

GARDENS OF THE GREATS

The soon-to-be-released book Gardens of the Greats: Expressions of Extraordinary People celebrates philanthropists in New Zealand and overseas who have devoted their love, time, money and energy to the causes they care about. The book illustrates the ways in which their own gardens reflect their personalities and generosity.

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The following pages are abridged extracts from the book *Gardens of the Greats: Expressions of Extraordinary People*. Minor changes have been made to the original text to adapt it to *Urbis*' editorial style.



These pages.
A mix of native and exotic plants creates a work of art around the home; Sir Michael Hill.



SIR MICHAEL HILL
Support the shine in everyone

On The Hills golf course, metal dragonflies hover over a peaceful pond, views of dramatic kinetic sculptures merge with snow-capped mountains in the distance and, on the last fairway, more than 100 cast-iron wolves provide an epic battle scene.

Art and craftsmanship are the hallmarks of Michael Hill's international jewellery enterprise, and they are also to the fore in his garden and adjoining private golf course near Arrowtown: home to the New Zealand Open. More than a dozen installations by local and overseas artists bedeck the fairways, cleverly sited to suit the works and the landscape. The natural elements are just as stunning. In the sylvan setting of an old glacial valley, the light dances amid thousands of shimmering red and silver tussocks.

Hill has had a lifelong interest in golf and created his first course on the lawns around his family's home in Whangārei. His love of music and art began there, too, along with his first steps into an enterprise that now spans the world. The grand home that he and his wife, Ann Christine Roe, had taken four years to build was lost to a fire. This dramatic event made him reassess his life and gain new resolve, and it was the catalyst to opening his own jewellery store.

Hill opened seven more jewellery stores in seven years and, before long, was opening many more in New Zealand and then in Australia, Canada and the United States, with more than 300 operating today.

Hill's love of the violin prompted him to establish the prestigious biennial Michael Hill International Violin



Competition in 2001 for emerging young musicians and his service to business and the arts has received numerous recognitions.

The garden around his home, designed by Suzanne Turley, is also a work of art that reflects the ethos of 'think bigger' and challenges convention, using plants in the harsh alpine conditions that you would not have thought would prosper. Careful planting of native grasses allows the house to blend naturally into its alpine setting. Dramatic bursts of colour resemble a symphony in which the conductor leads you along various paths based on your mood and the season, while still providing a sense of cohesiveness.



SIR MILES WARREN

A pleasurable, constructive game

Renowned architect Sir Miles Warren began work on Ohinetahi at Governors Bay in Christchurch in 1977 with his artist sister and architect brother-in-law, Pauline and John Trengrove. When they bought the house, it was half ruined and looked as though it sat amidst a jungle. Restoration of the house and garden “took considerable time and money but it was great fun. If you don’t enjoy the journey all along, you don’t begin. We did it for pleasure.”

Warren later purchased his fellow owners’ shares and, in 2012, gifted his house and what, by that stage, was a garden of international significance to the people of New Zealand.

Warren was instrumental in developing the ‘Christchurch School’ of architecture, in which the ruggedness and structural expression of Brutalism met the clean lines and straightforward approach of Japanese and Scandinavian design. He has accumulated a long list of awards, amongst them Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1985 and the Order of New Zealand in 1995, receiving an Icon Award from the Arts Foundation in 2003 and being commemorated as one of the Twelve Local Heroes of Christchurch. In 2006, Warren established the Warren Trust to promote architectural education to the profession and the public.

Arriving at Ohinetahi, you are immediately impressed by the mature trees that frame the garden majestically amongst the sweeping views of Lyttelton Harbour and the Port Hills rising behind Governors Bay.

Warren’s involvement in gardens was sparked with the very first building he designed at 65 Cambridge Terrace: both his house and a studio for the Warren and Mahoney architecture partnership. The way he looks at a garden is not only from the form, colour



and distinctiveness of the plants but also from the expert perspective of structure and space that derives from his architectural background. “It is not a static entity, instead providing you the opportunity to create constantly in what is a ‘pleasurable, constructive game’, a work in progress.” Legacy is important to Warren, as not many gardens have survived after their original owners have departed and it is important to him that this one does not fall into neglect. Nowadays, he reflects: when you look at how new dwellings are being built on small sites, there is little connection with nature. “Christchurch used to be called the Garden City but attitudes have clearly changed. You are lucky if you get a scrap of lawn.” His advice is: “However small your outdoor space, ensure you have somewhere you can sit in the sun and enjoy the moment.”



This spread.

The house and garden at Ohinetahi sit in a natural amphitheatre on the edge of Lyttelton Harbour, with the Port Hills rising behind.



This spread.
The native planting and sculptural elements in this Queenstown garden, overlooking Lake Wakatipu, soften the strong architectural lines of the house; Sir Eion and Lady Jan Edgar.



SIR EION AND LADY JAN EDGAR

Leading and encouraging others

“Christina, we would be happy to meet you at *Tussocks*. I should add my wife Jan is the gardener; I just pay the bills and water the vegies.”

With characteristic modesty and humour, Sir Eion Edgar, who has contributed significantly to many causes, downplays his role. His generous philanthropy is well known and has extended into various fields, including education, youth, arts, sports and health.

Lady Jan, however, is happy to declare she is a garden lover, and her calm and thoughtful nature is reflected in their peaceful garden. The setting in Queenstown overlooking Lake Wakatipu in New Zealand’s South Island, on the other hand, offers a dramatic and spectacular contrast. Landscape architect Ralf Krüger designed the garden and, years after its creation, the varied plantings soften and enhance the bold lines and materials of their home. Extensive use of native plants maintains harmony with the alpine surroundings and creates stunning textures and forms. The result is a magnificent example of a home blending effortlessly into the landscape.

Cleverly laid-out paths wind amongst large clusters of planting that frame stunning lake views or lead to unexpected areas in which to rest and contemplate, while also showcasing sculptures from local artists, reflecting the Edgars’ dedication to the arts.

In keeping with their genuinely giving personalities, their garden has no fence nor obvious boundaries and merges seamlessly into its environs, sloping down to the public path around the lake. There is no ‘Private Property’ sign here and the garden with its sculptures is for everyone to savour, while privacy is maintained by flax bushes that prevent people peeking in and hide walkers from the house.

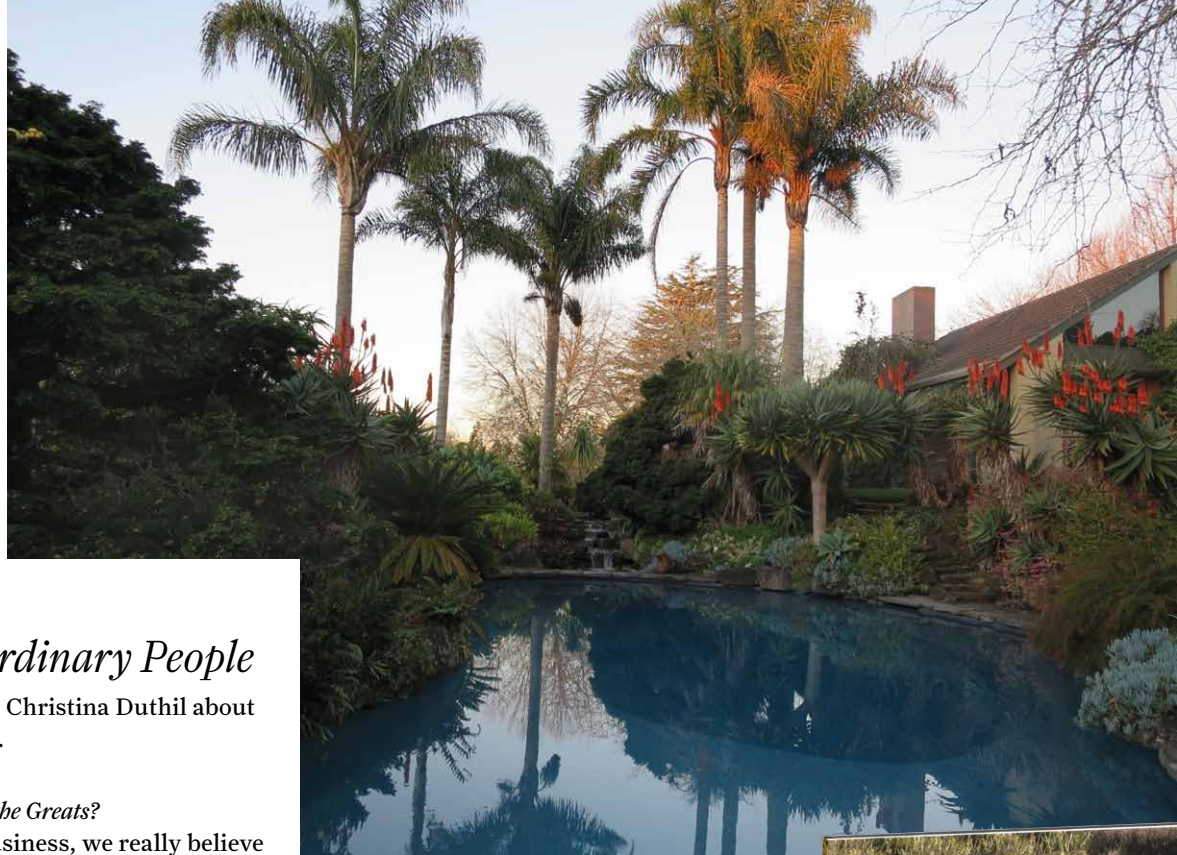


Lady Jan spends time most days in the garden and there is not one corner that she does not know well and enjoy. Seats scattered in the garden provide places from which she can watch the kinetic sculptures dancing in the wind. She was not convinced at first about having a completely native garden (their previous house in Dunedin had a typical English garden, which fitted well with the house). Krüger persuaded her of the merits of native plants, including an ability to withstand the cold climate and, 14 years later, they are still very pleased with the decision.

“I dislike roses very much, so there was not a hope that we would have any of them in the garden,” adds Edgar.

They both cherish the stream that greets you as you approach the entrance of their home. It was purposely created but its natural appearance and music add to the tranquillity of the garden. Edgar takes pleasure in hearing its gentle burble when working in his office, and both he and Lady Jan also enjoy time in their vegetable garden.

“I am allowed to do the watering in it,” says Edgar, “as I can’t muck that one up.”



Gardens of the Greats: Expressions of Extraordinary People

We spoke with Arnaud Daurat and Christina Duthil about the journey behind their new book.

What inspired you to write Gardens of the Greats?

Daurat: Being in the landscaping business, we really believe that our environment shapes who we are and we wanted to write a book that would add value in a different light.

The book has two purposes: it celebrates philanthropists from both within New Zealand and overseas who have donated their love, time, money and energy to the causes they care for; and it illustrates the philanthropists' gardens and how they reflect their personalities.

How did you choose the people you profiled in the book?

Duthil: We were looking at diversity of personalities, philanthropic actions and gardens. We came up with a selection through either meeting these people or hearing about them and their philanthropy. They're all really inspiring people whose stories we wanted to tell and we wanted to look at them in a personal light. We wanted to get to know them in their environments.

Daurat: In the book, there is diversity both through how these people give back and through their gardens – some are grand and majestic, and some are more modest. It's about the people and their connection with nature and how it resonates with them.

Did you find it hard to limit yourself to just 14?

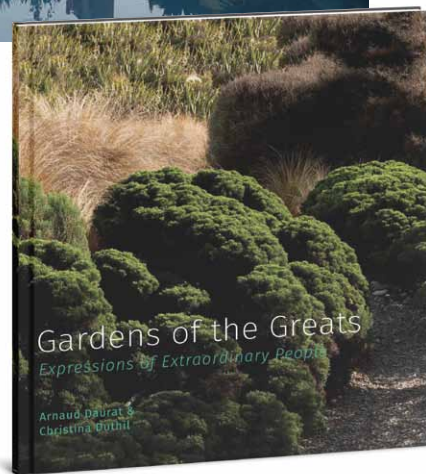
Duthil: We set out to profile between 10 and 15 but we fully expect we will produce further editions. Whenever we meet inspiring people, we will add them to our list.

Some of these people lead private lives. How did you convince them to take part?

Duthil: We didn't have a personal connection with many of them so we produced a 45-second video telling them about the project and why we wanted to include them in the book. They could see us and get a feel for what the project was about. I think the angle attracted them; it was about them and their personal connection with nature and their garden.

Can you tell us about some of the gardens?

Daurat: The Misners founded global networking organisation BNI, which now has 240,000 members. Their motto is 'Givers Gain' and we really connected with that. They're very down-to-earth people and they support myriad causes. They wanted to extract themselves from their busy lives and go into the country for a more restful environment.



We were curious to learn how one of New Zealand's most well-known architects, Sir Miles Warren, sees a garden. He is very free when designing and implementing. There are many rooms of different styles, vistas, formal structures, formal ponds, a pool, a gazebo, strong lines and designs, but everything else is very free.

Duthil: The alpine plants and tussock grasses in Sir Michael Hill's Arrowtown garden blend naturally into the landscape, but added exotic plants provide seasonal interest and form, strong structure and colour throughout the seasons.

The Edgar's landscape architect, Ralf Krüger, created a true masterpiece when he designed a native garden that fits with the very strong architecture of the home and its landscape. The garden is only about 14 years old but it is performing so well.

Many of the people you profiled are patrons of the arts. Was that by design?

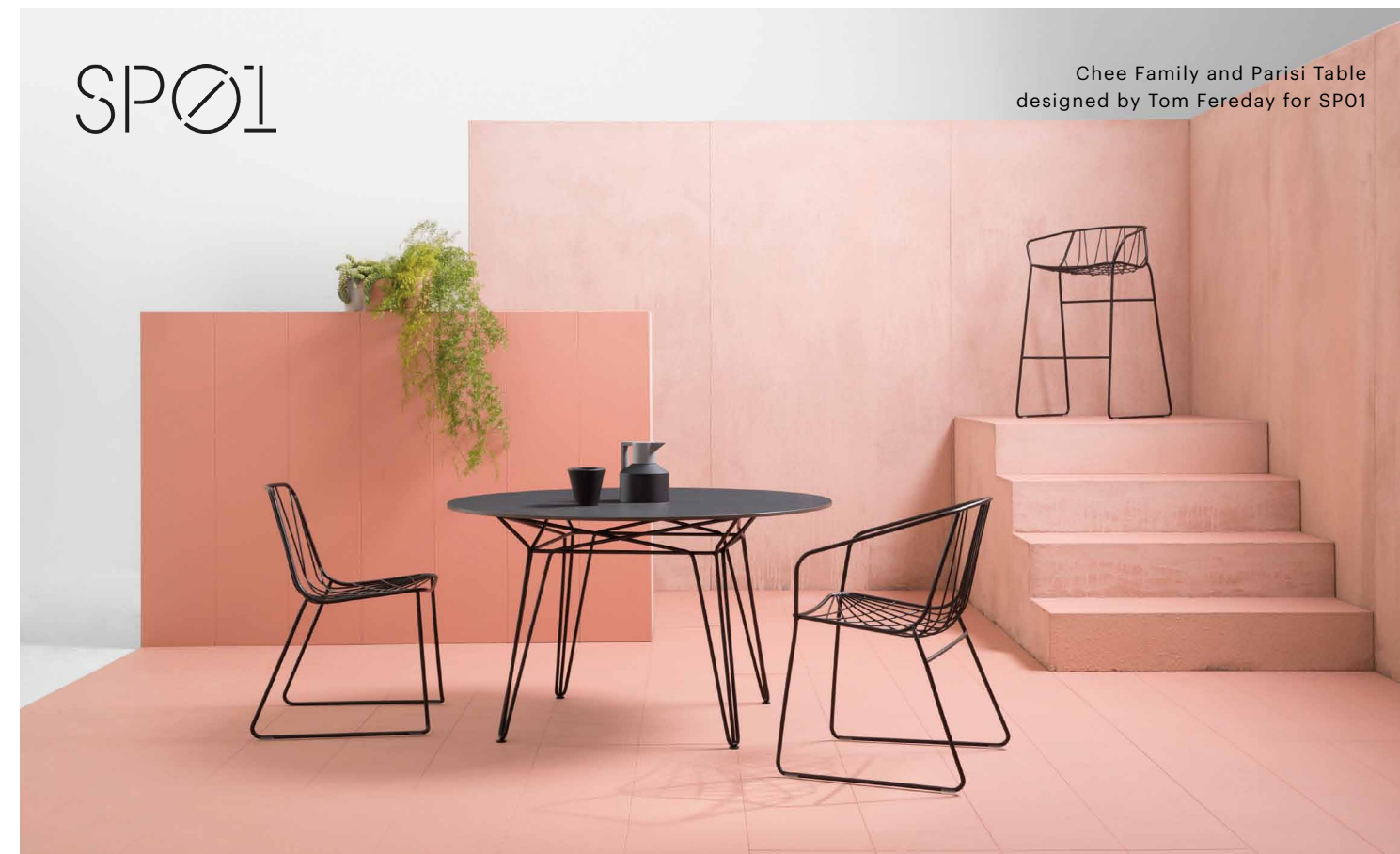
Duthil: It just happened organically; we weren't focusing on that. They give to many causes but, yes, many were also great supporters of the arts, which made even more sense, given that some of the proceeds of the sale of this book are going to the Arts Foundation.

Who do you expect will buy Gardens of the Greats?

Daurat: It's a book designed to inspire people to give more and to give back – from business people to garden lovers and everyone in between. It was created in that spirit.

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Above. Bev McConnell's Ayrles garden in Auckland; *Gardens of the Greats: Expressions of Extraordinary People*, available December 2018; Christina Duthil and Arnaud Daurat, authors of the book.



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