



01 Dec 2017  
Simply You - Living, New Zealand

Lily & Louis

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# HOME



PHOTOGRAPHY: MICHAEL LEWIS.

*From Northland  
to Northern Italy,  
the following homes  
celebrate indoor  
and outdoor living  
in all its forms.*



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The wooden dining table was bought in Ekali, Athens. The comfy leather mid-century modern dining chairs, bought in London, are a soft counterpoint to the concrete. **Opposite:** The windows on the copper roof are equipped with rain sensors and open and shut electronically.



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When John Fulton returned to New Zealand after 17 years spent mostly in London – with stints in Athens, Houston, Mexico City, Turkey and Hong Kong – he wanted to get back in touch with his homeland.

Deciding not to buy in Auckland, the chief financial officer of Agria Corporation, a Chinese-backed investment company, looked for a property up north instead while he waited for his wife and their teenage children to join him after finishing the school year in London. He wanted something that would get his creative juices flowing.

Fulton was about to close on a house in Tutukaka when a real estate agent from Sotheby's called and told him he had to see a property at Kauri Mountain Point with sweeping views to the Bay of Islands, Great Barrier, Little Barrier and all the way down to Kawau. It was January 2015, around the time New Zealand had its last major tropical cyclone and as Fulton drove up to the property he caught sight of the sea boiling white in the bay.

"I could hardly stand up at the top there was so much wind, but I fell in love with it," he says. "It was so rugged and so cool. I cancelled the other deal and bought this property. Now, instead of a 650 square metre garden, I've got a 25-acre garden."

The previous owner planted dense flax all the way along the road, so you have the immediate sense that you're coming to native bush. "I wanted to create a natural parkland-type scene on the property too. We took all the fences down so you look out through ancient pohutukawa and natural bush," says Fulton. "Every time I go up there I just melt."

A mere two-hour drive from Auckland, the property, originally a farm for livestock, includes Te Whara, an Andrew Patterson-designed concrete house, a second, smaller abode called the Glasshouse and planning consent to one day build an additional, larger house on the land.

Seeing the Glasshouse and Te Whara as a rental business in the short-term and a potential bach for their peripatetic family when they no longer want to spend their summers on a yacht in the Bay of Islands or abroad, the Fultons set to work.





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*To combat salt, sun and corrosion, the doors and window frames are aluminium. Opposite, from left: A sleep-out for children or teenagers, made from a shipping container, is equipped with bunk beds; a large pot, bought with the property, is planted with Mexican grass plants that Fulton fell in love with while based in Houston, Texas.*





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He renovated the Glasshouse (not pictured here), transforming it into a luxurious one-bedroom romantic retreat complete with private cove access. Then he tackled Te Whara and its adjoining tractor garage.

"The concrete made it such a cool core base to work from. But it needed to be exploited a lot more," says Fulton. He worked with local architect Felicity Christian of Two Architects to build on Patterson's original design and realise his own vision. A wall was removed, a bedroom relocated upstairs and a bathroom added on. Meanwhile, an existing upstairs bedroom was divided into two, creating what is now a three-bedroom house. The tractor garage was opened up to increase the living space.

One obstacle was the fact that the gorgeous black floor tiles chosen by the previous owner were no longer available. So builder Ollie Tuck polished the concrete in the main recreation room and left it as is, then introduced contoured wood to join it to the tile. A piece of brass was placed between the tile and the wood to finish it off.

After that it was a matter of adding the Fultons' favourite lights to the kitchen and lounge area – old warehouse lights originally from the Czech Republic that they found when renovating their country house in the



*A Gretchen Albrecht painting adds depth to the concrete wall. **Opposite:** Fulton works at the kitchen bench under the lights that originate from the old Czech Republic. The Charles Ghost stools are Kartell.*



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*The Barcelona Couch by Mies van der Rohe is from Knoll, the neutral couches and wooden coffee table came with the property, the hanging chair is from Dawson & Co., the Art Deco drinks trolley was a wedding gift. All paintings are Gretchen Albrecht.*





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*Lights automatically kick on as you walk up the concrete staircase. The etchings of Kiwis are by Helen Hunt for Backyard Kiwi. **Opposite, from left:** A reindeer skin from Lapco provides texture in the master bedroom; black and grey hues continue into the minimalist shower.*





United Kingdom. "They give off such a great concentration of light," says Fulton.

Then, alongside couches bought with the property, they arranged pieces acquired around the world. "We've had an Art Deco-y, mid-century modern drive for many years. It started with our London apartment and continued into our country house," says Fulton.

Some pieces, like the neutral leather dining chairs, were brought back for Te Whara so that the house wouldn't be too architecturally stark. The dining room table bought in Athens, which has never really worked in any of their other houses, has found its perfect home here. The only pops of colour come courtesy of multiple Gretchen Albrecht canvases. "They're very gracious and peaceful and when you look into them they have a lot of depth," says Fulton of the artworks he has been collecting since 1989. "I have a fascination with her work. It's almost an addiction."

Practical attention to detail continues outdoors too. Along with greening the area, restoring the native bush and adding heavy sandstone paths, the Fultons had a staircase built down to the cove to create an Amalfi Coast feel.

"You can walk down the steps, grab a rock mat or a beanbag and bake in the sun all afternoon," he says. "Then you can jump off the rocks into the water or go snorkelling, diving, kayaking or fishing."

There are private walking tracks too and, of course, he equally recommends going up there and doing nothing at all. "I want guests to be able to get away from Auckland or New York, or wherever, and go to this place to relax, detox and enjoy."

Through open aluminium doors, visitors can spot quail and gannet patrolling the headland as well as a collection of rabbits that belong to Fulton's wife and have a strict no-shoot order (possum, however, are fair game).

At night, wild kiwi roam the property. The Fultons sponsor a kiwi through Backyard Kiwi, a recovery programme run from Whangarei Heads. Note to potential guests: you might want to pack earplugs. Though if you forget, property managers Susanne and Paul Olsen of Ara Roa are nearby to look after any needs, including private chef catering if requested.

"We've even hosted the wedding of the year up here," says Fulton. "They had a beautiful party on the lawn with fairy lights and everything."



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*Copper from the tractor garage door was repurposed to make these garden boxes, planted with what will one day be a hedge for more privacy. **Opposite:** A concrete plinth was added to create an outdoor space, furnished with wooden chairs bought in London.*