



Cunning design: modular sofas by David Shaw can be rearranged for winter or summer living.

Photos: John Kirk-Anderson

A passion

Skilful interior design has transformed a new house into a home with warmth and style, as **David Killick** discovers.

Sometimes contemporary minimalist architecture can appear cold and soulless, believes interior designer Karen Smith, of Casabella, in Christchurch.

New homes may have clean lines and clever use of space, but rooms lack personality. Smith sees her role as bringing warmth inside.

“Knowing that people respond to their surroundings, my philosophy is to provide people with a sense of home — a place where they feel comfortable, a place to contemplate, relax, reconnect with themselves and connect with others who live or visit there. A place that reflects who they are and how they live.”

In designing the interior of a new house in Fendalton, the client — who prefers to remain private — gave Smith free rein. It was a

MAKEOVERS

dream project, she says. Her insider's knowledge meant she could access furniture and artworks a client would be unlikely to be aware of. In this case, they were on the same wavelength, and Smith's choices proved perfect.

An attractive combination of materials already provided a suitable template to work from, with use of schist stone on some internal walls, high ceilings, a neutral carpet and warm oak flooring — which Smith loved.

“I wanted to make a real statement that welcomed people in and gave them something to

ponder over.” The warmth of the cedar from the exterior and the oak floor is balanced with the stone wall and white walls.

Glass and steel on the staircase provide contrast. Smith replaced the timber balustrades with stainless steel.

Pendant feature lights are by Fabbian, of Italy. A coatstand sits next to a leather ottoman from John Cochrane Furniture.

However, it is the striking artwork by Romanian-born, Auckland-based artist Cristina Popovici that commands attention. It's vivid, vibrant, and positively radiates feelings of energy and warmth.

Three main rooms open off a short passageway. Petrol-green walls were the existing colour in the dining room.



Welcome entrance: pendant lights, from Fabbian, of Italy, and a striking painting by Auckland artist Cristina Popovici mix with schist, metal, glass and oak to form a visually appealing entrance hall in this new Fendalton home.



Dramatic dining: table and chairs are by David Shaw, sideboard is by Karen Smith, artwork by Richard Adams, lighting by Accent Lighting.



Sensuous appeal: chocolate shag-pile rug is by Source Mondial, coffee table from Trenzseater, and chairs from David Shaw. Another artwork by Cristina Popovici harmonises with colours and textures.



Karen Smith: dedicated to bringing warmth to a home.

for perfection

At one end, an artwork by New Zealand artist Richard Adams introduces warm yellows. It sits above a long, low sideboard in oak veneer which Smith designed herself. Candlesticks are from Belle Interiors.

Both the square oak dining table and chairs are by Christchurch furniture designer and manufacturer David Shaw. Smith selected the striped textured fabrics. "I'm a big fan of stripes," she says.

Above the table is a cool-looking metal light fitting, from the Lighthouse. It's dimmable, so you can change the atmosphere of the room. Wall ceramics and a black modern lamp complete the room.

This room leads through to a private lounge, a peaceful, luxurious retreat. Here Smith has indulged her taste for texture in the form of a rich chocolate shag-pile rug from Source Mondial. It looks positively decadent. Just the place to sprawl out in front of the natural flame gas fire that's set into the schist stone wall.

Or you could lounge back in the rich dark brown leather sofa and armchairs by David Shaw. The

Design questions

- ☐ What is the room used for? Is it casual, formal or somewhere in-between?
- ☐ Do you want a feeling of calmness or a more inspirational or fun feeling in this room?
- ☐ What is the architectural style of the home? Contemporary, traditional, or in between?
- ☐ Where is the house? On the hills, in the country? Are there views of water, gardens, trees?
- ☐ How much space is there?
- ☐ How many people will congregate when entertaining; will some furniture need to be moveable?
- ☐ What is the focal point of the room? The fire, the view, the TV?
- ☐ Masculine vs. feminine — a balance of both can be necessary.

oak-and-glass coffee table is from Trenzseater. Decorative feather balls came from Ballantynes, while the curtains, in a Belgian fabric, also have a feather-like texture. The emphasis is on comfort and relaxation.

Another artwork by Cristina Popovici brings drama to one wall, but this one is darker in colour and mood.

The casual dining and living area is large and open plan. Smith painted walls 1/8 Napa, from Resene — an off-white that is much warmer than the pure white used originally. A hi-tech kitchen with granite benchtop defines one end; a cosy sitting area next to a schist wall and fireplace with wall-

mounted flatscreen TV, defines the other.

Throughout, Smith has chosen top-of-the-range furniture and furnishings, from both international and New Zealand sources.

"I'm into people having things longterm. I feel this world is so disposable. You have things from China, they last a few years and you dispose of them. I like people having beautiful things that are well made and will last, rather than being in the dump a few years later."

Working on the Fendalton house was a treat, she says. "I am a perfectionist. It was a real passion to work on this home."