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KELVIN HEIGHTS

On a sun-soaked, north-facing suburb of Queenstown's Kelvin Peninsula, the house formally known as Kelvin Heights is majestically placed on a steep slope with gorgeous lake views. Due to the extensive planning and engineering required to build on the site, Condon Scott Architects not only managed to complete the project but also achieved great recognition by winning a NZIA award. Barry Condon, Director of Condon Scott Architects, is with us to tell about the project.

When explaining the brief of the project, Barry initially says: "This family home seeks to capitalize on views to the lake and mountains whilst wrestling with the complexities of a steep escarpment

that diagonally cuts the site in two." While the escarpment looks incredibly beautiful with a spectacular potential for views and sunshine hours, this site was extremely difficult to cope with for the team. "The site was highly challenging so we had to be innovative in our design. As the site is located on a flaky schist outcrop, the steepness of the site presented challenges not only from a construction perspective but also by the 7 meter height control envelope which restricted roof form heights once over the edge of the escarpment", Barry explains. Therefore, Barry and his team had to think out-of-the-box to meet the project criteria. "The building is literally drilled into the site with starter bars driven into the schist stone the footings to the foundation walls of

the house. The groundwork and up-to-slab level construction took almost half of the build time with the steep terrain making it difficult to access and operate machinery, particularly at the lower levels of the site", Barry elaborates.

In order to ensure that the house would fit below the 7 meter height control, the team designed a series of stepped levels contained within two wedge shaped forms. "The southern wedge containing the guest bedrooms presents to the street. The northern wedge is orientated west to the big view and contains the day-to-day living and the master bedroom suite", Barry mentions. These wedges create an angle, so that the house essentially follows the

Queenstown, New Zealand

trajectory of the slope. “The two wedges are linked by a low roofed element creating courtyards to capitalize on morning sun, while providing protection and a sheltered retreat on windy days including seasonal on-shore lake winds and extreme Central Otago sun”, Barry explains.

Throughout the house, there is a progression offering a variety of glimpse views before culminating in the grand living space with oversized panes of glass focusing on the main view and creating an illusion

of floating high above Lake Wakatipu. Situated on the highest step level, the master bedroom takes full advantage of the altitude where the residents can step outside on a small patio where nothing but a breeze can distract the observer.

Conclusively, Kelvin Heights was a winner in the Housing category of the NZIA’s Southern Architecture Awards in 2018. The jury of the category cited: “Discreet and restrained from the street, this house opens up across an impressive precipice to excellent

views of Lake Wakatipu. The attention to planning, orientation and siting has resulted in a variety of internal and external spaces that provide numerous options for enjoyment, no matter the weather conditions.” With this recognition, it was affirmed that Kelvin Heights responds harmoniously to the complexities of the site; providing an incredible living experience for the happy and satisfied client.

Architecture by **Condon Scott Architects**

Photography by **Simon Larkin**

