



# Making an entrance

*Imaginative use of colour, shapes and details transforms a very ordinary two-storey home*

Love and hate are usually reserved for our deepest involvements, but they can be lavished on buildings as well. Consider these words from the owner of a formerly very dull two-storey home in Auckland. "I hated everything about it. I hated the design, I hated the kitchen, I even hated the ceilings," she says.

She nevertheless bought the house five years ago because it was an excellent investment. It is located in one of Auckland's best suburbs, with splendid views of the harbour and downtown office district. But it was a house that only its builder could love: a square, gabled, suburban box mass-produced 30 years ago.

Inside, it was little better. The entry was cramped, the kitchen was small, the ceilings had been sprayed with glitter finish in the 1970s, and an awkward wrought-iron staircase gave access to the first floor.

After renting out the house to tenants for three years, the owner gritted her teeth and moved in. She considers this to be the ideal – if long-suffering – way to see exactly what

changes need to be made.

The owner decided to make the house her personal domain. The first floor would contain her private living space, and an area in which she could formally entertain. The ground floor would provide bedrooms and bathrooms for her grown-up sons who visit regularly.

The upper floor required some alterations. The kitchen at the top of the wrought-iron stairs was moved to an outside wall to make room for a dining table. A small deck on the sunny northern front of the house was remodelled.

The upstairs master bedroom was provided with a generous ensuite bathroom, and the downstairs bathrooms were similarly equipped.

But by far the most dramatic change was the creation of a full-height entry lobby to replace the wrought-iron staircase. The work of Auckland architect Lynda Simmons, it is the central element in the new internal design and creates a feeling of spaciousness in every room surrounding it.

Building the lobby involved

only minor structural changes. A new staircase was made from tawa and the existing staircase supports were strengthened and covered with Strongwall cladding and a plaster finish.

Equally impressive is how the elements of the new design are repeated throughout the renovated areas, giving them a strong sense of unity. The shapes of the stair supports, for instance, are echoed in a pergola-like structure at the top of the stairs.

Detailing from the staircase area is also repeated in the feature wall of the dining area. Attention to detail extends outdoors, where the sleek lines of the new Insulclad exterior cladding now give the house considerable street appeal.

**Architect:** Lynda Simmons (Neil Simmons Architects)  
**Builders:** North City Builders  
**Joinery:** North City Joiners  
**Feature window:** Supreme Glazing Services  
**Electrical:** Anthony Murray  
**Exterior cladding:** Insulclad  
**Interior wall paint:** Levene Tinge of Peach  
**Carpet:** Cavalier Bremworth

*Photography by Andrew Coffey*



Facing page: Clever use of colour, shape and detail gives unity to the re-designed living area of this Auckland house. The lines of columns in the entry lobby are repeated in the structure at the top of the stairs. Detailing

used in the staircase area – tawa veneer, lacquer trims and sandblasted glass – is repeated in the dining room.

Top: The new entry lobby.

Above, left and middle: The house before and after renovation. The exterior was re-clad.

Above: The stairs to the first floor. Note the inset detailing on the stair risers.