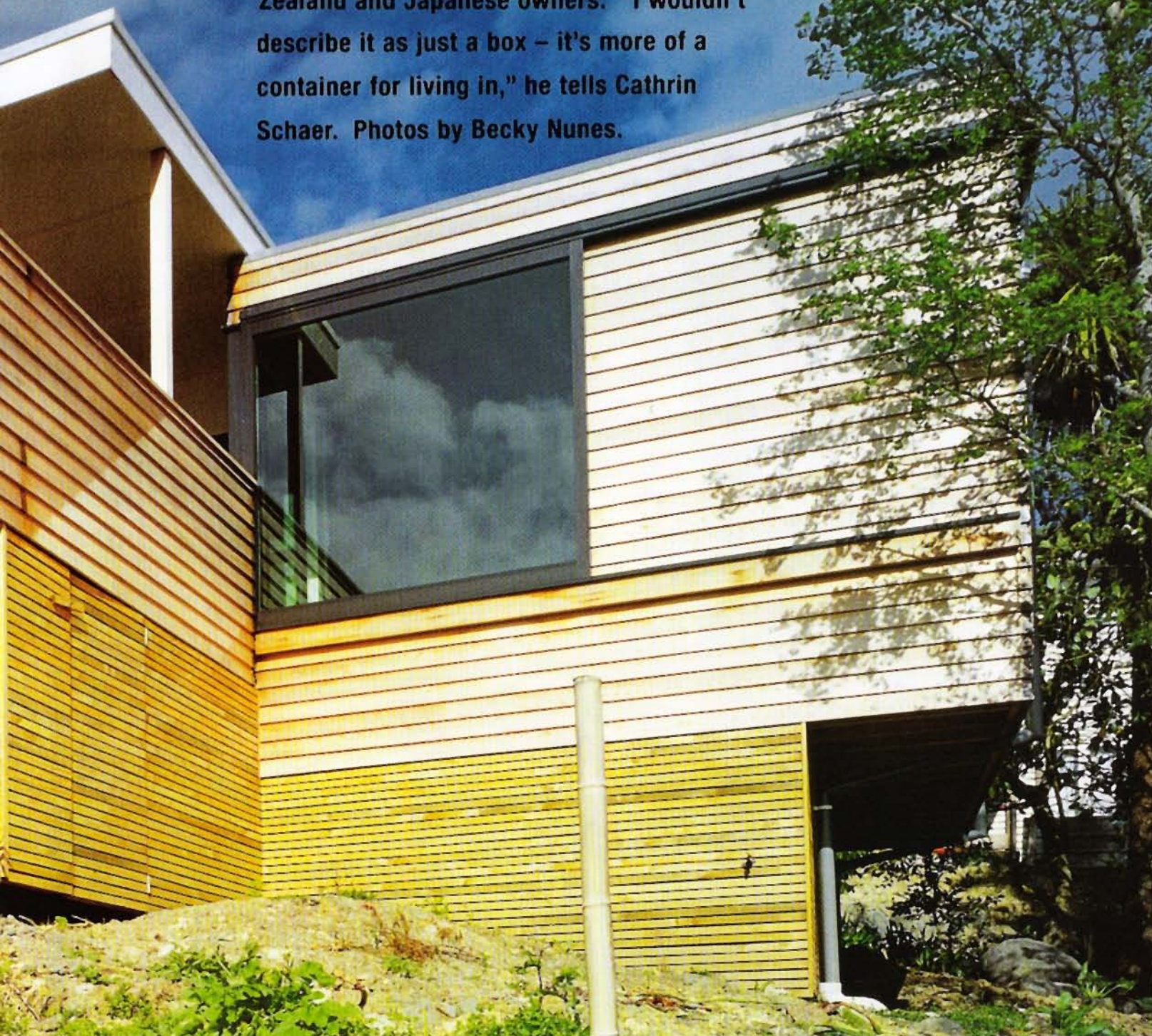




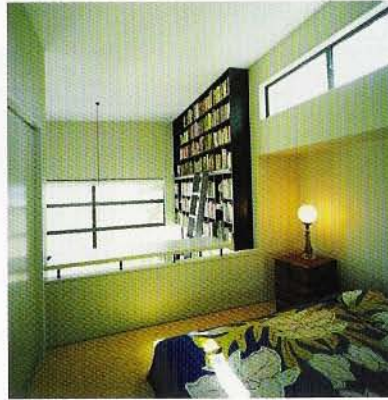
FUSION architecture

An Andrew Lister-designed house in West Auckland blends the cultures of its New Zealand and Japanese owners. "I wouldn't describe it as just a box – it's more of a container for living in," he tells Cathrin Schaer. Photos by Becky Nunes.





Architect Andrew Lister: "I like making houses that don't look like houses, something that's a little more abstract... there's something quite sculptural about this place."



At the end of a very suburban cul-de-sac in west Auckland sits what looks like a large wooden shed. Passers-by see only cedar weatherboards – there are no windows and the front door is barely visible. There’s a shuttered feeling and, to the untrained eye, this really does look like a blank-faced wooden box at the edge of a mangrove swamp, albeit a rather sophisticated one.

Walking into this unusual home is another experience altogether. Immediately one is struck by the view and the open nature of the living room. Because where one side of the building is closed, the other is wide open. The whole wall on the far side of the home is a double-height window, allowing a view of the lagoon and cityscape in the distance.

“It ignores the street and focuses on the water view,” confirms architect Andrew Lister of the home he has designed for film producer Owen Hughes and actress Yuri Kinugawa. “The view from the adjacent public reserves can attract a crowd but, being very private people, the clients really resisted becoming part of that view.” Hence the open-closed aspect to the home.

But there are more interesting tensions at play here than just this one. “I love boxes with a passion,” Lister explains the initial simplicity of the design, with a laugh. “But I wouldn’t describe it as just a box – it’s more of a

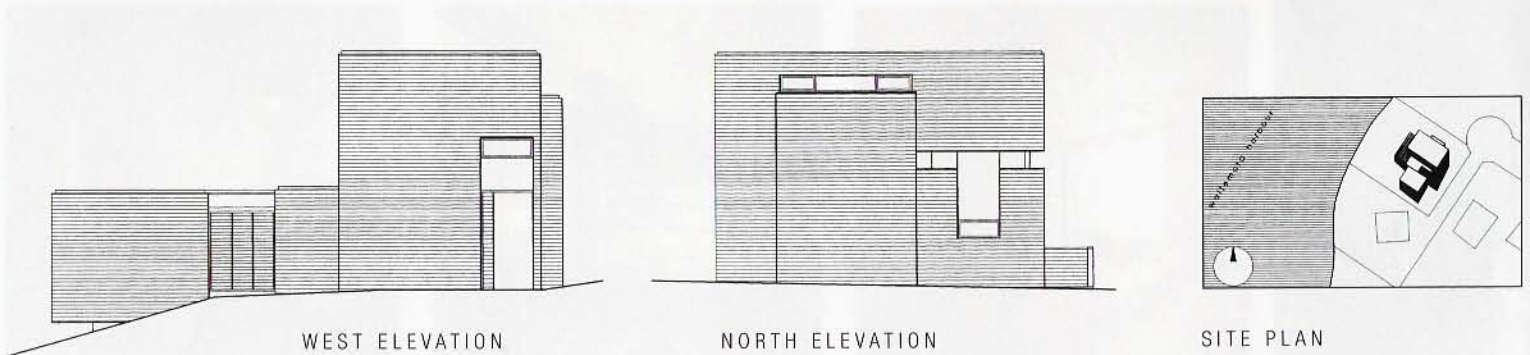
container for living in. I like making houses that don’t look like houses, something that’s a little more abstract. And I think there’s also something quite sculptural about this place.”

Hughes, who is a long time friend of Lister’s, shared with Lister a love of modern architecture. “We always had the same books,” Lister says, “West Coast American and European Modernism and then Japanese architecture.” Both men had also spent time in Japan working on the film *Memory and Desire* – Lister’s partner Niki Caro directed the movie while Kinugawa acted in it, and it was on set that she and Hughes first met. “So it was a matter of combining the kinds of architecture we liked with Japanese style and the New Zealand lifestyle. The rather sophisticated form of Feng Shui that Yuri practises also came into it. And,” Lister concludes, “I think we’ve ended up with something quite unique, something I personally haven’t seen before.”

The overall design of the home is quite a simple one and the atmosphere within is calming. Yet the interiors have a complex, detailed feel and, apparent in the general decor, there’s a fusion of the two cultures – Japanese and European – of the clients.

The site itself was very small and steep. This meant there were all kinds of council restrictions on the building but Lister went as high and wide as he could. The foundations had to be sunk through the infill to

Architect Andrew Lister: “It’s a relatively small house but because of this void and the view,” Lister says, indicating the high ceiling, “it feels much larger.”



the earth underneath and the view now, Lister notes, is basically “borrowed” from the adjacent land and the lagoon.

“But I like it – it feels a little precarious, like you’re perched on the edge of the water,” he enthuses.

The main living area, from where the view is seen, is a rectangular box in shape. A mezzanine floor, containing an office and spare bedroom, opens onto the double-height space.

“It’s a relatively small house but because of this void and the view,” Lister says, indicating the high ceiling, “it feels much larger. It’s actually quite a Japanese thing because they often have tiny sites and have to build upwards. To do

this we did have to compromise a little on the upstairs rooms – they’re a bit smaller – but the extra feeling of size is worth it.”

Indoors, a Japanese aesthetic is created by elements such as the darkened floors of ebony-stained pine and a darker veneer in the kitchen. The kitchen was designed especially for Hughes and Kinugawa, who are avid cooks. There are also various Japanese ornaments, pictures and wall hangings sitting alongside more Western artefacts and collectibles. Amenities such as the laundry and pantry are cleverly hidden away, making best use of the space. Moving further into the house, a hallway leads from the main

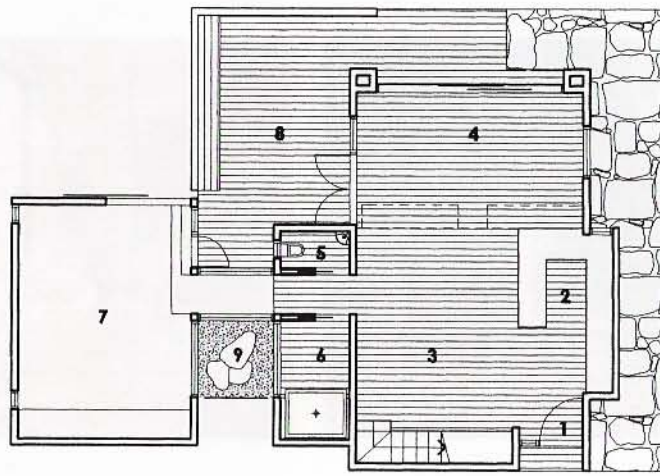
living area to a bedroom in a separate area. Therein lies an elevated futon with Japanese paper decorating the walls.

The placement of the bedroom was due to Kinugawa’s Feng Shui teacher, Lister notes. It took four re-designs before this house plan was considered suitable. “And the bedroom had to be a separate building; it was about keeping your private life separate from your public one,” he explains.

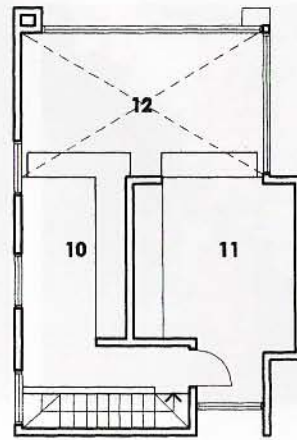
Off the hallway leading to the separate sleeping area sits a deck on one side and a bathroom on the other. The bathroom, built mainly from Lawson Cyprus, is a traditional Japanese one with an open shower where users wash themselves first and

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GROUND LEVEL



UPPER LEVEL

- 1 entry
- 2 kitchen
- 3 dining
- 4 living
- 5 wc
- 6 bathing
- 7 main bedroom
- 8 deck
- 9 courtyard garden
- 10 office/bed
- 11 bedroom
- 12 void





a large, menthol-scented wooden tub, where they soak after their shower. Outside the bathroom's louvre windows sits a small but perfectly formed Japanese-styled garden.

The larger outdoor area beyond the decks that surround the front of the house has mainly been the work of the clients. Kinugawa and Hughes say they've been creating a "sculptural garden" on the hillside that runs down to the water's edge. "We're being very conscious of certain shapes and colours," Hughes explains and then says with a laugh, "We keep changing our minds. And we've moved some of the plants three times already!"

Interestingly despite all the

decorative elements the overall feeling in the house is of peace and calm. And this is what Hughes likes best about his new home. "It feels like there's nothing underneath you but the mangroves and the light is always changing," he says. "The water view isn't violent like the West Coast; it's very peaceful especially at high tide."

For Lister one of the things he's enjoyed most is seeing all the various elements in the house come together and work well. He particularly likes how the home now reflects his friends' personalities. "It's quite a dramatic house," he says. "And that quality is drawn both from the site and the profession they're both involved in."



FUSION ARCHITECTURE SELECTED CREDITS

Architect Andrew Lister Architect

Builder Laurie McMurtrie Builders

Kitchen/bathroom cabinets Silverdale Kitchens

Window/door joinery Nebulite Aluminium

Earth/stoneworks Cook Construction

Lighting Realtime

Bathroom basin and taps In Residence

