

HIGH ON THE HILL

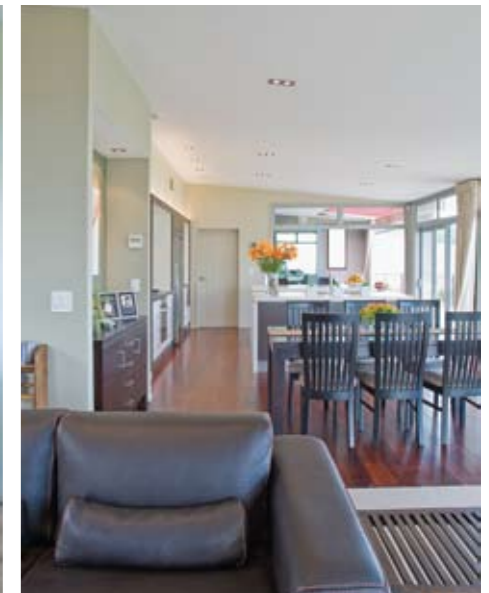
Contemporary architectural lines are at ease with the steep nature of this Christchurch hill site.



WHEN STEPHAN AND MARYLOU Heep took a casual Sunday drive to the hill suburb of Huntsbury, they had no idea it was where they would end up living. But with their children ready to leave home, and the hillside beckoning, they decided it was time to do something just for themselves. “There was no road and the sections hadn’t even been surveyed yet,” says Stephan. “We phoned the agent and were told a new section was available, and it was clearly the pick of them all. It was sheltered, faced the right way, and had real privacy. It was also apparent that the view couldn’t be built out.”

Once the decision had been made to purchase the section, the Heeps then had the onerous task of finding someone to design their house. “We had met three or four designers, but we never really clicked,” says Marylou. “Then we went to a home show and met Bob Burnett. He had his own personal home plans on display and we liked them, as well as the fact that he had designed many hill homes.” Stephan says they both “really enjoyed his style.” Bob is architectural designer and principal of Bob Burnett Architecture, along with wife and architect Shizuka Yasui.

Marylou and Stephan gave Bob quite



a strong brief, and enjoyed his style and interpretation of their ideas. The biggest concern the homeowners shared with Bob was that they “didn’t want the home to be set in an era, rather to be timeless.” Natural elements were incorporated, with hardwood timber floors and earthy colours.

“This is honestly the easiest home to live in for practicality and comfort,” says Stephan. Upstairs, the couple enjoy what they call an “intelligent conversation area”. This is the well-proportioned upstairs living space, which is refreshingly television free and adjoins the open plan kitchen. Bob and Shizuka designed the kitchen,

ABOVE TOP The exterior of the home is made from three different exterior materials to highlight the architectural elements of the home.

ABOVE Natural colours extend throughout the interior – Bob and Shizuka were happy to assist in the interior design.

LEFT The fireplace is at the centre of the main living room, and the notion of using varying materials to highlight different elements of the home as seen on the exterior is evident here also.

THE SPECS

Christchurch
\$600,000 +
315 Sq m



2



4



2.5



ABOVE The living area of the home is a deep open plan living model, and carpet plays a role in segmenting one area off from another. The kitchen has a hardwood flooring which draws on a natural-inspired theme. The outdoor room has been designed in a small alcove to combat the easterly winds.

RIGHT Views stretch out over Christchurch City. The automated awning overhead ensures that in the peak of summer the outdoor room can be sheltered from the sun's rays to maximize time outside.

BELOW The kitchen features two island benches, one for the sink and food preparation, and the other for casual dining and paper reading.



with ongoing consultations with Stephan and Marylou. 'It's a brilliant kitchen with great working spaces.' They mostly eat all their meals at the breakfast bar, and certainly enjoy the casual dining aspect.

Characteristic of many Bob Burnett designed hill dwellings, the Heeps home has the main living area on the upper level. This maximises the view and allows for a stunning deck to merge with this area. A covered outdoor "room" flows from the kitchen, and large sliding doors open along the north side.

The Heeps love the "clean, modern lines" of their home, and feel comfortable with the "understated elegance" of the house. They did not want a showhome, rather a home to

live in, and that's precisely what has been achieved. "We had a real meeting of minds with Bob," says Stephan. "We gave him a good opening as to what we wanted, and then virtually gave him a free hand. It was important to us to let him use his creativity." Marylou also liked Shizuka's influence. "There is certainly some of Shizuka in the home."

Ultimately, Marylou and Stephan understood and appreciated Bob's designs, and knew he could be trusted with the hillside nature of their section. "I tend to have a reputation for hillside and energy efficient houses. Some people are scared of hill sites, and they are a bit more tricky, but I enjoy making a home fit the hill, whilst remaining environmentally friendly," comments Bob. ■



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Q&A with Bob Burnett & Shizuka Yasui

Did you have a theme in mind when designing this house?

Stephan and Marylou both admired Frank Lloyd Wright designs, and so do we, so his designs were an influence. We really wanted to create something that was contemporary, using a mixture of materials.

What was your brief?

To create an open-plan home with lots of light, and of course everyone wants a warm home. A starting point for the design was the need to incorporate a 3 car garage, which required a large excavation. The homeowners didn't want lots of stairs.

Where there any obstacles to overcome to create the house?

The height limitations on the hill are always a factor, and we always work against this. Seven metres is the maximum height (from natural ground level) and recession planes are also an obstacle.

The house features a combination of exterior materials. Was there a reason for combining these claddings?

We usually use a few different materials to highlight different areas with the architectural form. Concrete is always affordable and is a good sound material with thermal mass benefits, and James Hardie Linea boards are great for higher areas that don't require a heavy product.

The main living is upstairs, with the bedrooms downstairs. Is this a floor plan you prefer for hill homes?

Yes it is. Traditionally homes on the flat are the opposite, but for a house on the hill, the view always has to be factored in. Also, with entering from the back of the home, on the upper level, it works well. We do always try to incorporate one living space downstairs though, to allow access to the garden. Also, having the bedrooms on the lower level means they are cooler.

What makes this place great from an architectural standpoint?

The way it suits the site and has such great curb appeal. It's a nice home for Stephan and Marylou to live in. The entrance with the high ceiling and skylight is a real feature and the views are incredible!