

comfort class



Turning a large modern house into her own personalised haven was a challenge handled with aplomb by designer Mary Roberts.

When Mary Roberts first laid eyes on plans for her own most recent residential project in Christchurch's seaside village of Sumner, excitement was tinged with panic.

A seasoned interior designer who's highly aesthetically attuned after many years working in fashion and cosmetics internationally, Mary is not often fazed. Once started on a project, she possesses an unshakeable faith in her own vision for interior spaces. (That's even in the face of tradespeople saying certain unprecedented wishes might be in their too-hard basket.)

But when husband Peter, an accountant, showed Mary the engineer's drawings of this home and its aircraft hangar-like dimensions, she did feel a tad daunted. How could she make such an impressively hard-edged, modernist structure into a personal haven and retreat?

A few months of intensive thought and project management later, it became clear any uncertainty had been unfounded. Mary has achieved a home that possesses its own brand of intimacy in spite of its big, bold spaces.

It wasn't as if the couple was accustomed to small rooms. One of their previous houses spread itself over 650 square metres of floor area on Christchurch's Mount Pleasant; another, a Mykonos-inspired dwelling on an incredibly steep section, was also large, and set over three levels. Like their previous dwellings, this house is wonderfully coastal, with its main living areas upstairs, seemingly suspended above the beach.

Their house's position – one road's-width from sand – is naturally its defining feature. Therefore the design's starting point was a given: optimising the wonderful sea views. In the conservatory dining area, for example, double-glazed windows and ceilings open up to the view and sky. It's a favourite space for friends and visitors.

Mary felt her challenge was to make the house feel welcoming and cosy, despite the open outlook. To this end she's found that the modern minimalist look can endow comfort to a level that traditional or embellished luxury often doesn't.

This is not a place where you'll spy any cabriole legs or precious antiques. Mary has opted for elegantly simple, large-scale square and rectangular furniture. Everything is fabulously functional, but every piece is also absolutely true to style, even down to a large macrosuede grand-daughter's toy box.

Resene
Cut Glass





alternative ideas for this interior on pages 66-69





“Some houses, regardless of budgetary restraint or even the lack of it, can feel really uncomfortable and as if you shouldn’t really sit down or touch anything. Working out how a home is going to be actually used and designing for comfort is incredibly important,” says Mary.

Continuous use of the same materials in the same finishes – namely concrete, iron, glass and blonde oak – and themes results in the sort of comfort that emerges from sophisticated restraint. The Sallee carpet used throughout is a chocolate-earth colour, with sumptuous purple overtones.

Mary’s made great use of nature’s warmest comfort colours throughout.

Mary takes her design philosophy straight from nature. “The floor is your ground. I start with the ground and build upwards. The walls [some in square oak panels] are like the trees, and the ceiling’s your sky.”

Although the floor area Mary had to work with was large for a domestic space, she has cleverly divided it into “rooms for a purpose”. The two upstairs dining areas are

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human-sized rather than overwhelmingly large. The same is true for the square-edged Poggenpohl kitchen, which has intimate views of the nearby green hillside dotted with cottages and houses.

Sure enough, Mary carries the comfort through by ensuring the barstools are an exercise in seated luxury with their square cushioned tops. They invite guests to rest and dream while talking to the cook or gazing beyond windows to Scarborough's slopes.

Mary envisages actual events when planning rooms. Downstairs, for instance, there's another large living space with its own kitchen, designed with large parties in mind. Everything's been second-guessed, down to where different age-groups will sit and what their needs and wants will be.

Although the floor area Mary had to work with was large, she has cleverly divided it into "rooms for a purpose".

Furniture, whether fixed or introduced, is all generously proportioned to suit the home's scale. Upstairs the couches can comfortably seat 14; the master bed's a Californian king size, and the office desk's a large, rectangular table.

Mary's made great use of nature's warmest comfort colours throughout. Resene Fudge, Resene Congo Brown and Resene Gargoyle are repeatedly employed.

An eye-catching feature wall seen from the entranceway

Avoid fly spots on ceilings with Resene Fly Deterrent. Designed to discourage flies from landing on the painted surface, it reduces the appearance of unwanted fly spots.

is a custom-made stainless steel mesh panel, which visually repeats metal used on the windows and stair balustrade, and introduces intriguing textural detail.

As for themes, Mary decides on these at the outset and never veers off course. "In my last house I had white marble, lacquered black furniture and curves everywhere; however in this one I've built upon the idea of the strength of the square and the drama created by geometric recesses, special lighting and contrasting textures."

Each detail accounts for as much planning and sourcing as larger, more obvious features. Even tiny handles on the smallest drawers are metallic squares.

If a piece of furniture Mary already owns isn't going to work with a house's themes, colours, style or scale, she simply edits it out into storage.

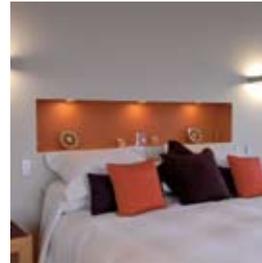
"Once I've finished, everything stays. I don't re-do my interiors or tweak anything later," Mary says. "Although I do ensure the furniture can be reconfigured in different rooms to fit different purposes and events as they happen."

Certain constants are maintained, of course – photos of loved ones in her bedroom and dressing room, vases of her favourite flowers, pleasing textures, fabrics and colours.

"I like to feel that I can come home, flick on music and lights and enjoy my surroundings as a sanctuary... an escape from a busy, noisy, complicated world."

"And it's incredibly important to feel that although a place is designed in detail, it can be enjoyed casually to the full. There's nothing better than fish and chips and beer on the coffee table and a room full of friends watching sport in total comfort – even spread throughout the room at 4am in sleeping bags."

It's Mary's recipe for contented living – rigorous, detailed planning which leads to laid-back enjoyment of a sumptuous, comfortable result. **H**



Get the look with Resene SpaceCote Low Sheen tinted to Resene Fudge, Resene Congo Brown, Resene Gargoyle and Resene Red Red Red.

Resene Red Red Red 



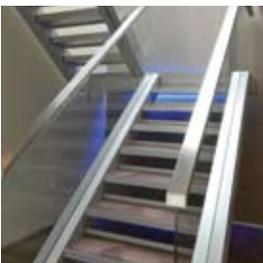
Timber furniture: in light oak designed by homeowner Mary Roberts and Brad Mawson of Urban Furniture, Christchurch

Resene Beethoven 

Open-tread steel stairs, underlit by blue LED lights

Get the exterior look with Resene Sonyx 101 tinted to Resene Tea and Resene Gravel.

Resene Hillary 



Carpet: Impala in colour Tango, from Sallee

Lounge suite: Miramar range with length adapted, by David Shaw, in Macrosuede, colour Buff

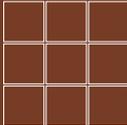
Resene Lemon Twist 

Bathroom vanity: opaque glass in stainless steel frames, made by Urban Furniture. Autumn brown glass top by Glasstech

Resene Gargoyle 



Resene Fudge 



on the following pages, find two alternative style suggestions



^ A striking custom-designed feature wall underpins this contemporary scheme.

Resene
Black White 

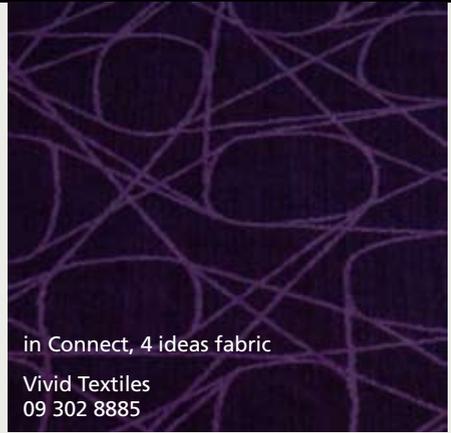
Link coffee table in white
 Simon James Design
www.simonjamesdesign.com



Pendant Tank Light, orange
 Simon James Design
www.simonjamesdesign.com



in Connect, 4 ideas fabric
 Vivid Textiles
 09 302 8885



<
 Single Edge Chair
 Forma
www.forma.co.nz

>
 Fantail cushions
 Eon Design Centre
www.eon.co.nz



Resene Kamikaze

Resene Wicked

Resene Pohutukawa

in Call, 5 Anytime fabric
 Vivid Textiles
 09 302 8885



Bealey three-seater sofa
 Simon James Design
www.simonjamesdesign.com



Liz Kerby
 of Workspace Design, Auckland,
 suggests this alternative solution:

This fresh, modern and clean space draws on my work with commercial interiors where the colour palettes used are often bolder. As a showcase to Resene paints and to add some fun, I've created the feature wall as a grid of colour rather than just one colour. They are strongly local colours, reflecting the tones found in our flora and vegetation. I've also used locally made furniture and accessories. It's quite a challenging space colour wise and would not be to everyone's liking! With such a large space, the various areas have been defined with floor rugs, and the internal doors should be taken to full height to optically maximise the stud height.

Liz Kerby

mobile 027 218 5608, email liz@workspacedesign.co.nz



^ Defined spaces gives this room flexibility.





Sud chairs
 Forma
www.forma.co.nz
 in Tribeca 14 Onyx fabric
 Royston House
 09 520 2400



wallpaper
 Vision Modern Living – Network
www.visionwalls.co.nz
 available from Resene ColorShops



tall red glassware by Katie Brown
 ZeaYou Gallery, Taupo
 07 378 1361



Resene Triple Hillary 
 Resene Eighth Putty
 Resene Rambler
 Resene Raging Bull



Shantung shelves
 Freedom Furniture
www.freedomfurniture.co.nz
 0800 373 336



wallpaper on feature wall
 Vision Premium Texture
 Collection – Hatch
www.visionwalls.co.nz
 available from Resene ColorShops



Green glassware by
 John Penman
 ZeaYou Gallery, Taupo
 07 378 1361



Sud four-seater sofa
 Forma
www.forma.co.nz
 in Abode Viva Red Earth fabric
 Warwick Fabrics
www.warwick.co.nz



Nord coffee table
 Forma
www.forma.co.nz



Heather Thorley
 interior designer of Colour
 Options, Paraparaumu, suggests
 this alternative solution:

The space is very horizontal, large and open. The revised room design introduces some vertical elements and divides the space with a movable storage unit, while still enabling it to be opened up into a single space for large-scale entertaining. The muted tones of the textured wallpapers and mainly brown and black furniture is offset by occasional colour highlights – for example, the four-seater sofa covered in a large and brightly patterned fabric, the red carpet runner sitting beneath the mobile display unit, and colourful glassware. The existing tile flooring is retained as it is complementary to the overall design.



phone 04 298 6251, email colouroptions@paradise.net.nz,
 web www.colouroptions.co.nz