

Bunker

Wearing a helmet of steel, a New Zealand home burrows into the ground to shield itself from the howling winds off Lake Wanaka.



On a scenic but exposed lakefront site on New Zealand's South Island, architects Tim Lovell and Ana O'Connell of Lo'CA created a pitch-roofed 2,690-square-foot residence for Tim's parents. The home's courtyard was excavated to help shelter it from high winds. A 10-foot eave over the windows and doors assists with sun shade and heat retention during the intense summer and winter months.

Mentality

TEXT BY Ben Morgan PHOTOS BY Patrick Reynolds





When Kate and Doug Lovell pictured their retirement, they knew it couldn't be anywhere but on Lake Wanaka. Located in the high-altitude Otago region of New Zealand's South Island, a three-and-a-half-hour drive from their hometown of Dunedin, the lake had been their vacation spot for years, a place where they could escape the grind with their boys. While they owned a place on the sheltered side of the lake, they longed for an open view and direct sunlight, even if it meant more wind.

On a blustery winter day, the couple visited a section of land in a subdivision overlooking the lake, circled by snow-capped mountains. "We could barely open the car doors, it was so windy, but we got out, looked at each other and said, 'Yes,'" recalls Kate, a former marketing manager. The punishing gusts didn't deter them, because they knew just the architects for the job: their son Tim Lovell and his business partner, Ana O'Connell.

"We spent a fair bit of time on-site trying to work out which directions the wind

comes from," says Tim. "Wanaka is a mountainous area, and the wind funnels down the valleys and can come from very different directions depending on where you are in town." And wind wasn't the only weather challenge they had to contend with. "It can get hot, in the mid-90s, in summer," he explains, "but also in winter—being in the mountains—you do get snow. So the house had to fit a range of climatic conditions."

For inspiration, Tim and O'Connell looked to the gold prospectors who rushed to Otago in the 1860s in search of fortune. These early pioneers pitched temporary shelters against the natural schist rock formations to protect themselves from the elements. Similarly, the architects created a long board-formed concrete wall that runs the length of the site and anchors the pitched-roof structure. With standing-seam steel folded down over the cypress timber frame, the roof provides cozy sleeping accommodation for guests beneath the gables on the upper floor. >



PHOTO, PREVIOUS SPREAD: PERSE08888/DREAMSTIME.COM (LAKE WANAKA)



The courtyard's board-formed concrete retaining wall extends indoors and has niches for growing herbs (opposite). It also anchors the standing-seam steel roof (left). In the kitchen/dining area, the range

hood and cooktop are by Fisher & Paykel; the Navy chairs are by Emeco (top). Many of the gaboon plywood cabinets are push-click. The accent wall is painted Fuel Yellow by Resene (above).

dwellings

From the street-facing side, the house appears bunker-like, protecting the residents' privacy from neighbors on the hill across the way. The lake side of the home is another story entirely. The interior flows seamlessly outside through large sliding glass doors that run parallel to the prevailing wind. The excavated courtyard is sheltered by retaining walls on two sides and a 10-foot eave, which assists with both sun shade and heat retention.

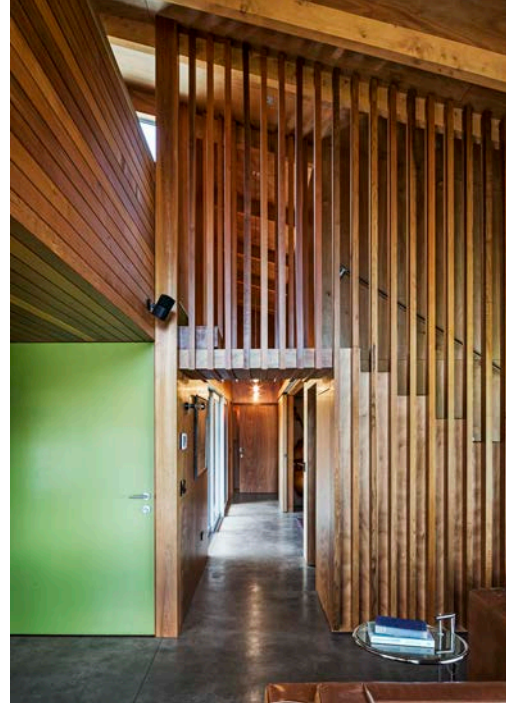
The harshness of the elements is juxtaposed with the warmth of the interior, where color was important to Kate and Doug. "There are three colors—a green, a yellow, and a red," O'Connell says. "The green was the idea of bringing the lawn in; the yellow referenced a native tree in New Zealand called the kowhai, which has these beautiful yellow flowers; and the red was from the pohutukawa tree, another native, the flower of which is bright red." These colors are embellished by a backdrop of concrete floors and plywood ceilings.

Doug, a retired dentist and an avid cook, has everything he needs in the no-frills kitchen. O'Connell says, "When we first were developing the brief, I remember talking about Tim's memory, as a child, of always seeing Doug's back as he stirred a pot of stew. So one of the big things was shifting the main cooking area to face the lounge. It became a bit of a stage for him to hold court on as he cooks."

Another stage of sorts can be found on the staircase, where the floor-to-ceiling slatted-wood balustrade gives way to an open landing where Doug and Kate's grandchildren hold impromptu musical performances. As a concert double bassist, Kate needs a quieter space in which to practice, which is why the den can be closed off behind large sliding doors. "They wanted that room to be a real nook," Tim says. "So if the winds are howling outside on a wintry day, and they just want to feel cozy, that's the place they go."

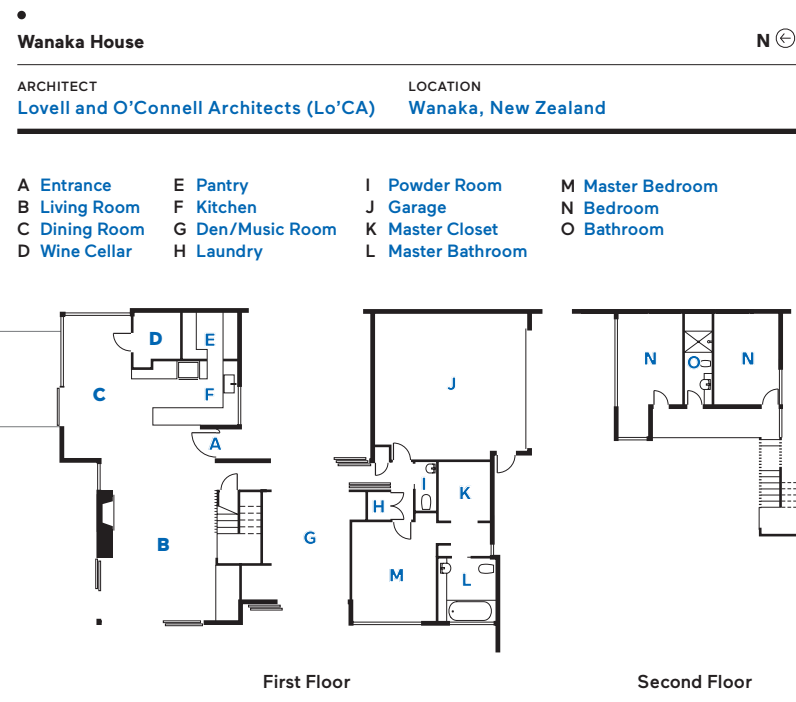
Kate and Doug fell immediately for the simple yet welcoming abode. And it's not just parental bias. Others have praised the house, too, although it sometimes takes a minute for them to warm up to it.

"When we first saw the design, Tim held his breath," Kate recalls. "He said it would polarize people. They'll either love it or hate it. Later, one of our very best friends came to visit and he said, 'What happened, couldn't you afford a carpet? No lights, just bulbs hanging down?' But by the end of the night, after a few glasses of wine, he sat back and said, 'It's bloody lovely.'" ■



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KATE LOVELL, RESIDENT



In collaboration with Tony Quirk Builders and structural engineer Spencer Holmes, Lo'CA finished the house in 10 months. Bursts of color, like the front door painted in Kombi green by Resene (opposite), are

counterbalanced by pared-down concrete flooring and exposed bulbs. In the living area (below), a Tolomeo lamp from Artemide sits near two Longreach sofas from Thonet. A slatted cedar balustrade

stretches to the ceiling of the voluminous parlor. Beneath the pitched roof, there's a bedroom with custom bunks for visiting grandchildren (bottom left). The family has been coming to Wanaka for decades.

They bought the hanging metal sculpture in a local shop some 30 years ago. On the street-facing side (bottom, right), the roof folds down almost to the ground to protect the owners' privacy.



ILLUSTRATION: LOHNES + WRIGHT

