



Owned by a New Zealand film producer and a Japanese actress, this contemporary weatherboard house in Auckland faces a reserve and glistening harbour on one side and a leafy streetscape on the other, while the interior fuses the styles of two disparate cultures.

PHOTOGRAPHER: RICHARD POWERS STYLIST: DANIELLE MILLER

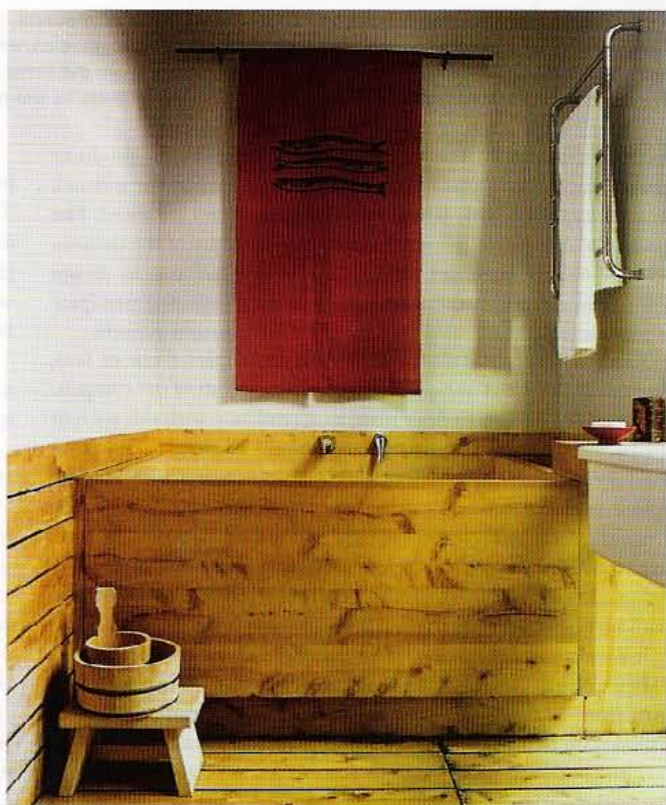
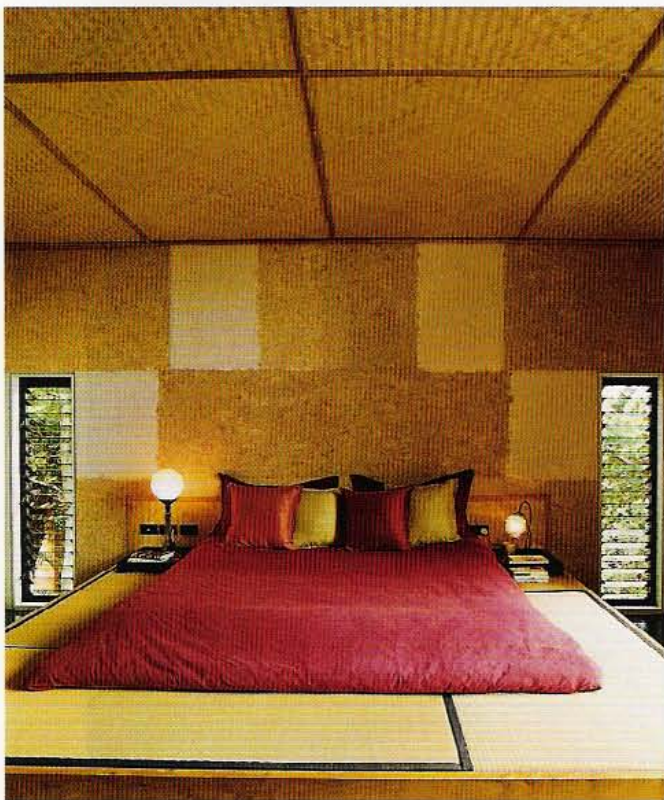






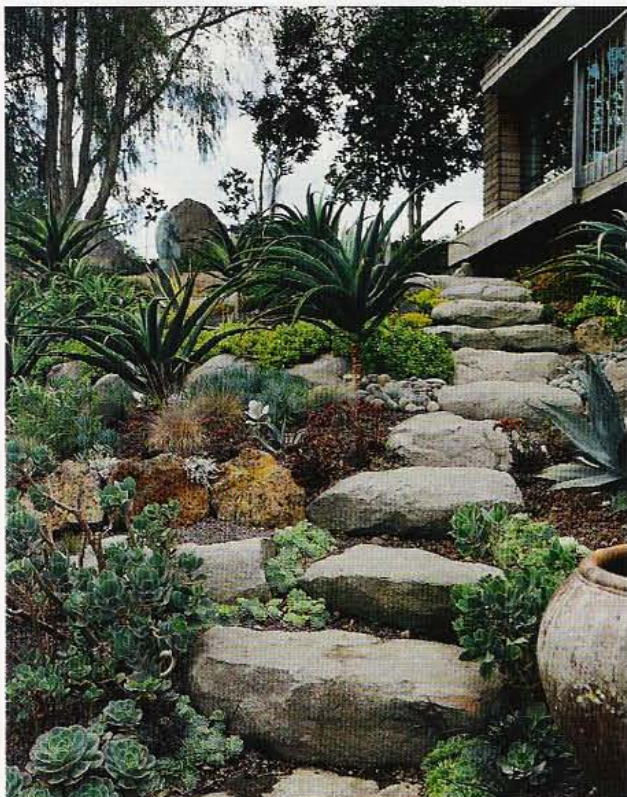






The gravelled entrance, PREVIOUS PAGES, LEFT, is flanked by *Salix matsudana* willows. RIGHT: in the living room, books are stacked to the six-metre-high ceiling, from which hang recycled white-glass 'globe' lights. On the oak coffee table is a South African bonsai tree, with copies of Pierre Paulin's 'Orange Slice' chair on either side. THESE PAGES, OPPOSITE: the mezzanine bedroom, with walls and bed linen in neutral shades, offset by a bentwood chair and a bedside table with a bronze sculpture by New Zealand artist Terry Stringer. CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: the bed base in the main bedroom, designed by architect Andrew Lister, is made from Lawson cypress and Japanese *tatami* straw mats. The kitchen benches and cabinets are in walnut-stained Tasmanian ash: benchtops are pressed in stainless steel. The Japanese-style bathtub and floorboards in the bathroom are Lawson cypress. The owners' collection of second-hand sake cups.





**A meeting of two cultures. ABOVE LEFT:** like the house it surrounds, the garden echoes the blending of Japanese and New Zealand sensibilities, with plantings of succulents and natives alongside carefully placed stone. **ABOVE RIGHT:** the outdoor deck, designed to age gracefully, wraps around one corner of the house, from the living room to the main bedroom. **OPPOSITE:** from the double-height living room and kitchen/dining area, the owners enjoy views to the mangroves and mudflats of Auckland's Pollen Island Reserve.

ENTER 'WATERVIEW', the home of New Zealand film producer Owen Hughes and Japanese actress Yuri Kinugawa, and one is drawn to the eloquence with which two diverse cultures are fused. The house was completed to coincide with the wedding of the owners, whose brief to Auckland architect Andrew Lister was to design a timeless, elegant, two-bedroom house on a secluded precipice at the end of a leafy cul-de-sac in Auckland's eastern suburbs.

Kinugawa, an enthusiastic student of a complex form of feng shui called 'the direct compass', based on nine points of the compass, modified the architect's floor plans in accordance with this ancient mathematical system. "With Kinugawa still residing in Tokyo at the time, it took a year of designing and redesigning with Hughes before realising that her teacher had been vetoing the concepts. Once the main issues were addressed, the rest of the design became free to follow Western principles," says Lister. The result is "a house designed with a blank facade to the street and adjacent reserve without compromising its due west aspect and water views".

It borrows scenery from its breathtaking outlook over Auckland's Pollen Island Reserve. Without a neighbour in sight, views span from low-tide mudflats, beyond mangroves and marshes, to a glistening harbour at high tide and dramatic sunsets.

The house was designed with consideration given primarily to the owners' privacy. Clad entirely in Canadian cedar weatherboards, the double-height structure stands dramatically while embracing the surroundings, its external edges designed to mellow over time. It comprises two juxtaposed buildings separated to the lee side by a small Zen garden, which can be viewed from the main bedroom on one side, and a traditional Japanese bathing room to the other. The main bedroom, cocooned by a bamboo-panelled ceiling and *washi* (Japanese papered walls), exudes calm and elegance.

The main building is dominated by a double-height open-plan living area, and includes a compact kitchen in walnut-stained Tasmanian ash, a dining area and an open mezzanine above, which accommodates a second bedroom and office. Sensuous, dark-glossed floorboards contrast with the furnishings and reflect natural light, which floods through the sliding glass-panelled wall that opens out to a verandah and garden.

"The double-height void meant stretching the budget and squeezing the rooms a little, but the result is a sense of luminous space and continuity in a house modest in size," says Lister.

Bookshelves in the living area rise precariously to meet the six-metre-high ceiling and house a wonderful accumulation of books. "We absolutely required bookshelves – eventually I'll get around to categorising," says Hughes. A ladder that runs on sliding tracks is on permanent standby and bypasses the height of the mezzanine to facilitate access. Beneath the shelves, a sideboard holds tiny bronze sculptures and handmade sake-drinking vessels. "We began collecting on our honeymoon. Each of the vessels, some dating over a century, are from various flea markets," says Hughes.

Both avid gardeners, Hughes and Kinugawa began landscaping while the house was still under construction. While some serious stabilising of the steep incline was carried out, amazingly, not one freshly embedded sapling was disturbed. Now the garden echoes the style of the interior – a fusion of Japanese and New Zealand. A stepping-stone path meanders through manicured pockets of blossoming succulents and exotic natives.

The house, integrating effortlessly with the environment, is a seemingly isolated retreat, yet just a few minutes from the city. "Sighting dolphins in the harbour from our verandah only adds to the experience," says Hughes.

**DANIELLE MILLER**



