

Interior motives

CHRISTINE McCABE

KIT KEMP

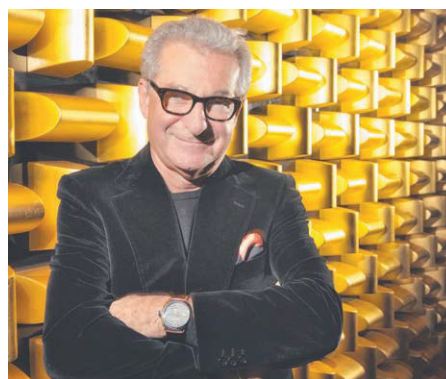
VIRGINIA FISHER

Fisher, doyenne of the much-copied New Zealand lodge aesthetic, has almost single-handedly restyled the Land of the Long White Cloud. But it is her work with the one owner across three very different projects — a luxe New Zealand fishing lodge, a grand wine estate founded by French Huguenots in South Africa in 1694 and a romantic private island in Fiji — for which she is best known.

When Alex van Heeren purchased Huka Lodge in Taupo on the North Island in 1984, it had orange shag-pile and a car park obscuring the view. Fisher set to creating interiors that have since become a template for luxury lodges everywhere: understated, deeply comfortable and sensitively in keeping with their glorious surrounds. Her style is intimate, even homey, but smart in a way that never lets you forget you are staying in a five-star establishment. She has often said she wants guests to feel as though they are arriving home and always likes to include a separate dressing room so suitcases don't mess up the bedroom.

Fisher's more recent transformation of Dolphin Island for van Heeren has been done with the lightest touch. Sleeping a maximum of eight guests, the small retreat features a handsome main lodge and four large private villas, set back behind manicured lawns and slender coconut palms.

A soft colour palette and cool linens create a serene atmosphere and the use of local motifs is elegantly restrained: a shell chandelier here, a woven floor mat there. And she's embraced the island lifestyle by designing indoor/outdoor en suites that enable guests to laze in the tub while gazing up at the rain trees. More: hukaretreats.co.nz.



From top, Kemp; Tihany; and Fisher