

FUTURE FACING

From the humble shores of *New Zealand* to a highly deserved spot on the GLOBAL stage, the *astounding* ascension of FISHER & PAYKEL is only just getting started.

By YEONG SASSALL





This page the arrival threshold at Fisher & Paykel's Auckland Experience Centre. Rammed-earth walls surround a six-tonne basalt sculpture. Within the carved bowl, water rises and falls with the tides of Ōkahu Bay on the edge of the Waitematā Harbour.



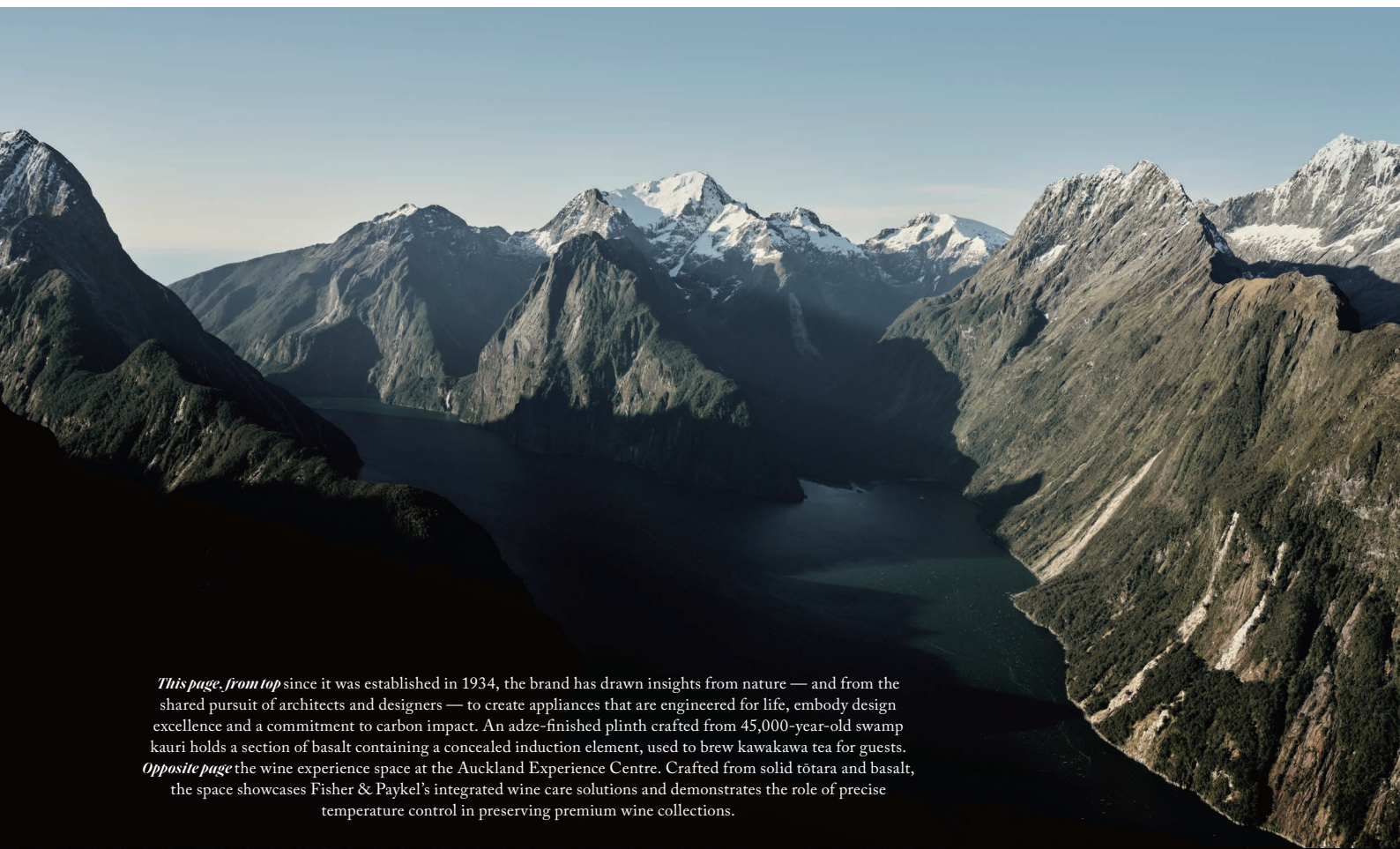


Design is at the heart of what we do,” states Fisher & Paykel CEO Daniel Witten-Hannah, as he explains how a once family-owned company hailing from New Zealand has managed to stay at the top of the appliance game for more than 90 years. Launching in 1934, the company’s remarkable journey has seen it transform into a stalwart of the industry: reliable, ever-present and perennially trustworthy. While new faces have flashed and faded, Fisher & Paykel has consistently remained an outlier of the highest order, boasting heritage and instant brand recognition that quite frankly belies the grit and determination needed to stay relevant for this many decades.

“We’ve gone from an organisation involved in a lot of different industries and categories,” notes Witten-Hannah of the brand’s quiet evolution from local to world player, “but for the last 50 years, appliances have been the core of the business.” Appliances are certainly how most Antipodeans know Fisher & Paykel. It’s a brand they’ve grown up with, spotted in millions of homes found on both sides of the Tasman, but under Witten-Hannah’s stewardship, Fisher & Paykel is going global and gaining major credibility in the lucrative luxury market.

Crucially, no one is more perfectly qualified for this mission than Witten-Hannah, who joined the company some 30 years ago as a mechanical engineer, before powering his way through the ranks to become CEO. “In 25 years I did 18 different roles across the business, from manufacturing to product development, running the market, marketing and digital,” he confirms. If you ask Witten-Hannah, it is Fisher & Paykel’s geographical distance from the rest of the world that is its superpower. “New Zealand’s such a little country,” he reflects. “We’re super remote, and I think that drives an innate curiosity about the world and the way people live. We look outward a lot.”

And underpinning this desire to innovate and push boundaries is the very Kiwi preoccupation with nature. “Architecture in Australia and New Zealand has an incredible way of connecting people to landscape and life in a really unique and seamless way,” says Witten-Hannah. Moreover, as the luxury market evolves and shifts to the demands of consumption, energy and climate, this prevailing understanding of the relationship between nature and the man-made is the way of the future. “That understanding of nature, life, the built environment — it’s an important part of what it means to be a luxury brand from this part of the world,” he adds. >



This page, from top since it was established in 1934, the brand has drawn insights from nature — and from the shared pursuit of architects and designers — to create appliances that are engineered for life, embody design excellence and a commitment to carbon impact. An adze-finished plinth crafted from 45,000-year-old swamp kauri holds a section of basalt containing a concealed induction element, used to brew kawakawa tea for guests. *Opposite page* the wine experience space at the Auckland Experience Centre. Crafted from solid tōtara and basalt, the space showcases Fisher & Paykel's integrated wine care solutions and demonstrates the role of precise temperature control in preserving premium wine collections.



This page the Social Kitchen at the Auckland Experience Centre, designed with Arclinea, where Fisher & Paykel's chef-led experiences are held. A Flos light of blown-glass modules hangs above the Waka table crafted from a 9.5-metre section of 45,000-year-old kauri, and integrated appliance solutions that support gathering, cooking and entertaining.



< Funnelling curiosity into “a culture of innovation” has been integral to the businesses’ success over the past 15 years — the driver behind its appeal to a new generation of “design-savvy global consumers looking for brands with a fresh perspective”. It’s here where Fisher & Paykel’s deep ties to the design industry step in. “[We’re] taking a deliberate focus on customers who are deeply engaged in their new home building or renovation and providing complete appliance solutions.” From seamless outdoor kitchens to beautifully integrated fabric care solutions like the Fabric Care Cabinet or DishDrawer, Fisher & Paykel’s comprehensive product offering catapults home appliances into a new dimension.

“We try hard to understand and adapt to the changing world,” opines Witten-Hannah. Central to this thesis is the luxury of choice, compatibility and flexibility. “Designers don’t start with appliances,” he adds. “They start with understanding their clients, landscape, context — then design beautiful spaces. Our job is not to impose our aesthetic upon the built environment; it’s to help the designer or architect produce a solution that fits the lifestyle of the client.” From washers, dryers and fabric steaming cabinets in the laundry; to multifunctional ovens, fridges and dishwashers in the kitchen — it is all about options.

Beyond technological growth, another major pillar for Fisher & Paykel is its impact on the environment. “That journey started with climate change — something largely irreversible if we don’t take action now,” stresses Witten-Hannah. Central to Fisher & Paykel’s sustainability goal is addressing the carbon impact of its products across a whole lifetime. From designing products that use less water, energy and chemicals, to utilising AI to create smarter appliances that learn from a user’s habits, there is ongoing research and development, but also a collective understanding that change takes time. “Our products live in homes for sometimes 20 years,” he highlights. “You can’t just wave your magic wand and make things better; it starts with clear goals.” These include a 50 per cent reduction in carbon emissions by 2030 and 90 per cent reduction by 2050.

Bolstered by decades of steady growth and generations of accumulated experience, the next chapter in Fisher & Paykel’s playbook is certainly not limited by vision, nor is it lacking in ambition. Indeed, Witten-Hannah knows precisely where the company is headed. “Great brands stand for something, have a point of view,” he pronounces. “They connect with their users and adapt to their needs over time. I think Fisher & Paykel lives out a lot of those characteristics. We have a really clear point of view around helping people live a better life in their homes.” ■ fisherpaykel.com