

# Copper House

This landscape takes inspiration from its stunning surrounds while its finished form offers much to the immediate environs.

Words by **Clare Chapman** Photographs by **Marina Mathews**

01

**LANDSCAPE  
ARCHITECTURE**  
LAND Landscape Architects;  
Jo Dey, Rebecca Lucas

**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER**  
Lewis Bradford Structural  
Engineers

**MAIN CONTRACTOR**  
Southern Landmarx

**BUILDER**  
RBJ Builders

**EARTHWORKS**  
Maccaferri NZ

**ELECTRICAL**  
Aotea Electrical

**LIGHTING DESIGN**  
ECC; Bridget Dorn

**STONEMASONRY**  
Ray Anderson

**STONE SUPPLY**  
Glen Dennison Stone

**PLANT SUPPLY**  
Easy Big Trees; Burn Cottage  
Nursery; Sunvale Meadows  
Mature Tree Nursery

**GREEN WALL**  
Insol NZ, Oasis Hire Plants;  
Darren Rice

The house itself is a sight to behold. Set on a steep site in the Queenstown suburb of Aspen Grove, its sizeable form rises dramatically from the hillside. Copper tray roofing wraps around various planes, both horizontal and vertical, folding down and around the front elevation. Broken by schist detailing, the façade makes a bold statement, due in part to its scale.

But it is the extensive, intricate landscaping that grounds this structure in its stunning surroundings – due to its siting high above Queenstown it has sweeping, unobscured lake and mountain views.

From the street below the house, it is clear that the landscaping, extending over the main section upon which the house is sited and an adjoining one as steep as the first, is derived from a concept set well apart from the regional vernacular. While it takes its cues from the rocky mountains in which it is set, there is far more to this landscaping than the jagged peaks of the surrounding ranges.

Landscape architects Jo Dey and Rebecca Lucas of Queenstown-based LAND Landscape Architects, were involved from the inception of the project nearly five years ago and worked closely with the architects and clients to develop the concept for the 2500m<sup>2</sup> residential setting. The aim from the outset was to create a memorable garden setting when viewed both from within the building, and from outside, which complemented the stunning surrounds and the unique architectural design and scale of the house.

“On a functional level, the clients wished for privacy, for colour within the planting, and to tame what was essentially a very steep site into interesting and useable areas,” Dey says. “The house used large areas of locally-sourced schist stone wrapping into the facades and then stepping out into the landscape beyond. We took those principles into the landscaping by repeating the schist stone on a variety of planes, both horizontally and vertically.”

Schist is a significant feature of the region and forms the craggy tops of the mountain ranges that dominate the views from the site: these rock formations were pushed up through geological processes over millions of years, resulting in the schist pushing and twisting, changing their orientation from horizontal to vertical and anything inbetween. “We wanted to replicate this but in a formal setting, which related it to the house,” Dey says. “So we included, in three areas in the garden, walls that twist through 90 degrees, twisting the vertical faces up until they become





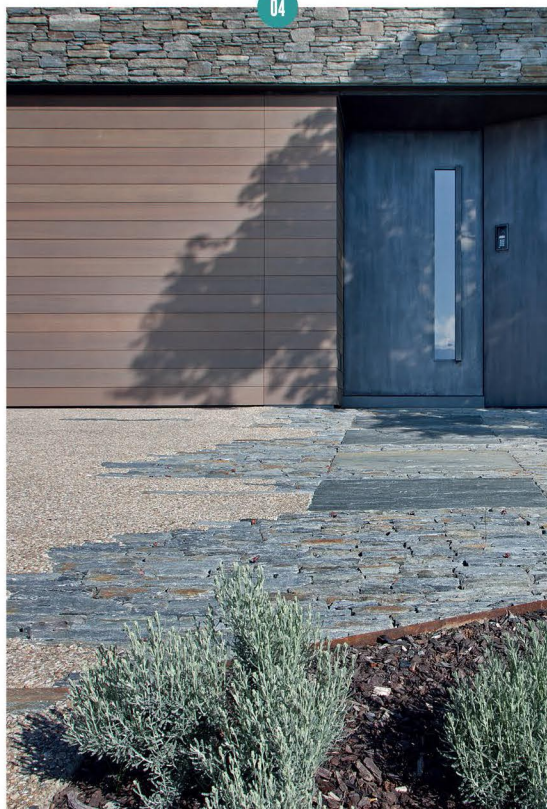
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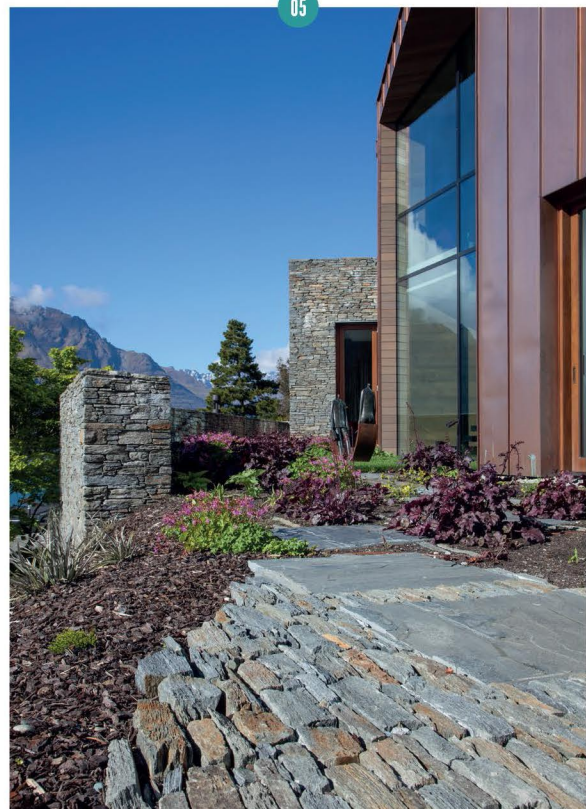
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04



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horizontal, taking the facing of the wall and using it to form the paving surface material. The stone walls therefore extend the folding planes of the house into the landscape and connect the house to the hillside.

“Drifts of both native and exotic planting wrap around the schist walls and steps anchoring these hard landscape features back to the ground plane. Taller growing evergreen trees and shrubs offer privacy and screening from residential neighbours. A mature Japanese maple tree was craned into place at the front entry to the house and has created a beautiful entry with dappled shade falling across the stone façade of the house providing a feeling of maturity to the project far beyond its actual age.”

Because of the steep incline of the site, walls became a dominant and necessary part of the landscape concept in order to create terracing and useable spaces. In addition to the twisted walls, a green wall extends the length of a three-metre-high retaining wall at the rear of the property offering a unique perspective to the home’s entertaining courtyard and incorporating the principle of utilising a traditionally horizontal medium on a vertical face.

Here, at the rear of the house, schist walls also provide a focal point. “A sculptural element was blending and overlapping the traditional and ordered schist-faced stone walls with the more relaxed and tumble-down schist

boulder walls, which also performed a retaining function.” The boulder walls step out into planted areas, offering a more organic transition.

A large transplanted Japanese maple marks the main entrance to the house; to the right, the first of the three twisted walls is visible from the road. “Drifts of ornamental planting feature here, with horizontal schist stepping stones set within vertical schist on edge. This vertical schist then blends back in to form the twist of the most accessible twisted wall. It twists to become horizontal and form the front face of the retaining wall to the east.” The path up from the lowest lawn and seating area near the entrance winds across the property on digger-placed boulders and then along the base of the main twisted wall.

Set in between two grassed areas, the main twisted wall offers a stunning standalone sculptural element in the grounds, which is accessible from all directions. When viewed from the bedroom directly behind, it provides the foreground to views of Lake Wakatipu and the Remarkables. A ‘pause’ is set

**01:** (Previous spread) The main twisted rock wall echoes the formation of the surrounding mountain ranges. **02:** Despite the steep nature of the site, flat, useable areas are a feature throughout the landscaping. **03:** Twisted rock wall detail. **04:** Schist spills out into the main entrance area. **05:** A boulder pathway winds around the property with interspersed planting. **06:** Drifts of ornamental planting feature throughout the landscaping.





**07-08:** Oasis Plant Hire supplied and installed the plants for the vertical garden, which covers part of a significant retaining wall at the rear of the entertaining balcony.

into the end of the wall – a place to sit and contemplate the mountain vistas.

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Dey says one of the biggest challenges of this project was transforming the concept of the twisted walls into reality. To do so required close work with the project engineer, the builders and the stonemasons to preserve the purity of its design aesthetic with the practicality of how the twist needed to be constructed to be self-supporting.

Another challenge was the steep terrain, which made access difficult. The soil was unstable due to the steep slope and the amount of existing rock. "Steep slopes of disturbed ground were stabilised using a Maccaferri product called Geoweb." This helped keep soil and mulch in place and meant planting could be instigated between the material's cells. The design and layout sought to work with the existing contours wherever possible, with surface rock at the top of the site utilised to create informal paths and steps.

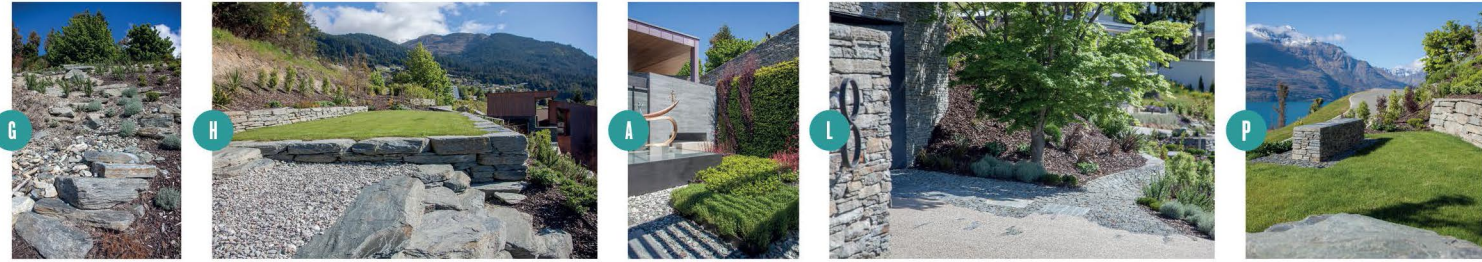
The adjoining section features a croquet lawn at the highest elevation. Seating areas and sculptures are dotted across the section, while extensive planting offers swathes of colour.

Native plants were utilised as the structure for the landscaping to provide textural interest – including hebe species, black and green flax and astelia. Red beech trees and broadleaf hedges were used to screen the property from neighbours and the road, and a mix of evergreen native and exotic shrubs were used as a backdrop for drifts of smaller, more ornamental plants.

While the planting is not yet mature, the concept is clear and already offers a stunning visual counter to the copper-clad house and place to muse the immediate and extended surrounds. "We wanted the experience of walking through the garden to be one of interest and wonder, both at items in the foreground and in the background," Dey says. ①



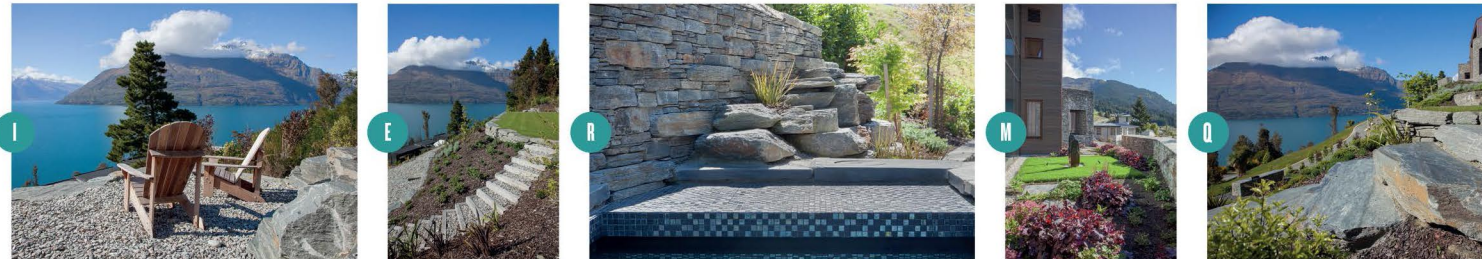




## COPPER HOUSE

A: Green wall. B: Outside entertaining area. C: Upper level house entry. D: Woodstore. E: Hardwood timber sleeper and gravel steps. F: Native screening. G: Dry creek/waterfall. H: Croquet lawn. I: Mountain view platform. J: High ornamental colour mix. K: Digger-stacked boulder wall. L: Lower level house entry. M: Perennial garden. N: Mature japanese maple. O: Twisted schist wall. P: Low schist wall seat. Q: 'Boulder hop' steps. R: Spa.

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| astelia nervosa  | libertia ixoides  | high shrub / screening mix to include cordyline australis / dodonea viscosa / dodonea viscosa 'pupurea' / griselnia littoralis / nothofagus fusca pitosporum tenuifolium / pitosporum tenuifolium 'Jacks Point' |
| phormium cookianum   | scleranthus biflorus  | Ornamental trees to include - Acer griseum, Acer rubrum, Cornus 'Eddie's White Wonder'  |
| phormium 'Black Rage'  | thyme species   |   |
| hebe mix to include cupressoides / 'Emerald Gem' / odora / salicifolia | groundcover mix to include shrysanthemum leucanthemum / pachystegia insignis / parahebe lyallii / pimelia prostrata |   |
| Scented shrubs to include rosemary / lavender / cotton lavender        | corokia 'Geenty's Green'  |   |
|  | corokia 'Frosted Chocolate'   |   |



## DETAILS

### Editor's note

'To roam the roads of lands remote, to travel is to live.' This statement from Hans Christian Anderson's autobiography, *The Fairy Tale of My Life*, came to mind recently when a family member who is an avid traveller sent me an email about his next trip, to the Dominican Republic. He described travel as a way to 'spring clean the mind', as a way to be able to think more clearly, and as a vehicle for understanding others. These ideas resonate in this issue, in which we hear about landscapes the world over and the importance of having a wider perspective in order to facilitate responsible change in the context of landscape architecture.

Up front, Renee Davies talks about her experience in the Sarawak rainforest in Malaysia in which she explores the notions of cultural landscapes and community tourism within this very confronting context. Davies and a group of students spent time with the Penan, who have lived in the area for generations – an area now threatened by deforestation and dams. In China, ex-pat Kiwi, Joby Barham, explains the context of a design for a 600-hectare park on the banks of the Yangtze River, which has flooded catastrophically a number of times over the last century resulting in a huge loss of human life and destruction of property. Barham discusses how the significant park, which is still in the design phase, will aid with the restoration of wetlands and ecosystems that have been adversely affected by the installation of infrastructure to prevent flooding. The park also aims to contribute to reducing pollution in the river's lower catchment and become a benchmark for sustainability in China as part of the master-planned community of Xiaochi. In the Netherlands, a particularly unique underfoot visual display caught our attention. More on this on pg. 12.

Back in New Zealand, the projects reviewed in this issue are diverse. It is not often that we feature residential projects within these pages, but one such project came up in Queenstown we couldn't look past. Substantial in form, the landscaping of what has been dubbed 'Copper House' is erudite in design and function, taking inspiration from the geological formation of the alps surrounding it. More on pg. 28. In Whangarei, the Hatea Loop Walk, or pathway of opportunity, weaves together local stories as it winds around the town's inner harbour, pg. 22.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the magazine this year. I look forward to working with you all in 2015. CLARE CHAPMAN