



ON TOP OF THE WORLD

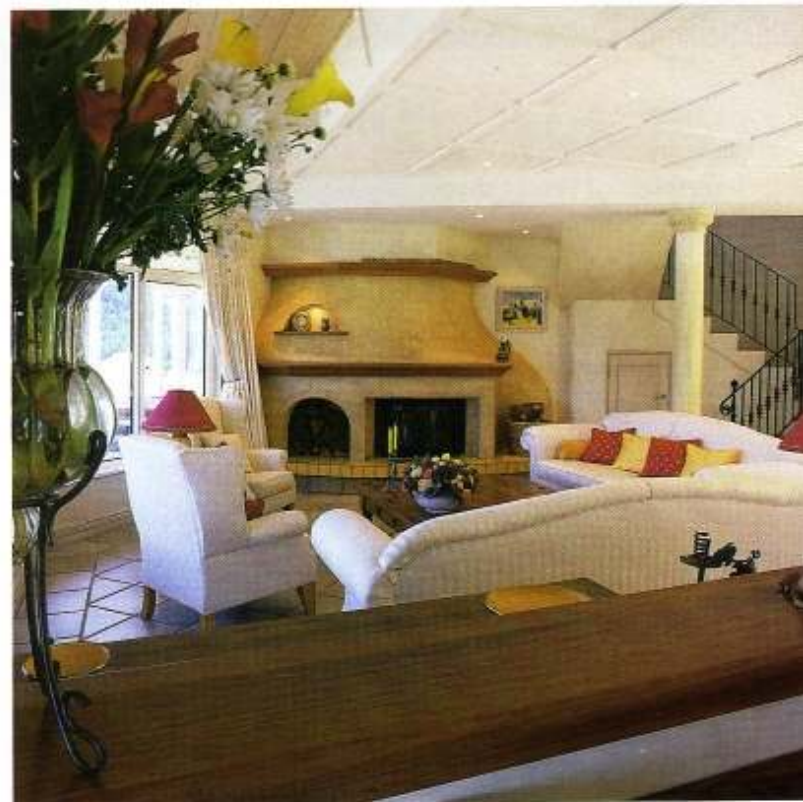
When you live with a panorama of exquisite beauty in a house that embraces your style, every day is filled with magic. Jenny McLeod shares the dream

Photographs: *Doc Ross*

Marianne Montagnat first visited Queenstown from her native Noumea, when she was nine years old. Now a permanent resident, she feels privileged to live high above the town with stunning views of Lake Wakatipu and the mountains.

Over the years, Marianne's family has owned several houses in the district and she had a home in the Kelvin Heights dress circle. But it was a site on the Queenstown Commonage, behind the resort township, that sparked her interest. "I saw the For Sale sign and knew this was it. With a view like that who wouldn't want it?"





Italian floor tiles, 'Tagina' from Designa Ceramic Tiles in Queenstown, have been used in the expansive downstairs area. Total Interiors supplied the custom, drapes and lampshades. The fireplace, built of Hebel blocks and then plastered, is the central focus of the formal sitting area. the couches are upholstered in 'Plaza' from Mokum and the wing chair fabric is from Kravet. the ironwork balustrade was made by Marianne's partner, Robert.



Three sections were bought in one lot and the 550-square metre house has been built on two of them. The double section was ideal for her vision and Marianne, who has completed an interior design correspondence course, was soon pooling ideas with well-known Swiss architect Edwin Stack.

The result is everything she hoped for; an imposing home that has become a Queenstown talking point. From the front, the long sleek house has a colonial feel, complete with verandahs and latticed posts. The back of the property, on the other hand, features a classical Italian courtyard.

"I wanted to incorporate both styles and they have worked well together," says Marianne.

Builders Peter and Paul Rowers knew instinctively the type of statement she was trying to make. Built from aerated concrete Rebel blocks, the Montagnat house features the first Hebel slab floor in the country. Hebel blocks are made of sand, lime and cement to which a paste of water and aluminum is added. This mixture releases hydrogen gas which expands to create air pockets within the

The stainless steel rangehood above the central bench is Gaggenau, Marianne loves to cook French-based meals in this kitchen built by Paul Rogers. Trellised cupboard doors are an unusual feature.

block. The lightweight blocks are an ideal material for foundations, have a high fire rating, are noise-resistant and offer good insulation.

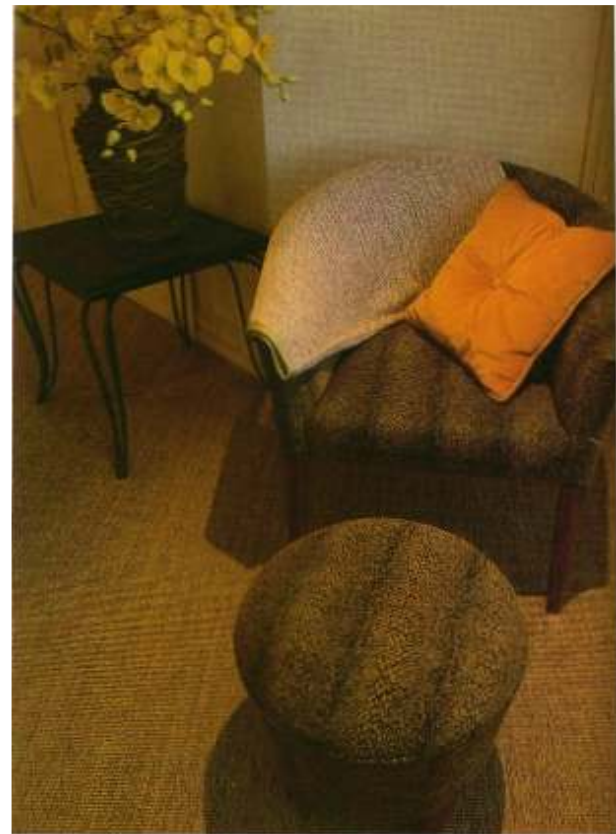
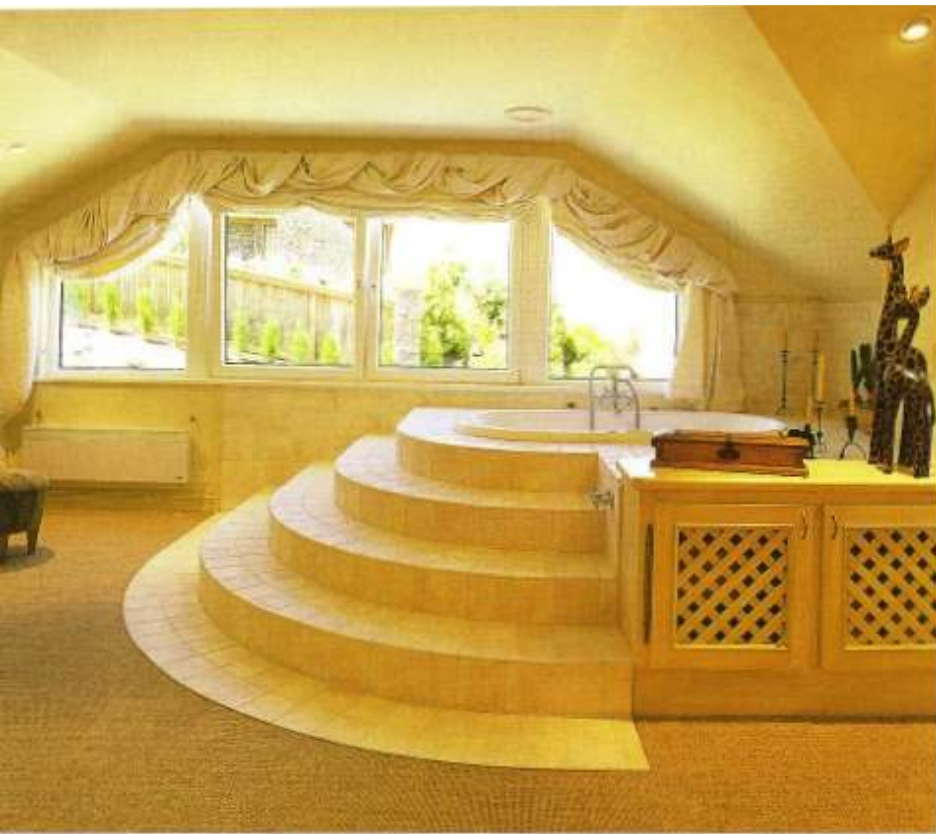
The exterior is plastered and gives the impression of a house that has been poured from a mould.

Paul Rogers says the exciting project broke new ground in many ways and that the same effect would never have been achieved with timber.

With huge expanses of glass overlooking Lake Wakatipu there's a postcard view from every window and Marianne has been careful not to compete with it.

Light, airy and spacious, an understated elegance pervades the open-plan first floor which takes in the kitchen and casual sitting room as well as a formal dining and sitting area.





Marianne's kitchen is state of the art and she enjoys creating exciting meals in what is obviously her personal domain.

"While I'm cooking I never tire of the view" she says.

Granite work Surfaces lend a hardy elegance to the kitchen benches and the central cooking island. Marianne is able to chat to guests while she prepares a French dish or perhaps the Montagnat family specialty - Algerian cuisine.

A twelve- seater table takes pride of place between the kitchen and main sitting area and is geared towards large family dinner parties.

"We are always in and out of each other's houses for meals," says Marianne. "We love to sit around, eat, talk and laugh."

The house is angled to the sun but there is also underfloor heating which is supplemented by a log burner set into a feature fireplace in the formal sitting room. Luxuriant plain-coloured couches dotted with red and yellow cushions make this a favourite meeting place.

Italian tiles are used throughout the downstairs area, a theme continued in the courtyard, Large French doors lead out to this sheltered, sunny space.

Upstairs the informal study cum sitting room offers a 180 degree-view

that reaches all the way to the head of Lake Wakatipu. The master bedroom with its sunken bath commands a breathtaking vista of the famous range, The Remarkables.

This floor also houses the guest wing made up of two bedrooms, a kitchenette and bathroom.

While most of the interior walls in the house are beige, Marianne has used a clever colourwash effect in the guest quarters in vibrant blues, yellows and greens. "I wanted to differentiate between the two areas," she explains.

A friend from Noumea created the colours. "He was the chemist who mixed the shades."

Marianne's walls reveal her love of Gauguin and she has interesting works of art and other collectibles dotted about. A set of pottery Spanish _oil jars always attracts attention.

Marianne's daughter, Emmanuelle, lives in a studio apartment which is part of the house but has its own separate entrance. "It's good to have her close by, but independent with her own space."

The Montagnat house has a definite stamp of personality. Meet Marianne and you realise immediately that the two go hand in hand. "What is here is what I like This is definitely me."