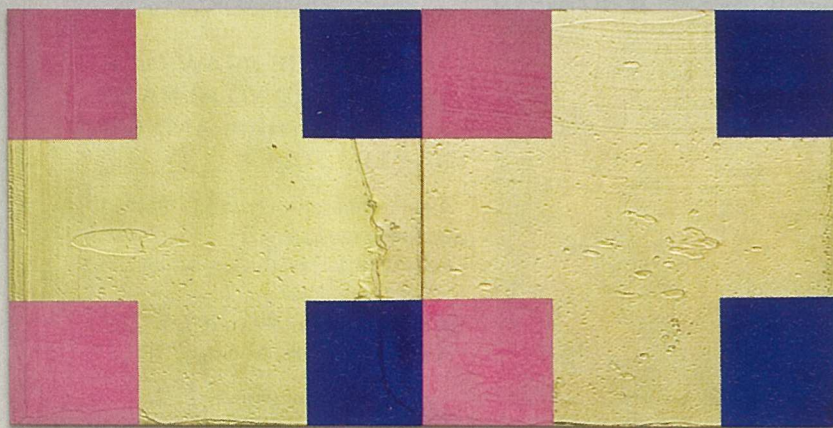


CROSSOVER

In Auckland's Western Springs, a series of "combative" discussions between artist Stephen Bambury, his wife Jan and architect Pip Cheshire results in a light-as-air fusion of art and architecture. "It's like living inside one of my paintings," the artist says.

TEXT JESSICA BARTER PHOTOGRAPHY PATRICK REYNOLDS



OPPOSITE 'Siena' by Stephen Bambury, made from 23-carat gold and schlag metal on two aluminium panels. THIS PHOTO Steel beams cross over on the deck outside the living area of the home.



ON A RECENT CLEAR SPRING EVENING ON THE ROOF TERRACE

of the house belonging to Stephen and Jan Bambury in Auckland's Western Springs, a discussion took place about the home as if it were a well-loved family member. While seafood barbecued underneath the oaks that rule the site, Stephen, a prominent New Zealand painter, and Jan, an academic, enthusiastically recalled the journey of designing, building and moving into their home. The building, now 10 years old, was designed by architect Pip Cheshire with the assistance of Kendon McGrail, with a further addition designed four years later by Pip's son, Nathaniel Cheshire.

The project began in 1994, soon after the Bamburgs purchased the site. Prior to this, Cheshire had planned a living-space addition to Stephen's inner-city studio that the Bamburgs eventually nixed because Jan missed being able to easily access the outdoors. For a while, they looked at existing homes, but nothing seemed to suit. "What's out there

is so incredibly boring and conservative," Stephen says. And so they bought the site their home now occupies, on the condition that Cheshire could come up with a plan for the flood-prone section before they went ahead with the purchase.

He did, and the home ended up being built almost exactly to this scheme – but not without a vast amount of in-depth discussion between architect and owners over the home's eventual shape and character. Stephen Bambury's paintings – a decades-long series of variations on a highly disciplined cross format – are notable for their sense of control and precision; the artist approached the process of developing a home with the same level of intensity as one of his works. Cheshire, an architect responsible for some of the country's most remarkable homes, had first worked with the couple on a small renovation of an earlier home in Titirangi. In the intervening years, he and Stephen had surfed together



ABOVE In the living area are 1950s chairs from Melbourne. The ceramics are a mix of German, Australian and New Zealand designs with English and Scandinavian glass works. The Stephen Bambury work on the wall is called 'Friendly Abstract'. The dish on the coffee table was purchased at a street market in Jinan City, China. OPPOSITE Architect Pip Cheshire calls the house a "bridge" across a flood plain. The design had to address the site's flood-prone tendencies and is suspended on stilts.



The intriguing New Zealand-designed 'Unistrut' lattice-work roof is commonly used in light industrial buildings and hidden by lining. Here it is left exposed to great effect. The artwork on the far left is 'Suzhou' by Stephen Bambury. The collection of ceramics that form a wall in the home's entryway are a mix of German and Italian, and Swedish glass pieces. The light was bought in New York and the couch is from Uno Design. The coffee table was designed by Isamu Noguchi for Herman Miller and is from Matisse.

THIS PAGE From the street the house looks like an unassuming box. It is clad in Zinalume and painted with silver metallic paint. The retaining wall is a mix of timber and concrete. OPPOSITE TOP The ramp leading to the home's office and roof terrace. To the left is a painting by Harvey Quatman. Above the staircase is a work by Stephen Bambury. OPPOSITE BOTTOM In the bedroom above the bed is work by Swiss artist Olivier Mossett entitled 'Enough'. Below this is 'Ghost' by Stephen Bambury. Above the bookshelf is 'Alizarin Shift' by Stephen Bambury.



Cheshire describes the house as a “bridge” spanning a flood plain. From the road it looks like a large tin box, but beyond the front door is a vastly different experience, as the interior unfolds into light and dynamic volumes



and engaged in a continuing (and very robust) discussion about art and architecture, modernity and post-modernity. Creating the Bamburys' home only amplified the intensity of these discussions, with no detail of the design process going unexamined. “It was an incredibly verbose and energetic process,” Stephen says. “[Pip and I] were both combative”.

Developing her and Stephen's brief for Cheshire, Jan says, “was like going into psychoanalysis together”. The couple asked that the design of their home should “extend and challenge us, providing a stimulating environment in which to live”. They wanted to be able to cook and bathe together, and to have morning light in their bedroom. (Stephen had to be discouraged from indulging his interest in “astral surfing”: “I wanted to be able to see the stars at night, but Pip talked me out of that because he said I wouldn't sleep, and I wouldn't thank him for that”). Crucially, Jan wanted to ensure

the home had a sense of warmth; she didn't want to live in something that, if her husband had his way, might end up feeling like a well-designed art gallery.

The eventual brief for the Bamburys' home was grounded in a clarity that tips its hat to mid-century greats such as Le Corbusier's Villa La Roche (1925) and Charles and Ray Eames' famous house, built between 1945 and 1949 and a case study that established a modern aesthetic of light, elegant assembly from standard industrial elements.

Cheshire's wife Aileen astutely observes that “there is not a ‘Pip Cheshire’ house”, by which she means her husband has never had a signature style. This turned out to be advantageous in the design process: Cheshire says Stephen saw the house “not just in terms of home, but as an artistic expression, and I think I was a kind of agent for that.” He adds: “For Stephen, home is where the art is; he wanted to hang art within art. For Jan, it was much more about notions of home.”



ABOVE The timber detailing throughout the home reflects Jan's wish for warmth, rather than a home reminiscent of a barren art gallery.

OPPOSITE The outdoor dining area stands before the double-height entry foyer (with its timber ramp leading to the upper floor), and its striking metal framing and orange wall.

The result is a home that challenged and stimulated both artist and architect in their respective fields. Cheshire describes the house as a "bridge" spanning a flood plain. From the road it looks like a large tin box. The façade is clad in Zincolume, with flat translucent fibreglass panels providing the only clue as to the quality of life inside. Visitors pass through a narrow opening in a concrete block wall and step down to a metal grille clipped to the side of the house above an inviting sliver of water and stone.

Beyond the front door is a vastly different experience, as the interior unfolds into light and dynamic volumes that dissipate into a series of outdoor platforms fringed with planting and ponds, and bounded by screens that completely enclose the property. The house is made up of modestly proportioned spaces. The lower floor contains the necessary rooms of the house: a laundry, guest bathroom and tack room for Jan's horse-riding gear, along with an open-plan living, kitchen and dining room. The upper floor contains the private spaces, comprising two bedrooms, two bathrooms and a study. Within the home are playful gestures – such as the shower that is shared between both bathrooms, and can be entered from either of them – and subtle shifts in door heights and proportions. Jan's desire for a sense of

warmth is expressed in the home's rich timber linings, which create a beautiful canvas for the dappled light that comes through the trees in the courtyard.

Having developed his own dialogue with Stephen during his years at art and architecture school, Pip's son Nathaniel was in 2002 commissioned to "further paint the site" by helping the interior stretch and dissolve into its surrounds. His addition, which is comprised of boundary screens and an extension to the deck area, set up a geometry consistent with his and Stephen's fascination with the skewed geometries of the early 20th-century Russian painter Kazimir Malevich.

Art is clearly a fundamental part of Stephen's idea of domestic space, but it took a while for art works to finally permeate the house. "I didn't want to hang anything on the walls for a long time," he says. "I just wanted to enjoy the architecture neat". Perhaps the success of Cheshire's assumption of the role of artistic "agent" can be measured by the fact that Stephen now feels the home is closer to one of his works of art than he could ever have imagined. "I feel like the whole thing is like living inside one of my paintings," he says. "I find a solitude and time to reflect in the space of my paintings that I also find here. I think it's the depth of Pip's understanding as an architect that he can achieve that."





LEFT The home's main living area opens onto the garden via a series of decks. The artwork is by Stephen Bambury. ABOVE Translucent sheets at the home's entrance let light flood into the stairwell. BELOW The home's upstairs bathroom.



notebook

PIP CHESHIRE
CHESHIRE ARCHITECTS



Architect Pip Cheshire had previously designed a small renovation for artist Stephen Bambury and his wife Jan before embarking on this home in Auckland's Western Springs. Cheshire does not have a signature architectural style – in this case he saw himself as the “agent” for Stephen's desire for the dwelling to be a vehicle for artistic expression, and Jan's desire that it feel like a home.



ABOVE The home's roof terrace is reached by a ramp from the stairwell, and opens off the study. Its northerly aspect and view of the site's oak trees make it an ideal spot for evening barbecues.

