUNES



The Herbsts named this house the 'Bark House' during construction, with the surrounding trees providing inspiration for the rough-sawn plywood exterior. The outdoor chairs and ottoman are from Coastal Design. The sculpture on the deck is 'Numbers', by Anton Parsons.



**RARELY ARE RURAL
RETREATS AS QUIET OR AS
CONTEMPLATIVE AS THIS**

collection of pavilions assembled by Lance and Nicky Herbst for art consultant Kate Darrow, her husband John and their children (seven-year-old twins Edward and Grace and five-year-old Richard) on a generous tree-lined site in the Waikato.

After 10 moves in 10 years, the couple had settled in Hamilton for John's work. They found this plot of land, a grove of black walnut, pin oak, walnut and Tasmanian blackwood on the edge of the city and began a series of conversations with their friends the Herbsts about their family life and how they wanted their new house to work.

"A friend gave me the best advice, which is to talk about how you actually live, and not, as most clients do, how you'd like to think you live," Darrow says. "We didn't want to have grandiose anything, but we did want space for the kids, a library for the art books and somewhere to show art."

Darrow found the process of being a client working with architects similar to putting together a major exhibition with an artist, something she experienced in senior roles at both the Auckland Art Gallery and City Gallery, Wellington. She saw that their art had to come first, and to learn to trust them, rather than tell them what to do. In this case, her trust was well-placed: the Herbsts "were always right", she says. "There were things that they made so much better than we thought possible". And the moments when the client really insisted on something – a sliver of window to view the trees from the master bathtub, a roof on the platform between mudroom and garage, for example



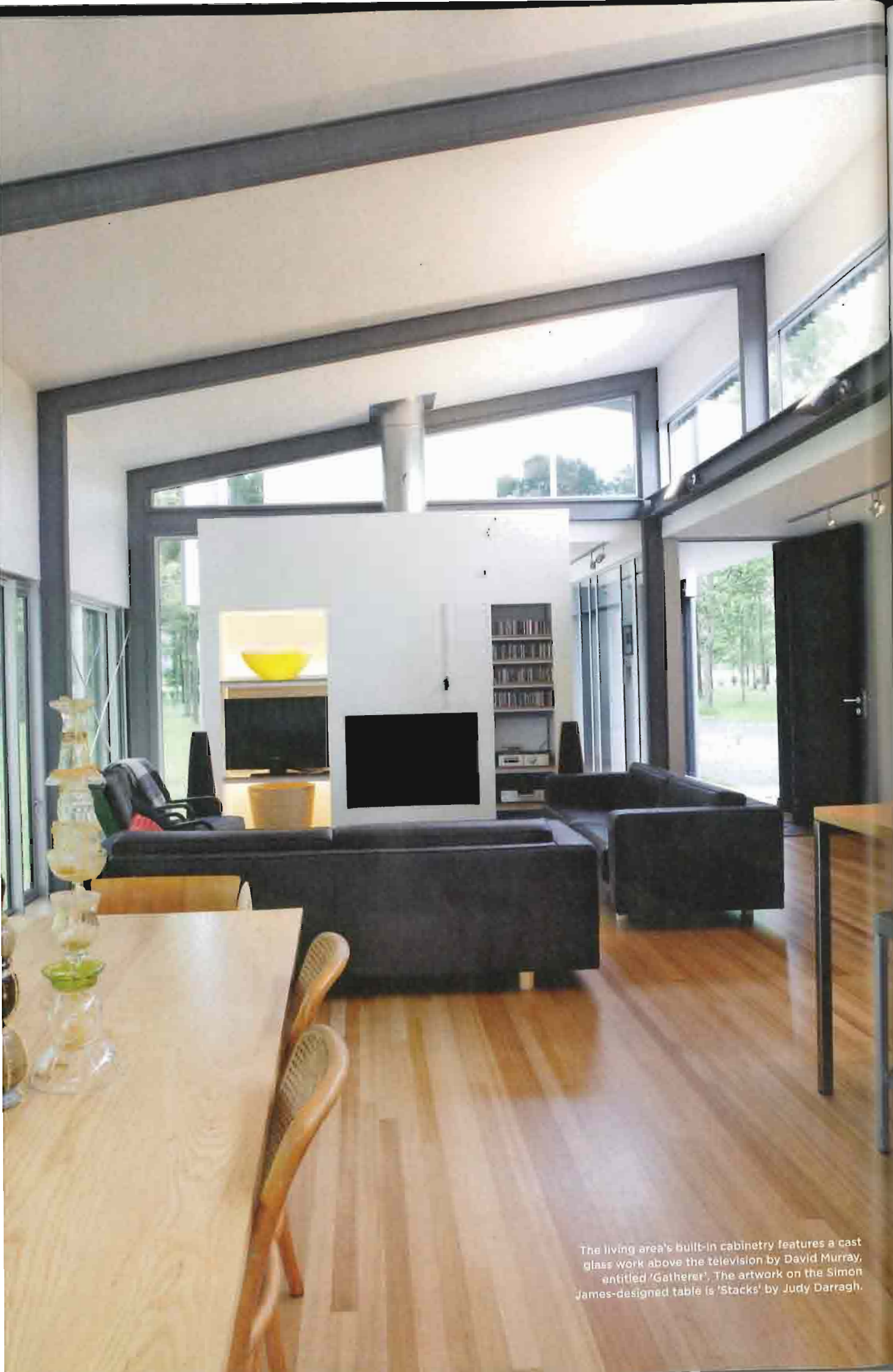
– the result was better, for both parties.

Critical to the success of the project was the Herbsts' decision to site the house within the grove of trees rather than on the building platform initially cleared for a home. The house is now hugged by the woodland and its dappled light, looking through the irregularly spaced trunks into the clearing a few steps away. In winter, the deciduous trees shed their leaves to let sunlight in. The Herbsts named the house 'The Bark House' during its development; the patterns of the trees inspired the use of rough-sawn plywood and irregularly spaced battens on its exterior. In contrast with this organic feel is the iron sheeting used for the roof and some of the walls, a reference to the many iron sheds in the rural neighbourhood.

OPPOSITE The home's position among the trees allows for lovely dappled light to flow into its glassy pavilions. The main entry is on the left of the covered deck, while the glass corridor connects the living and bedroom wings of the home. **ABOVE** In the kitchen, the 'Fly' hanging lamp is by Ferruccio Laviani for Kartell. The 'Hei Tiki' photograph is by Fiona Pardington. The 'Longreach' sofas are by Neil Burley and are from Thonet.



es of pavillions stretches across the
ched' to the ground by concrete block
is, with 'rafts' of flooring floating across
an-made axes', says Lance Herbst. The
ating of the exterior is a direct reference
any iron sheds dotted throughout this
al neighbourhood.



The living area's built-in cabinetry features a cast glass work above the television by David Murray, entitled 'Gatherer'. The artwork on the Simon James-designed table is 'Stacks' by Judy Darragh.

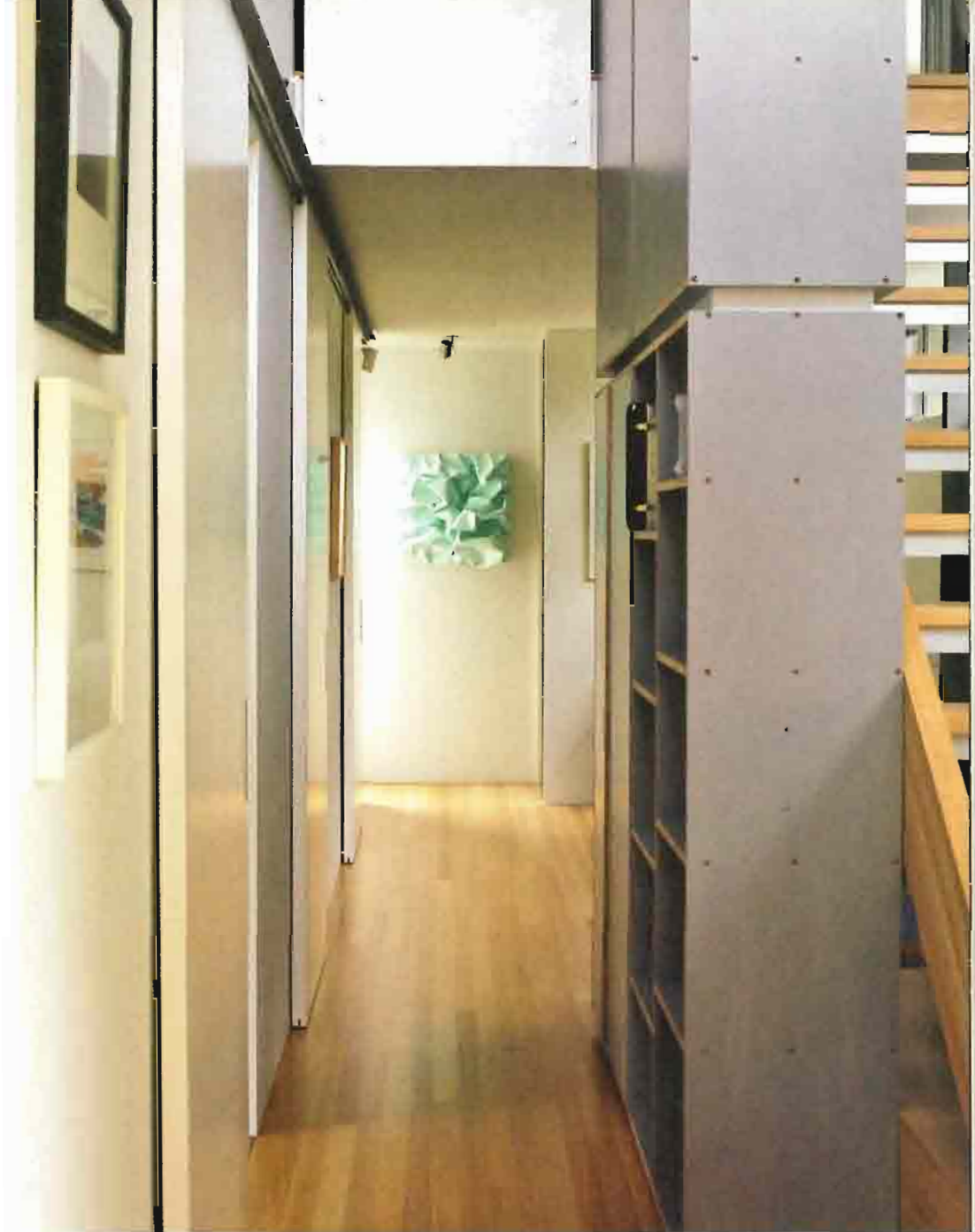
The house is 'stitched' to its site with a series of large concrete-block platforms; Lance Herbst says the "rafts of the flooring float across these man-made axes". The architects talk about the yin-and-yang contrast of solid and floating, organic and man-made, massed and light, and the newly built form of the home with the trees around it.

The architects devised an indirect approach to the house that guides the visitor around a curving driveway, allowing glimpses of what appear to be a series of simple agrarian-style sheds that make up the house: the double-storeyed bedroom block, the single-storey living block, a garage/studio and a smaller utility shed on the edge of the yard.

Views of the house are limited by the trees until the visitor pulls up at the arrival court, a series of semi-circles landscaped with granite rocks intersected with low blade walls. The slash of a glass entry gallery reveals a view through the house to the lawn beyond (where, eventually, a slim pool and water feature will terminate in a sculpture).

Once inside, the steel structure of the building is expressed in the living pavilion, but solidly enclosed in the home's southern wing. The open-plan living room and kitchen area is full of details that still delight the Darrows: a kitchen finished in simple ply and repeating the rough-sawn "bark" finish of the exterior; slot windows beside the fireplace to allow glimpses of the house and the garden; up-lights to bathe the ceiling and reveal the

ABOVE RIGHT The oak stairs are anchored by a set of book shelves. The painting at the end of the hall is 'Tender' by Miranda Parkes. RIGHT The bronze climbers by Elizabeth Thomson are called 'Party of Six'. FAR RIGHT 'Shirt' by Pip Culbert.





ABOVE The simple ply kitchen mirrors the exterior of the home and is one of the owners' favourite features of the house. The bowl, jug and dish are by Martin Poppelwell. **OPPOSITE** The "yin and yang" aspects of the house are visible here, with natural wooden detailing paired with hard steel, floating elements juxtaposed with solid, and light concrete against dark wood.

steel skeleton. The staircase in the bedroom wing between the ground-floor children's area and the parents' suite upstairs elegantly solves several problems at once: graceful oak stairs are anchored by a sculptural book case while light floods in from clerestory windows, turning a simple circulation space into something much more interesting. The children and their friends find the space magical, dragging mattresses out to sleep under the stairs (with more style and light than poor old Harry Potter).

The owners added their own touches to the home in the form of furniture and artwork: classic bentwood chairs with a new

Simon James table, a tumbledown woodshed relocated from a nearby farm, a changing array of sculpture, Kate now runs her art business with partner Alison Ewing from the house, inviting clients to see the works in a real home setting (allowing her to hardly ever leave the house, she jokes).

Outdoor living brings the house and land together in a progression from the fully enclosed porch to the floating decks anchored to the land by steel steps or more stone. Planting nearest the house is a mixture of squares and circles, helping the home merge with the natural curves of the woods that were integral to its creation. **H**



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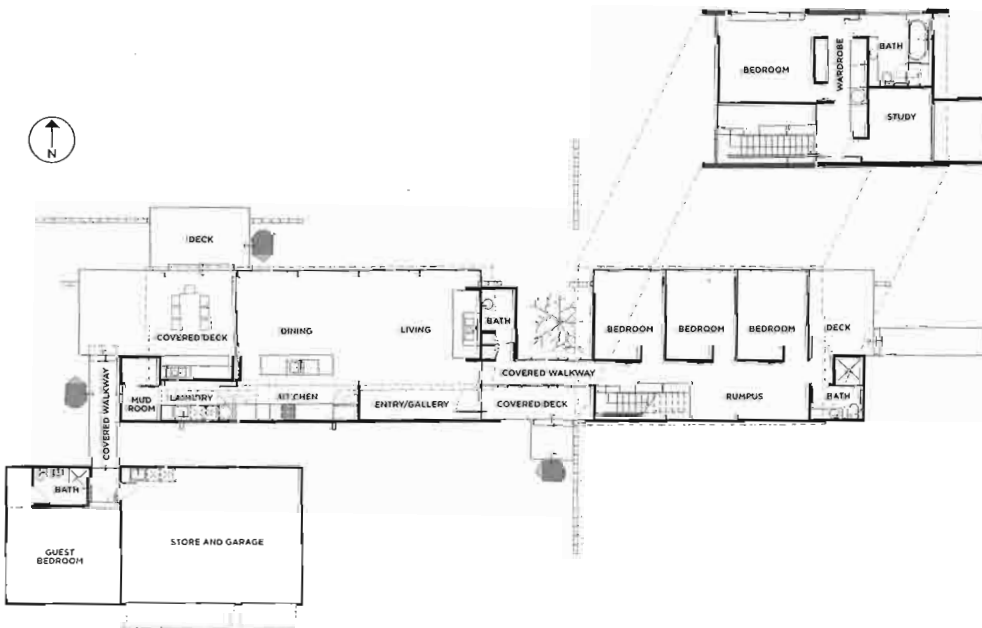
The pavilion to the left houses four bedrooms, with a covered deck to the far left. To the right is the lounge, kitchen and dining pavilion.

notebook

LANCE AND NICOLA HERBST
HERBST ARCHITECTS



ABOVE The two-storey sleeping pavilion houses the master suite and study on the top floor. LEFT In the bedroom is a painting by John Reynolds, 'Any Other Night #3'. RIGHT The architects, Lance and Nicola Herbst.



Lance Herbst (left) and Nicola Herbst of Herbst Architects designed this house for friends Kate Darrow and her husband John on a site in Hamilton among a grove of leafy trees. The home is comprised of three pavilions for living, sleeping and a guest quarters/garage, which are linked by covered walkways. The north side of the dwelling opens up to a clearing in the grove.