

# THE NATIONAL BUSINESS REVIEW

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# THE TOP 100 HOMIES LIST 2001

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# Shadows and light

New Zealand's  
**TOP HOME**

- Congreve home, Takapuna, Auckland
- Owners: Dr Robin Congreve and Erika Congreve

This award-winning house is one of the most finely conceived modern homes of the last decade. Built using a custom-made concrete brick, it has an interior and exterior rich in texture, detail and contrasting shapes.

The monolithic structure of the building is relieved by a curved façade, massive sculptural canopies and large glazed areas. A cornice of bricks set at a slight angle adds to the liveliness of the facade, giving an impression of complexity.

The lower floor is divided into the public areas, where the outlook is to the panorama of Rangitoto, while the interior courtyard and pool area is bathed in light.

From the enclosed entranceway there is a sense of drama, with light being used to draw the attention from one space into another. The house is composed in terms of light and dark spaces and one is drawn into each space through movement from dark areas to light and from small spaces into larger ones.

The drama of the house is also developed by the spaces themselves, which range in size and scale. The entrance lobby is two-storied and gives the sense of being in a medieval piazza with narrow streets leading off to other areas.

Adjacent to the lobby is a small intimate library. The kitchen area between the public area and pool is a long passageway with surprising perspectives.

The house is furnished in a mix of antique and contemporary furniture with a number of classic 20th-century pieces of design. The house has a large collection of major artworks including ones by Gretchen Albrecht, Richard Killeen and Neil Dawson. A large specially commissioned Stephen Bambury Chakra work is in the entrance lobby.

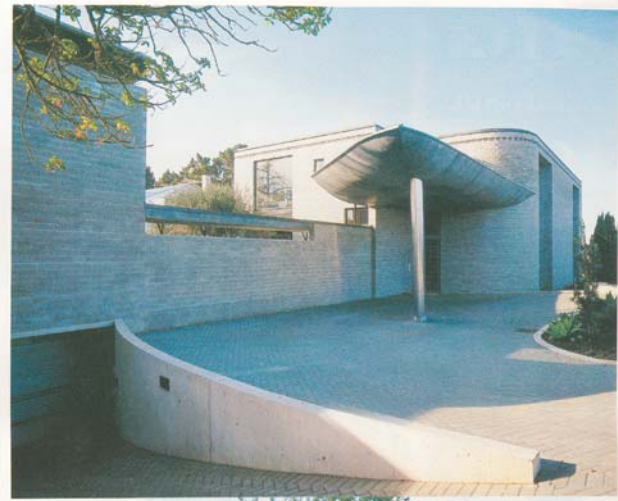
— John Daly-Peoples

Built: 1994  
Architect: Pip Cheshire of Jasmox  
Government valuation: \$4.95 million  
Style: Contemporary  
Size: 1060sq m

House photos: Jasmox



Dr Robin Congreve



## World-class 'bunker' joy to live in

New Zealand's Top Home – referred to by some locals in Takapuna, Auckland, as the "bunker" – is symbolic of knowledge-wave thinking.

It is an international house designed by New Zealand architect Pip Cheshire who has worked overseas as well as in New Zealand. It is a building that functions on a variety of levels. It takes chances, extending current and traditional ways of thinking about the places we live in.

The house was an award winner in the Resene/New Zealand Institute of Architects Awards in 1994. The clients required the house to make use of its elevated site which looked out to the Hauraki Gulf and Rangitoto.

The jury citation at the time noted: "Rangitoto provides the focus for a substantial new house on a cliff-edge of Auckland's North Shore. The architect has responded to a generous budget with a spare aesthetic generated by rectangular forms and minimal finishes applied to a structure of rough and polished concrete. The house has modernist influences, yet transcends fashionable lifestyle conventions. A world-class residence that is a sophisticated synthesis of modern art and architecture."

The clients, Erika and Robin Congreve, who had a considerable input into the design and the project, said: "We wanted to party to creating something ourselves and to build a house that is really us. We really enjoyed working with Pip. He took our ideas on board, gently rejected some of them and used others in a way that we wouldn't have imagined they could ever be used. Pip has created a house that is a real joy to live in."

Mr Cheshire, managing director of the Auckland-based Jasmox architectural partnership, has been involved in architecture since the 1970s and has worked on projects including single houses, community facilities, university buildings and commercial premises. This year he was awarded an NZIA award for the Bambury home in Western Springs, Auckland.

— John Daly-Peoples



## VIEWPOINT

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