

lifestyle properties

# Married to the land

Architects of a modern rural residence can go beyond optimising views, letting the design itself provide a salute to the environment





# Pressed to perfection

Precision-built down to a screw turn, this distinctive, copper-clad lodge echoes regimented vines and the colour of the sea



*Preceding pages and these pages:*  
The lodge and guest suites at Elephant Hill winery are clad in custom pre-patinated copper, sourced from Germany, and pressed into shape on arrival. This metal was treated to match the colour of the sea at Elephant Hill in the mid afternoon. Shady pergolas, soaring cutouts and protruding glass boxes provide multiple indoor-outdoor connections. Water in the infinity-edge pool sits on a flat plane with the tile surround.



**Right:** The dining area sits in a three-sided glass box that protrudes from the building envelope – creating a fully enclosed outdoor living space. Near-invisible glass supports make the dining table look as if it is hanging midair. Adding to the playful, sculptural appeal, the area rug has long tufts reminiscent of waving grass.



**An abiding love of the land** might make you anticipate a preference for all things rustic. However, even far from the city, contemporary exteriors and sophisticated interiors can still hold sway.

This dramatic lodge and accompanying guest suites form part of the landscape at the Elephant Hill Estate Winery. Both the lodge and nearby winery were designed

to have an identical aesthetic by architect John Blair.

“Seen from above, the lodge and two guest cottages form a U shape – the lodge makes up one wing and the bottom of the U, and the suites and a garage make the other wing,” Blair says. “This close grouping creates shelter for the inner courtyard and lap pool.

“The buildings also had to link to the vineyard visually,”

says Blair. “To achieve this, we designed structures with a strong linear emphasis. The copper cladding is seamed to echo the rows of vines, the lie of the land, and the horizon.”

The pretreated copper will not react further on exposure to the salt air and is also non-reflective – an asset for any sunny, wine-growing climate.

However, copper is also a soft, volatile material that reacts

adversely when in contact with other metals and can be easily damaged by a wayward forklift. To protect its integrity, the cladding finishes a metre short of the ground, on a contrasting concrete base.

“The solid look of concrete plays its part elsewhere in the design, too,” says the architect. “Two substantial concrete forms flank the formal entrance to the lodge.”

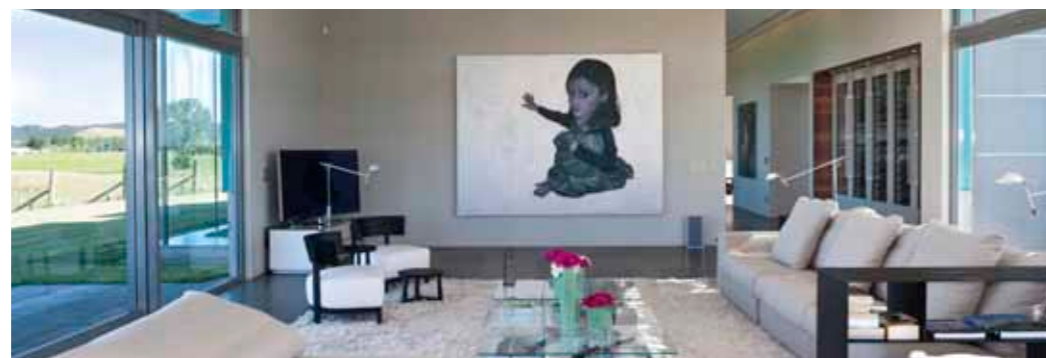
**Above:** The entrance to the lodge lies between the guest suites and the garage, across the centre of an open courtyard. A double set of glass doors enclose a small lobby. Twin concrete forms on either side of the entrance are etched with grooves that continue the horizontal emphasis of the design. One of these structures contains the guest cloakroom, the other a powder room.



*These pages:* The clean-lined, highly contemporary kitchen was conceived and modified by an Italian design and built to exacting specifications in Germany. The extruded aluminium cabinetry surfaces are so finely engineered that gaps between the cabinet doors and drawers are mitred at 45° to accommodate fingers to open them. A dinner gong with a patina of verdigris stands at the end of the centrally positioned island.



**Right:** The design incorporates opportunity for change, including a blade wall between the living room and dining area, which can be removed to create one extended space. Next to the entry alcove, five large Gaggenau refrigerators are a reminder of the vineyard's stock in trade. The area rug warms up the limestone floors visually and adds texture to the understated interior.



From the inside, the living spaces act as a viewing gallery, optimising appreciation of the vineyard and the sea, but also providing strategically set wall areas to showcase artworks.

"It was important that the lodge reminded the owners and guests of the setting at every turn," says Blair. "When a couple has several homes around the world, as this one does, the location itself is an

integral part of the appeal."

The decor in the living spaces is neutral, again to let the sea, sky and sculptures take centre stage. Limestone floors are used throughout the interiors for continuity.

"Another request of the owners was for flexibility in the interior design," says Blair. "We designed spaces that could be reconfigured at a later date to accommodate this."

Air conditioning plant is set in upper recesses, blade walls can be removed to open up spaces, and there are no central columns or posts to interrupt the views if a furniture setting is changed.

In a climate that can offer extremes, there are several ways to adjust the temperature of the interiors. Mechanical external aluminium louvres and vertical blinds are used to

**Above:** External views are factored into the interior decor, with furniture easily repositioned to focus on different outlooks. Vertical blinds offer privacy but are usually tucked to one side, out of sight. Sliding doors open to areas shaded with aluminium screens that had to be carefully engineered and installed. Rubber buffers were introduced to prevent any contact between the aluminium and the copper, which would damage the cladding.



**Architect:** John Blair, FNZIA, Blair + Co (Arrowtown, New Zealand)  
**Interior design:** Wolf Schaefer, architect, and owner  
**Builder:** Linnell Building  
**Kitchen design:** Owner  
**Kitchen manufacturer:** Schumann, Germany  
**Landscape designer:** Ralf Krugar, Morgan & Pollard  
**Cladding:** Tecu patinated copper, supplied and installed by Metal Design Solutions  
**Roofing:** Dimond BB900; Colorcote in Metallic Gunmetal  
**Tiling:** Custom by Firth  
**Flooring:** Bleu de Tirrannie limestone, from Design Source  
**Wallcoverings:** Gibraltar board from Winstone Wallboards  
**Paints:** Resene  
**Lighting:** iGuzzi  
**Heating:** Underfloor heating by Electrotech  
**Air conditioning:** Chubb  
**Doors and windows:** Vantage  
**Window and door hardware:** Halliday & Baillie  
**Blinds:** Sallee  
**Pool designer:** John Blair  
**Audiovisual equipment:** Electrotech  
**Television, speakers:** Loewe  
**Kitchen cabinetry:** Anodised aluminium by Schumann  
**Benchtops:** Bleu de Tirrannie  
**Sink:** Custom  
**Taps:** Dornbracht  
**Oven, cooktop, microwave:** Gaggenau  
**Hood:** Custom  
**Refrigerator:** Gaggenau  
**Vanity countertop, floors, walls:** Bleu de Tirrannie  
**Shower fittings:** Dornbracht Balance Module, Agape Rub 060  
**Shower enclosure:** Glass, custom  
**Bath:** Matisse by Agape  
**Basins:** Vero by Duravit  
**Taps:** Dornbracht Meta  
**Hot water:** Chubbs  
**Lighting:** Electrotech, various

**Story by Charles Moxham**  
**Photography by Jamie Cobeldick**

**Above:** The bathroom's raised plinth gives bathers the sense of being on stage, albeit in complete privacy. The space continues the architectural language of external projections, though its walls are stone instead of glass. A frameless glass shower adds to the room's spacious feel.

moderate the sun's rays, with clerestory windows allowing natural cross ventilation. In winter, the air conditioning, underfloor heating, and gas fires bring optimum comfort.

The master suite occupies the rear of the U-shaped footprint. Naturally, this area has a more secluded feel, although the placement gives a line of sight out to the lap pool, past the glass safety balustrade to

the sea beyond. The master bathroom is also a room with a view. Here a privacy wall encloses a courtyard designed solely to be enjoyed by the bathroom's occupants.

"The porcelain tile wall forms a large water feature, with water trickling and shimmering down its ribbed surfaces and across the gently sloping courtyard floor," says Blair. "The bathroom structure

protrudes from the house just as the dining room does, but its side walls are stone, rather than glass."

Blair says that every aspect of the design was scrutinised by the owner – down to the exact turn of a screw. Overall, however, the effect is relaxed and inviting.

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**Left:** An elongated fire augments underfloor heating in the bedroom. The lodge's minimalist interiors continue in the private spaces, as do the paintings and sculptures. A housekeeper's room is positioned adjacent to this room, at the rear corner of the residence.