



# The sky's **the limit**

Suspended above a paddock in the open-natured Wanaka surrounds, this exacting Paul Clarke-designed home offers its owners a place to escape the rigours of the fast-paced fashion industry

TEXT by Margo Berryman PHOTOGRAPHY by Patrick Reynolds



THIS PHOTO This home sits in a shallow depression in the centre of a paddock and cantilevers beautifully over the lie of the land.  
INSET Two horizontal planes of concrete sandwich the glazed living area.



A finalist in the 2005 NZ Home & Entertaining Home of the Year Award, the Wanaka holiday home designed by Auckland architect Paul Clarke of Crosson Clarke Carnachan Architects for Bill and Robyn Hall is a dream come true for its owners.

A passionate skier with a heartfelt love of Central Otago, Robyn knew exactly what she wanted to build on purchasing their four-hectare lifestyle block five years ago. She wanted a glass box.

"With such a beautiful landscape, I just didn't want to shut any of it out," says Robyn. "The house has been designed very much around my needs – socialising, ski trips with girlfriends, having fun, and also, eventually, so I can enjoy the area in retirement."

The architect's brief gave careful consideration to retaining the 270-degree panoramic view of Mt Iron, the Cardrona Hills and surrounding mountains while still providing a high degree of privacy. Future-proofing against visual interference from buildings on neighbouring properties was also a priority.

While architect Paul Clarke pays homage to the glass box, a concept originated by American architect Philip Johnson, he says the final result is more robust and practical for the Central Otago climate.

Built of concrete, glass and timber, the design retains a seamless connection between the buildings and the land.

Nestled into a gentle gully near the entrance to the

property, the main pavilion is wedged on to its site and cantilevers over several small hillocks.

The pitch of the roof is mirrored in the floor so that the house appears to be floating, with the natural horizontal plane of the house extending through and over the undulating terrain.

Walls that divide living and bedroom spaces run like blades through the house from east to west, with the entrance area providing a buffer between the expansive open-plan kitchen and living areas and the bedrooms.

The garage on the eastern side is connected by a walkway, giving a sense of modulation. Low slung, with clean and contemporary lines, the buildings are like objects that lightly touch the land – elegant and transparent.

"We used limited colours with white being a pure way of dealing with the built form. But it's not stark or austere – more warm minimalism with the richness of the timber cabinetry and doors and quite a bit of texture from the furnishings."

On arrival, a gabion wall made from Cardrona River stones and steel SHS and RHS inserts acts as a visual shield between the interior and exterior of the house and makes a stunning sculptural impact.

Paul personally oversaw the placement of the steel inserts in the rock to ensure the filtration of light through the small gaps was exactly right, providing a magical transformation as day turns to night.

**OPPOSITE** A gabion wall constructed of wire baskets filled with local Cardrona River stones is a striking design device that flanks the entrance and at first keeps the views a mystery to the visitor. A poodle sculpture by Jeff Thompson stands guard. **ABOVE** The large Corian island bench in the kitchen was designed as a congregation point in the house and creates a pleasant space for socialising. Beech kitchen cabinetry hides all the essentials for a great party. The slimline phone is from Bang & Olufsen and the barstools are from ECC Lighting & Living.

THIS PAGE A flash of red from the Fritz Hansen Egg chair injects colour into the monochrome palette, with interior furnishings relying on subtle texture for effect. The Malmo sofa and single-seater are from Bromhead Design, and the rug is from Source Mondial.





ABOVE Robyn's choice of ultimate luxury – an Agape Spoon bath – drinks in the expansive rural views from the master bedroom. A Vola spout, Paini Cox mixer and Agape storage ladder finish off the look. OPPOSITE PAGE White is the predominant colour throughout the house, with natural polished concrete floors the perfect foil for a Fritz Hansen table from Corporate Culture and Eames chairs from Matisse. An Ingo Maurer Zettel-z light from ECC hangs above.

This is the third house for the Halls, who have a home in Auckland and a holiday place in the Bay of Islands designed by architect Simon Carnachan.

“Our Bay of Islands house is built on the edge of a cliff to capture the seascape. For the Wanaka house, views of the surrounding landscape were equally important,” says Robyn.

Floor-to-ceiling glass sliding and fixed panels on three sides of the home ensure that the Central Otago seasonality can be enjoyed in comfort and style. Wide anodised aluminium joinery complements the muted tones of the interior, with the tracks recessed top and bottom.

On scorching summer days the whole house can be opened up to the elements, while in winter the house is kept snug against snow storms and plummeting temperatures with double-glazed glass panels.

A suspended fireplace in the living area pumps out plenty of heat and is an important structural element, acting as a supporting brace. Placed at a height where people can stand beside it and enjoy the warmth, the smartly designed unit also houses the television and sub woofer and provides storage.

Sensitive to the social needs of his clients, Paul has included several playful and clever elements into the house. These include a white glass box that slides up through the kitchen island benchtop, creating a visual barrier between the cooking and dining areas. At night

it lights up and, with a Martini glass placed on top, the room becomes a glamorous cocktail area.

Three bedrooms, a bathroom and storage areas are housed on the western side of the hallway with beautiful internal doors made of European beech creating intrigue as to what lies beyond.

Keeping the internal workings uncomplicated, Paul designed the doors with no framework or hardware, working off a unique pivot mechanism.

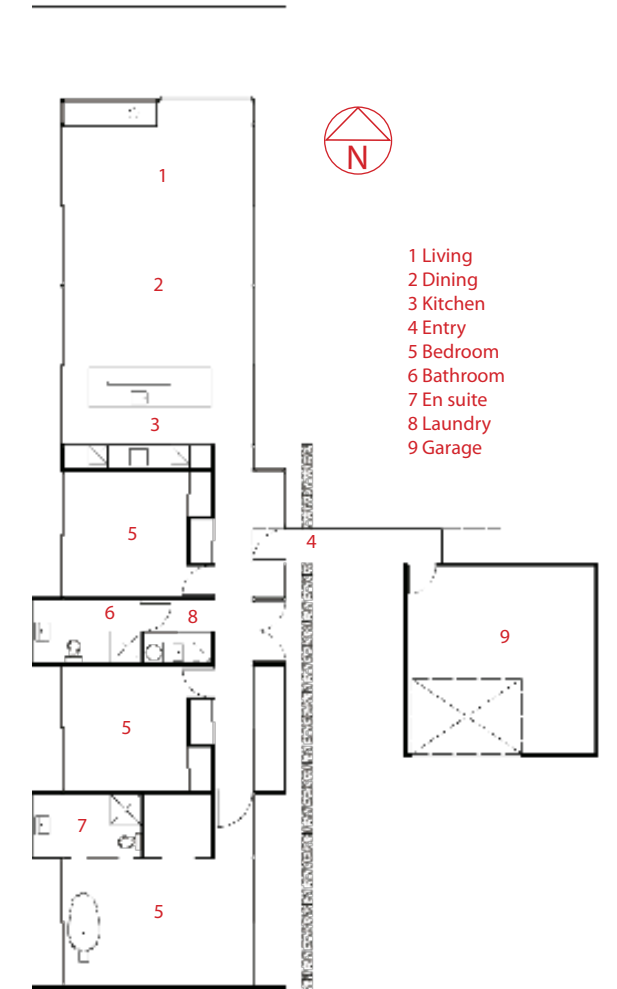
Bill and Robyn's master bedroom and en suite are at the south-east end of the home, giving them privacy with the pièce de résistance, an Agape bath, placed to make the most of the stunning view.

The house is now a retreat for the whole family with Bill, who is not a skier, farming alpacas on the property.

Robyn's godson Johnny, who works at local ski field Treble Cone, lives in the garage cum studio and keeps an eye on the property while Jasper the standard poodle enjoys keeping his eye on the prolific rabbit colony.

Robyn delights in getting away from her busy life overseeing fashion labels Catalyst, Obi, Mosaic and Chocolat, in her role as managing director of High Society. Bill founded the company 45 years ago and gave Robyn her first job in fashion, a decision which led to a successful business and life partnership.

Having just celebrated 40 years in the industry, she's passionate about enjoying life to the full, particularly the space and privacy of her dream home in Wanaka. )



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It's been a steady road to success for this New Zealand architect who has an eye for exacting interpretations of his clients' briefs.

Paul Clarke's career started out in Dunedin in 1987 when he went to work for Mason & Wales Architects.

By 1992 he had completed his Bachelor of Architecture (Hons) at the University of Auckland Architecture School and had joined Crosson Architects, eventually becoming a partner in 1999.

His consistent use of natural materials such as glass, concrete and wood have left an indelible mark on landscapes both north and south and he prides himself on not one building ever looking the same.

"It's important to tell the story of the occupants while also being site specific," says Paul. "I like to create a relationship between the building, the location, the weather factors such as sun movements, and the people living there."

He names his school art teacher, Peggy Richards, as a major influence on developing his love of art and creation and he relishes the opportunity, with each new

project, to invent something unique and different which hopefully exceeds the clients' expectations.

Partner Ken Crosson has been equally successful, making his mark with a host of industry awards. He took out the NZ Home & Entertaining Home of the Year Award 2003 for his distinctive and pure design of a container-like timber bach built for his family in the Coromandel.

Crosson Clarke Carnachan Architects was established in 2004, merging Paul and Ken's unique talents with those of well-known architect Simon Carnachan.

There is a strong synergy of ideas between the three design-orientated partners, each determined to create beautiful solutions that meet their clients' architectural needs.

Multi-award winners, the group are considered one of New Zealand's leading residential architectural companies. They currently have projects in Fiji that Simon Carnachan is working on and an international focus is something they plan to investigate in the future . H&E

