



# Harris House (1980)

## ENDURING ARCHITECTURE

Roger Walker  
*58a Lake Crescent, Hamilton*



The Harris House commission was a golden opportunity for Walker’s rampant rebelliousness to retaliate against his persistent ambivalence towards Hamilton’s man-made environment. Inspired by his deep respect for the abundant luxuriance of the Waikato’s natural landscape, the result is pure diamond (unpolished) set in a fabulously florid lakefront setting.

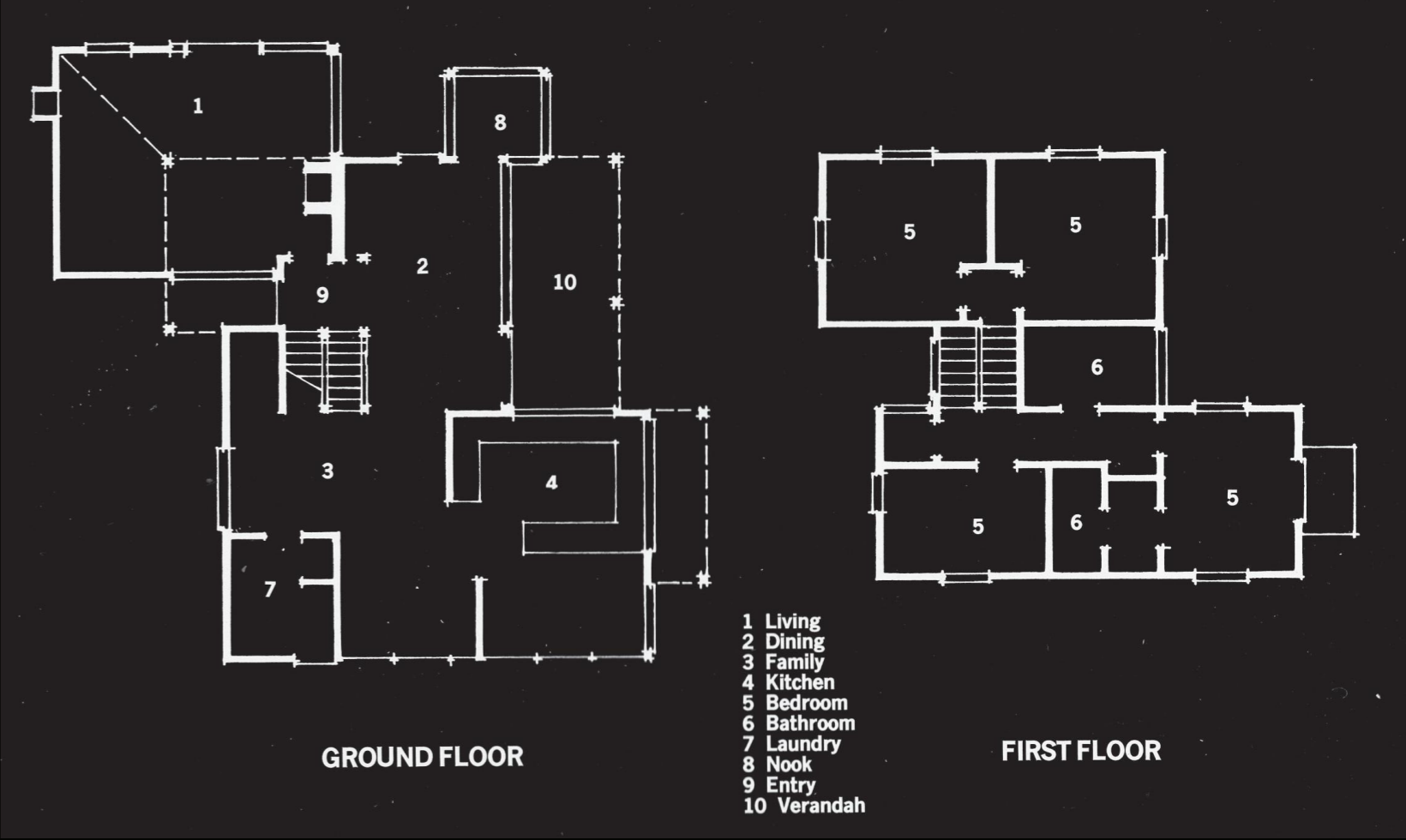
Walker was suitably humbled by the natural display of growth and renewal in this land of glass houses – the movement of the seed through the season – and sees the Harris house as a simulation of that external botanical process. Beginning internally with the seeds of its service rooms, the house grows outwards into its site before bursting into bloom along its edges.

The blossoming, however, makes no attempt to compete with the real flowers surrounding it. Walker’s use of materials and colour had never before been so utterly subservient to context –the house is clad in pine weatherboards left unfinished to weather to a natural grey amongst the twigs and tree trunks, and the strongest applied colours are soft oranges and ambers to window and door joinery.

The formal language of the building remains quintessential Roger Walker, but the delivery is almost whispered – even lyrical. Only the drooped fretworks to the gable barges actually sing with any intensity. And that mandatory icon of the domestic New Zealand vernacular – the steeply pitched, hard-edged gable roof – has been subtly softened by round-headed dormers and windows. Elements in this house have taken on an easy symbiosis; a new tradition entirely compatible with the old.

The planning of the building is – by Walker’s own domestic standards – quiet and matter-of-fact. The house has a straightforward ground-floor living space/lawn/lakeside relationship with the bedrooms tucked upstairs under their treetop gables.

The Harris house sees Walker at his calmest, reflected both inside and out.



*Edited from: Melling, Gerald. Positively Architecture; New Zealand’s Roger Walker. Square One Press, Dunedin, New Zealand. 1985*

*Previous Awards: NZIA Waikato/ Bay of Plenty Local Award 1981*



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