

NZ HOUSE & GARDEN

APRIL
2006

kylie kwong:
simple chinese cooking

EASTER BASKETS

**AUTUMN FEAST
IN ARROWTOWN**

A CAPITAL GARDEN

**WELL-RUGGED
FLOORS**



\$8.95
INCL GST



kevin roberts
ALOFT IN MANHATTAN

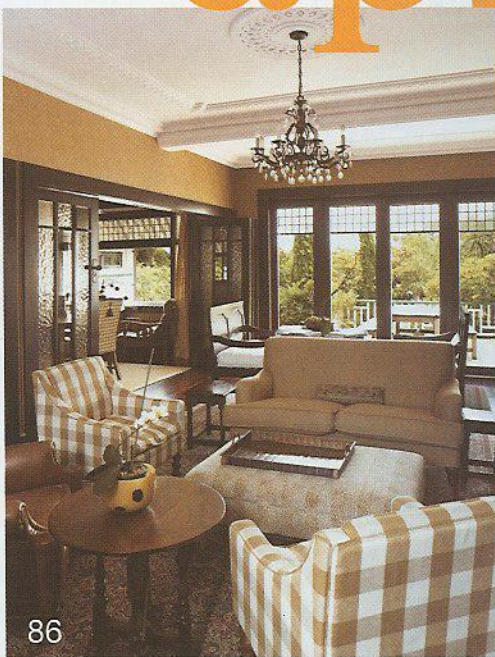
beautiful bedding ■ edible art ■ climbing a family tree

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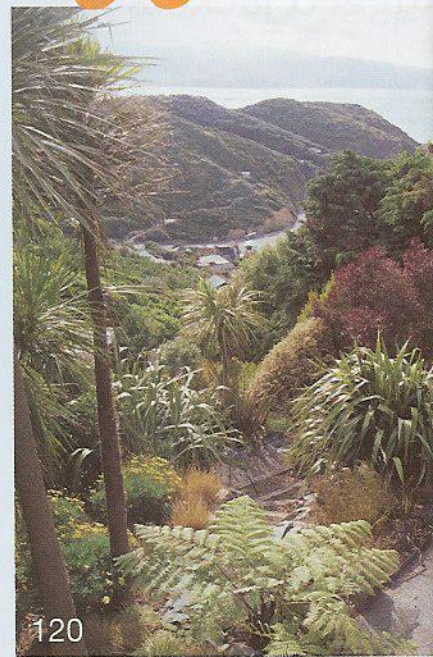
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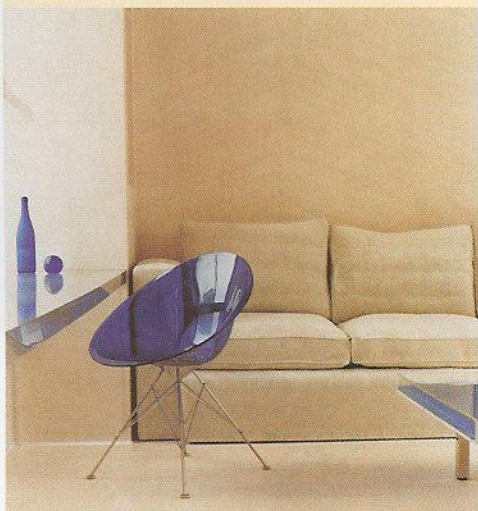


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THE COVER

A peek at the minimalist New York apartment of New Zealanders Kevin and Rowena Roberts. Story page 24.

PHOTOGRAPH: KATE AYRTON



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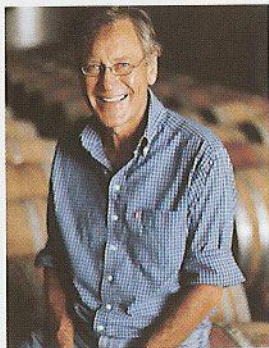
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Introducing

Writer, producer and photographer Kate Ayrton divides her time and her talents between New York and Los Angeles. When not working in the advertising game as a television commercial producer, Kate can be found pursuing her passion for travel, writing and photography. In this issue she explores expatriate adman Kevin

Roberts' cool New York home (page 24). Kevin calls antipodeans "edge-dwellers". He says the edge is exciting. "Great ideas come from the edge. I love it." So does Kate!



Wine expert **Tim Harris** first began writing about wine in *The Friends of Wine* newsletter in 1983 and has been

penning columns on the subject ever since. He founded and planted Harrier Rise Vineyard at Kumeu in 1986 and produces wine under the Harrier Rise label. Tim passionately believes in the uniqueness and sophistication of New Zealand wine as part of our national identity. He shares his thoughts on sauvignon blanc on page 175.

After five years as editor of *NZ Gardener*, **Sarah Beresford** is happy to have the chance to keep up with a who's who of the country's landscaping and plant scene by showcasing some of our finest in NZ House & Garden's *Down to Earth* column (page 133). Sarah's new freelance lifestyle, which includes work in book

publishing as a project manager and editor, leaves her more time out in her garden and riding the family's three horses with her two teenage daughters.





manhattan mode

When adman Kevin Roberts needs a place to withdraw to, he retreats to his cave within the urban jungle of New York

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS: KATE AYRTON

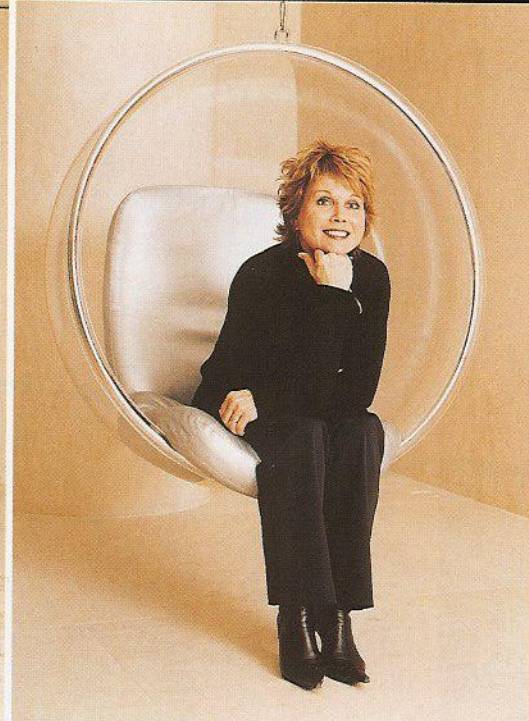
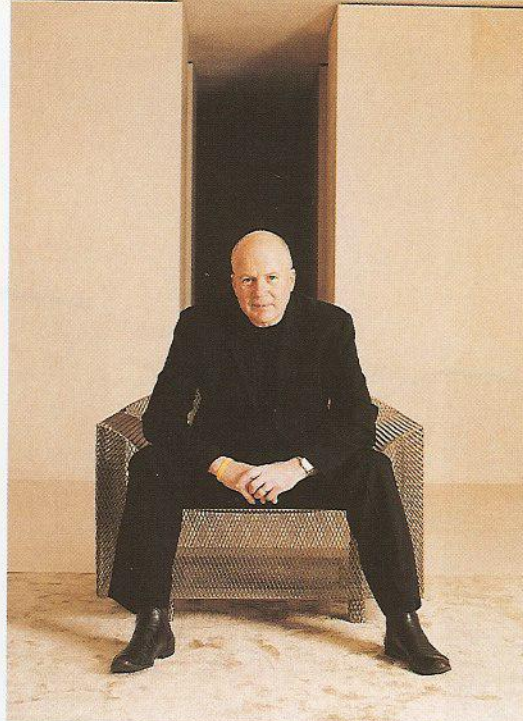


In the limestone living room/gallery Kevin and Rowena curate a symphony of classic chairs. From left to right: the 'Bubble' chair by Eero Aarnio, Shiro Kuramata's 'How High The Moon' metal mesh chair, Eames' 'La Chaise' and Ron Arad's 'Tom Rock' chair.

THIS PAGE: Kevin sits in what he considers the more masculine Kuramata chair while Rowena enjoys Aarnio's 'Bubble'.

A Baccarat crystal ball balances on the end of an Indonesian teak bench adjacent to Sean Lander's painting *Becoming Great*.

FACING PAGE: Jo Malone candles soften and warm the Portuguese lens limestone that sheathes the bathroom walls and floor. A skylight at the end of the hallway adds natural light.



As the worldwide chief executive of Saatchi & Saatchi, Kevin Roberts is constantly putting himself out there. Whether he's running an agency meeting, pitching a new client, being interviewed on television or lecturing as a public speaker, the pressure is always on.

Five years ago he decided he needed a place to withdraw to, to disconnect from the constant demands on an executive leading an international team of more than 7000 creative people in eighty-two countries.

He decided to build a cave-like retreat in the urban jungle; a 600-square-metre loft in the heart of Tribeca, just steps from ground zero and a nine-minute walk to his office.

Based in New Zealand (and sometimes St Tropez) with his wife Rowena and three children, Kevin spends about a third of the year in New York City.


When conceiving the space, Kevin drew inspiration from his book *Lovemarks*, a manifesto detailing a "passionate commitment" to three powerful concepts: mystery, sensuality and intimacy. In ad-speak, it is about the future beyond brands but it is also Kevin's personal credo and it informs everything he does.

"I wanted an intimate and sensual space in which I could be creative," says Kevin. Enter Sam Trimble, a talented young architect who was working on a commission for Robert De Niro when he heard about the Roberts project.

The two began collaborating. Kevin spent a great deal of time with Sam looking at materials and shapes and creating, moving and adjusting a space that started as nothing but the shell of an old industrial building.

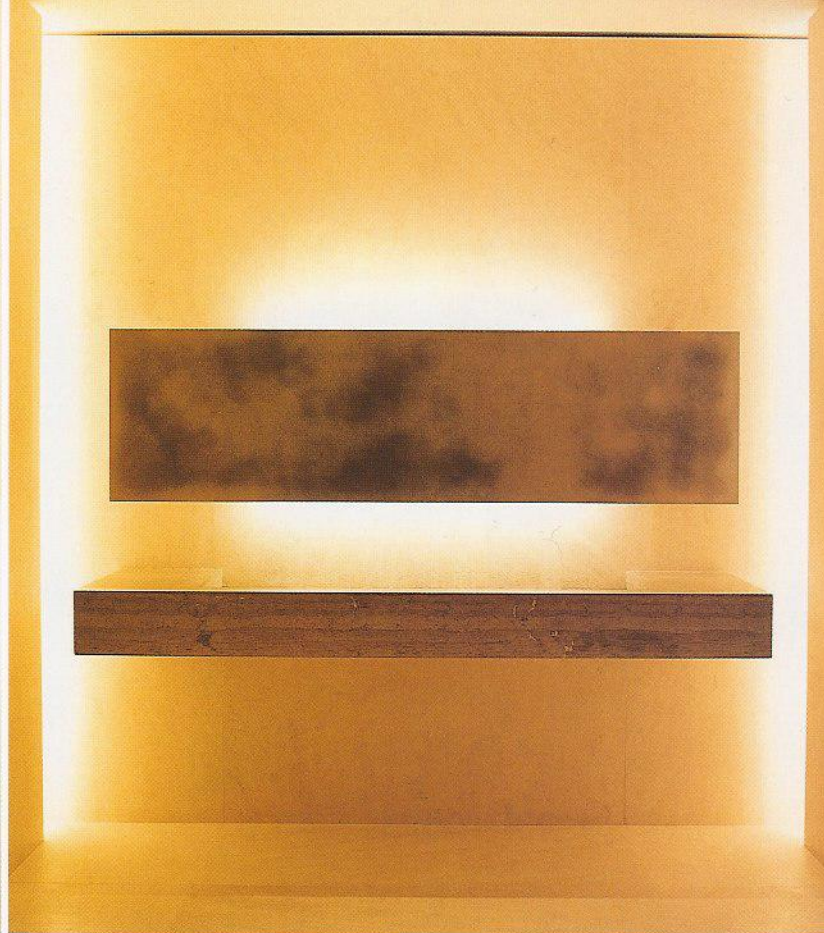
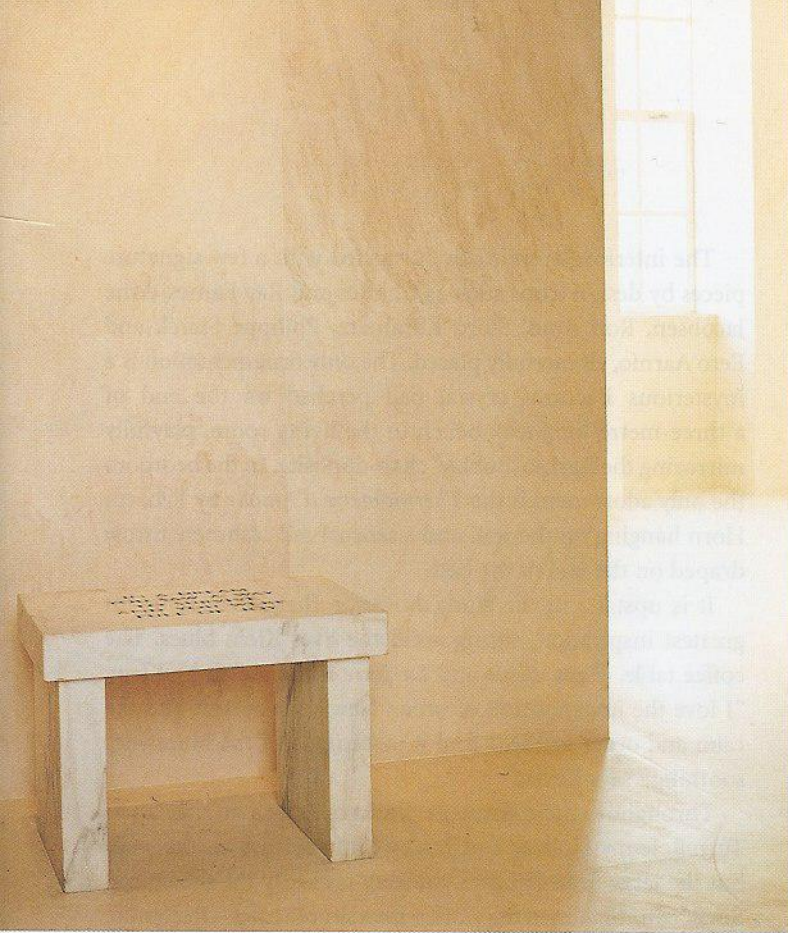
Split into two levels, it has the main living quarters downstairs. The lounge, dining annex, bedroom and bathroom are laid out in an open plan with large banks of windows all around. Upstairs, at the top of a narrow, cubic stairwell, is the study and a large outdoor terrace. ▷



A photograph of a dining room. In the center is a large, square wooden dining table with a thick top and a dark wood base. Eight wooden chairs with curved backs are arranged around the table. On the wall behind the table is a framed abstract artwork with a dark background, a vertical light-colored bar, and a horizontal light-colored bar. The room has large windows on either side of the wall with the artwork, and the walls are finished with light-colored wood paneling. The floor is a light, neutral color.

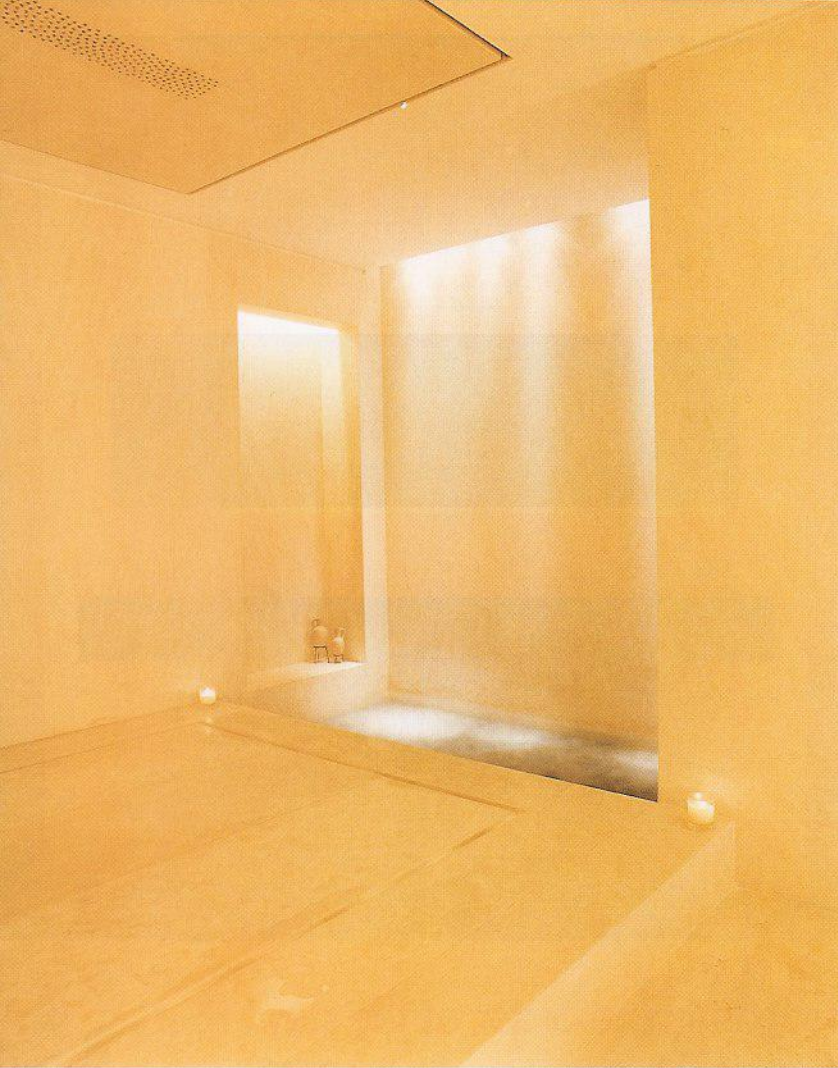
THIS PAGE: James Turrell's *E2* presides over the dining table, which is made from a single piece of Indonesian wood. The chairs are original Arne Jacobsen's.

FACING PAGE: Jenny Holtzer's white marble bench *Survivial Series (In a Dream)* sits in the front entrance. In the bathroom a counterweighted aluminium panel masks the medicine cabinet suspended over the washbasin made from Purbeck marble. A small cubist stone stairwell leads to Kevin's study. A hand-carved silver fern front door handle by New Zealand artist Andrew de Boer.



“The relentless pursuit of perfection is the order of the day”





The interior is minimally furnished with a few signature pieces by design icons such as Charles and Ray Eames, Arne Jacobsen, Ron Arad, Shiro Kuramata, Philippe Starck and Eero Aarnio, all carefully placed. The only ornamentation is a mysterious Baccarat crystal ball perched on the end of a three-metre-long teak bench in the living room, playfully mirroring the Aarnio 'Bubble' chair opposite. In the bedroom the only adornment is the *Thermomètre d'Amour* by Rebecca Horn hanging on the wall and a sensual red cashmere throw draped on the end of the bed.

It is upstairs in the study, however, that Kevin finds his greatest inspiration, sitting amid the Yves Klein blues. The coffee table, *Venus Bleue* and *La Terre Bleue* are all by Klein. "I love the juxtaposition of urban New York outside and the calm and order inside. I find it inspiring and the blues very soothing," says Kevin.

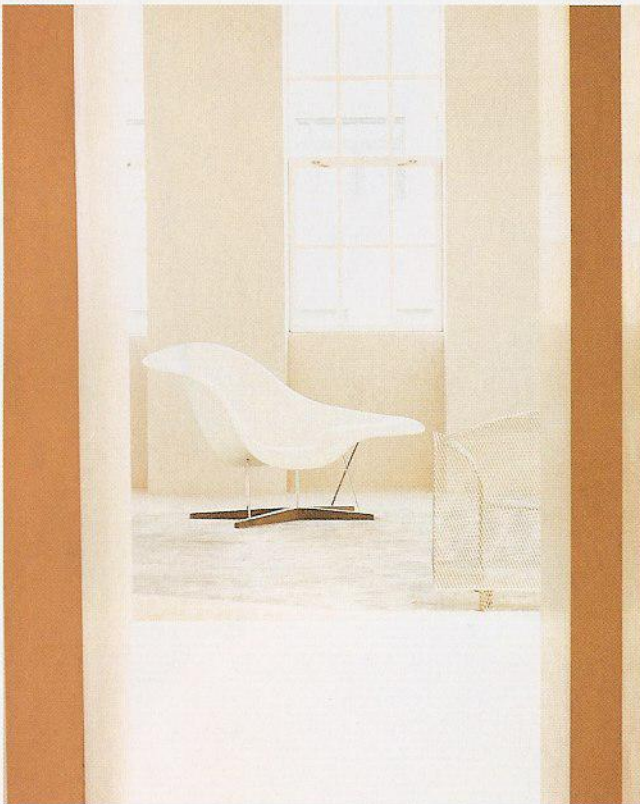
Throughout the apartment, works by artists such as James Turrell, Jenny Holtzer and Tracey Emin feature on the walls but the large Sean Landers painting is clearly the showpiece. Kevin commissioned the work with a simple brief – Becoming Great. "Sean was just starting out and I had just moved here and we both wanted to become great. So that was it!" It is a mesmerising piece that draws the viewer into a swirling black and white vortex.

According to Sam, Kevin originally wanted a minimal space to go with his contemporary art collection but there were other prerequisites on his wish list. Kevin wanted the apartment to feel elemental, protected and secure yet remain light, uplifting and open. He liked the idea of a cave. They spoke of Platonic forms, symmetry and stasis, diagonals and movement, earth and natural environments. Sam looked to materials that suggested geological permanence. "I decided to create a space that seemed hollowed out, as though carved from solid rock," he says. Kevin loved the idea and they were off.

To create a sense of solidity they used lens limestone (imported from Portugal) on the floors and walls in very large slabs. The fossils and variations in the pattern of the lens limestone worked well with the primitive concept. Instead of doors, gaps between solid blocks of limestone create a natural cave-like flow through the space.

Kevin was keen for Sam to explore the physical nature and mechanics of the material and its components. Sam says Kevin pushed him to the limits both creatively and in terms of construction: "It was a case of finding what the limit was then backing off just enough to be able to accomplish it."

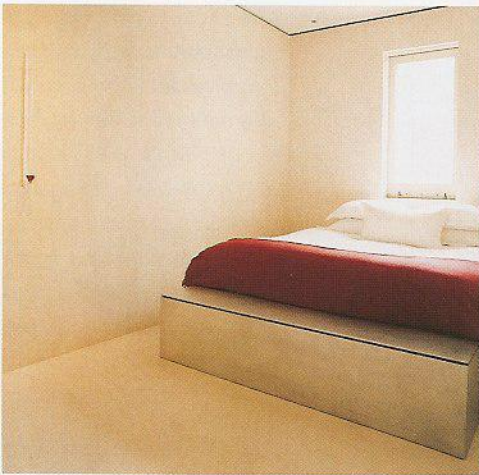
Kevin encouraged Sam to be experimental and tolerated none of the usual conventions. In the bathroom, for instance, Sam hid the mirror behind a counterweighted aluminium panel, creating a Rothko-like study in light and sculpture. ▷





THIS PAGE: A 1961 Plexiglas glass and steel Yves Klein table containing a cobalt pigment is the centrepiece of Kevin's study. Klein's *La Terre Bleue* rests against the far wall and his *Venus Bleue* torso stands in the corner. The blue chair is by Philippe Starck and the velour sofa is from Osborne & Little.

FACING PAGE: Two stone vessels from Israel, each 3400 years old, rest like archaeological finds in the corner of the bathroom. Blue Bahia granite from Brazil covers the bathtub floor. Charles and Ray Eames' *La Chaise* whimsically punctuates a side view from the bedroom to the living room.



A red cashmere throw and Rebecca Horn's *Thermomètre d'Amour* are the only decorative touches in the bedroom. The silk Dolma carpet in the living room was handwoven by Buddhist monks.



Instead of taps, he used concealed structural devices such as solenoid valves and proximity sensors to trigger the release of water into the washbasin in a wide cascade varying from warm to cool from left to right.

For the shower, suspended above a floor-lit pedestal, he designed a showerhead made up of 300 nozzles carved into a limestone panel in the ceiling. They release a rectangular waterfall when turned on, surrounded by a stunning invisible shower curtain of falling water.

Sam remembers getting a note from Kevin stating, "The relentless pursuit of perfection is the order of the day!"

The entire space is free from distracting light fixtures or visible hardware. All the electronics are operated using a Crestron remote control system and lights are controlled with hidden Lutron keypads. Carefully placed skylights and windows allow the light to stretch and fade across floors and walls in a dramatic display that illuminates the architecture.

Sam was not the first person Kevin has creatively pushed to the limit, as anyone at Saatchi & Saatchi will tell you. The night before they shut down Hudson Street to install 30,000 kilograms of limestone that could only be lowered through the roof, Kevin received the highest local honour ever given to a non-New Yorker, for his efforts to inspire the people of the city after 9/11. The NYC Citizen of the Year Award was presented by the chief of police. After the black tie event, Kevin beat a hasty retreat to the airport with a full police escort, his award tightly clutched under his arm and forgot to mention that the next day traffic might be somewhat tied up downtown for a while.

"I skipped town before they could take my award back."

When he's not travelling, Kevin likes to spend time at home dreaming up new ideas and writing; he has just published his latest book, *Sisomo: the future on screen*, and has another in the works. And he entertains a lot. He recently hosted 150 people to celebrate the opening of New Zealand dance group Black Grace on Broadway. New Zealand artist Max Gimblett was a guest and Peter Gordon flew over from London to do the catering, which featured exclusive New Zealand wines and Kiwi-style cuisine, prepared on the roof terrace. The loft does not have a kitchen – a uniquely New York trend. Why cook when you can order in 24/7? "Nobu is right downstairs," says Kevin. "And they deliver."

A devoted Kiwi and a strong supporter of the arts, Kevin is particularly fond of his front door handle – a hand-carved wooden silver fern by New Zealand artist Andrew de Boer. In the corridor leading up to it is a work by Michael Stevenson titled *Revolution in New Zealand*.

Like the All Blacks, his favourite rugby team, Kevin believes that black is the colour of passion, commitment and victory. So it's no surprise that on the night NZ House & Garden caught up with Kevin he was off to the New York premiere of Peter Jackson's *King Kong* dressed in his signature black suit. It seems fitting that this Antipodean transplant who has scaled the social, corporate, economic and now architectural heights of the Big Apple is attending one of the biggest blockbuster events of the year, only to retreat back into his cave at the end of the night to rest and begin all over again tomorrow.