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At Stonepeace in
Hawke's Bay, Ema
Scott carries on a
family tradition –
one that stretches
back before
recorded time. Text
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Photographs
RICHARD BRIMER.

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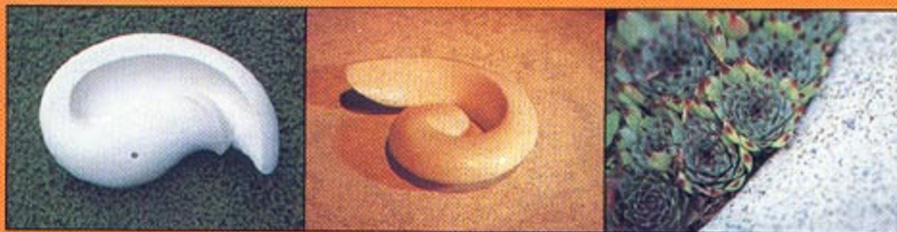


Below, two of Stonepeace's three partners: Ema Scott, designer, with husband Steve Wheeler, responsible for quality control.

Creating a future for her stoneware business, designer Ema Scott finds inspiration in her spiritual connection to the past. She has been the catalyst for Stonepeace, based at the Hawke's Bay home she shares with her husband Steve Wheeler. Their house, sited in a family enclave at the coastal settlement of Haumoana, came off the drawing board of one of New Zealand's most influential architects – her father, the late John Scott. She views her work as tangible expression of an unbroken chain of creativity, linking her through her parents to tipuna – her ancestors – and ultimately to the source of creation. "Stonepeace," she says, "is design by descent."

The business had its beginnings 10 years ago when Scott and Wheeler's son Maia was a toddler. Loathe to leave her youngster to return to teaching at school, Scott taught instead at a kindergarten so she could spend as much time as possible with him. Face masks she modelled from clay for the kindy kids were also a hit with parents. But Wheeler became annoyed when she started giving them away, suggesting she should build a business around the medium. Scott then began





<< For more details, visit www.stonepeace.co.nz >>

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making uplights "which our house badly needed". And so Stonepeace started taking shape.

Scott is reluctant to talk about the recipe she has developed to make her pieces. But she gives a hint when she notes that "JC" (her father's given names were John Cohn) loved using block structures, valuing the honesty and enduring qualities of concrete.

"Hawke's Bay concrete blocks have a limestone aggregate base and he preferred them left unpainted to show their natural ivory colour."

A shed on Wheeler and Scott's riverside property was established as the first production centre. As the business has grown, a carport has been transformed into a display and sales area and a large shed on a nearby rural block taken over for manufacturing the bigger designs.

Stonepeace started with moulded works such as bowls, decorative balls, plinths and light standards, but designs have recently evolved to include sculpted forms such as roimata-leaf forms, small tables and fountains. A year ago, a dining table was specially created for a Queenstown client and further editions of the elegant eight-seater design have been produced. They, with other Stonepeace works, featured in a first exhibition, held at Lombardi winery in Havelock North as a drawcard event for Harvest Hawke's Bay, the region's annual wine festival.

Stonepeace's timeless and elemental forms are as much at home in interiors as they are out of doors. They are produced in just two colours, bone and charcoal. "A lot of these things can be mixed and matched," says Scott.



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While she concentrates on design, Wheeler, a full-time lecturer in viticultural science at the local polytechnic, and another Haumoana local, Eugene Kingi, are also involved in the business. The three-way partnership is symbolised by Stonepeace's pyramid-shaped logo which also evokes architectural form. "We feel we are an awesome team," says Scott. "Without the strength of three people, we could not have



Ena Scott notes that her father, architect John Scott, loved using block structures, valuing the honesty and enduring qualities of the concrete.



achieved what we did in terms of size and range of designs for the exhibition."

Wheeler, who has encouraged Scott's creative bent, is responsible for quality control. "I trust his eye, he has a good feel for proportion. Steve was very affected by J.C. He worked alongside him when we built the house, giving him energy. Steve has been bitten by the bug. It seems to be that the appreciation you absorb living in this house is what you put back into this work. So is it you doing it? Sometimes I wonder about that."

Scott launched into the millennium by giving up teaching to devote herself full-time to Stonepeace. "Sometimes I see it as long-term," she laughs. "It takes extraordinary faith and hope, but I believe we are on the right track." Developing the business has been absorbing, nurturing and challenging, she says. "If you have all those things coming from a creative activity, you don't need much else."



John Scott

John Scott (1924-1991), one of the seminal Group architects, began private practice in 1953, working from his Hāumoana home, The Grange, in Hawke's Bay. He considered his designs most influenced by the woolshed and the whare. His most celebrated and honoured work is the Chapel of Futuna, in Karori, Wellington, which he designed as the spiritual focus of a retreat house run by the Brothers of the Society of Mary. Scott also produced a great many outstanding domestic designs including The Brow, a homestead set in rolling hill country in central Hawke's Bay and Ngamata, a farmhouse at one with surrounding tussock landscape on the Napier-Taihape Road. Although he didn't consider his Māoriness a particularly significant factor in his work, Scott's buildings – including the visitors' centre at Waitangi, in the Bay of Islands, and park headquarters in the Urewera National Park – offer all New Zealanders a sense of *tūrangawāwae* (a place to stand) in terms of this country's cultural identity.

