

Top: Anna Fitzpatrick at the pressed-aluminium doorway of her family's new home. The shapely arcs of the staircase – which is warm underfoot and lit along its risers – are the only curves allowed in this rectilinear retreat. **Above and right:** Sophie, 9, and Paddy, 7, can't get enough of the white-plastered swimming pool designed for ducking and diving.



HOME *of the month*



steeling beauty

Crisp whites, straight lines – and heaps of hidden storage
– turn an aesthete's dream into a perfect family home

STORY SARA FAULL PHOTOGRAPHS PAUL McCREDIE



Square. White. Stainless steel. These were the three essentials in the brief Anna Fitzpatrick and George Foss gave to architect Andrew Lister when the couple decided to build a house in Auckland's Eastern Bays.

"We had decided to go radically modern and minimalistic," Anna explains, "so we approached Andrew because of his youth and growing reputation." (The architect was one of five finalists in *NZ Home & Entertaining's* 2002 Home of the Year competition.)

"When we explained our ideas to him," Anna continues, "he immediately grasped where we were coming from."

Andrew translated their text into a spacious, five to six

bedroom, concrete-slab family home and proposed including a pair of square – almost Romanesque – wings, with bridging between the two.

Throughout the home, straight lines rule – from the limestone pavers that flow beyond the pressed-aluminium front door right out to the pool, to the extra-tall, elegant doors and the square sided pillars that support the upstairs balconies. The only curvaceous exception is the concrete stairway that compels second-storey viewing. Defined by a steel railing and a transparent sweep of glass, warmed underfoot and lit along the risers and from above, the staircase is as important to the house as a sparkling necklace is to a woman.

"The curved staircase was 100 per cent Andrew's idea," Anna says. "It was an amazing process watching it being made. First a pattern was drafted. Then the staircase was framed up using solid timber and plywood bent into shape. Finally the concrete was poured in situ, including a groove and spaces where the lights and glass would eventually go."

The process took some perfecting, Anna recalls, but because it is such a feature, the fit had to be perfect.

Anna, who designs clothing under the Space by Anna Fitzpatrick label, knows the importance of a good fit and finish. She also understands the emotional pull and power of

colour in her fashion ranges, but at home she prefers to be surrounded by the unbeatable pairing of black and white. "I love white – even to the point of always having white flowers in the house. White just feels so fresh and clean. I find it very inspiring as a colour scheme. It allows me to create."

What Anna refused to visually acknowledge was all the clutter three children – Sophie, 9, Paddy, 7, and Thomas, 18 months – and a techno-savvy spouse can create. "I didn't want to look at the television and the stereo system or all the children's toys and games, so I designed a bank of streamlined cupboards beside the fireplace to hide it all," she says.

From far left: Anna, a clothes designer, adores the freshness of an all-white interior. Sophie and 18-month-old Thomas offer a little light entertainment in the open-plan area which continues right through to the kitchen.





One large cupboard is dedicated to the paraphernalia – the uniforms and all the bags – that tend to bottleneck traffic-flow areas once children get to school. “The cupboards can be opened up when we all sit down to watch a movie,” explains Anna, “but on a day-to-day basis, I can shut it all away.”

This allows an uninterrupted view through the two sets of folding doors to the 14 x 5m pool. “All my life I have wanted a swimming pool,” she says. “Before we began building ours, I was shown about six of the latest concrete examples and they all seemed to be blue and decorated with mosaic tiles. No one could believe I wanted something as simple as a white, plastered, concrete pool!” Anna laughs. “I specified enough length to dive in and swim laps and for the children and their friends to have enough space to really duck and dive.”

The inclusion of an outdoor shower means Sophie and Paddy can hop out of the pool, straight into hot water and then into their pyjamas, Anna tells me. Inside the house, the children stay warm, thanks to the under-floor-heated limestone tiles. “They are fabulous,” this busy working mother raves. “There are no wet feet or cold toes.”

Anna reiterates that comfort and family living have always driven the design of their newly finished home and that the ensuing flow encourages social contact.

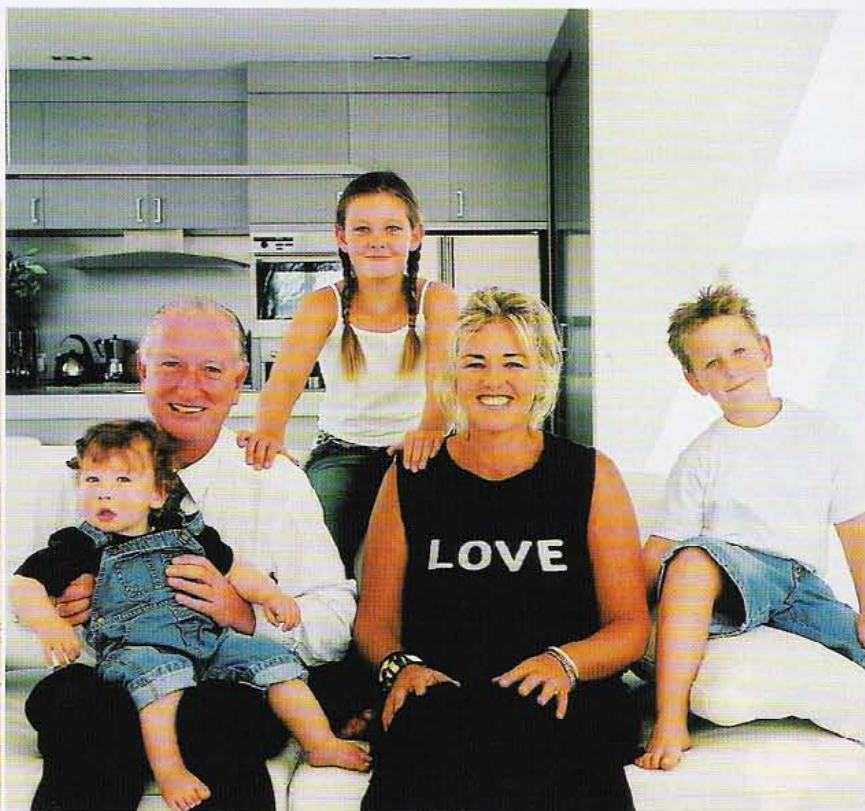
Downstairs is the kitchen/family/living area with a separate sitting room for Anna and a study for George. Upstairs, the master and guest bedroom both claim ensuite bathrooms, three others share a bathroom and a sixth is used as a gym.

The house faces north and, because of the placement of doors, windows and skylights and the glass partitioning, the sunlight seems to rumba and cha-cha its way through the rooms in an all-day party fest. So powerful is this play of light and shade that Anna and George are still debating whether to let the sun continue to feature as an ever-changing work of art or put up more traditional, framed artworks on the main walls.

While Anna happily admits to steering the aesthetic restraint of the interior, she credits George with accelerating the behind-the-scenes essentials of lighting, heating, sound and security systems to state-of-the-art supremes.

“The lighting was installed in consultation with Mike Thorburn of ECC Lighting,” George concurs, “and the sound system was wired by Atlantic Audio, working off the plans.”

“Because the house is concrete slab, all the wiring had to be done at the shell stage, so it was very important to get it right,” says George, who advises getting specialists in early on. “Consult the experts at the planning stage. Find people who are passionate in their field and can relate to your home.” ■



Opposite, clockwise from bottom left: minimalism is the theme of this home, from the elegant master bedroom to Anna's orderly closet and the simplicity of an ensuite bathroom. There are no cold toes in this household as the limestone floor is heated. **This page, clockwise from top:** on either side of the fireplace, the cupboards which Anna designed hide a multitude of sins (well, clutter is a sin to a minimalist) including the television, stereo, toys and school stuff. Anna, George Foss and their children love their light-filled home geared to comfort and family life. Architect Andrew Lister's design included a compact but highly efficient kitchen with a u shaped bar/bench capped in linen-look stainless steel. *Anna wears designs from her clothing range, Espace by Anna Fitzpatrick.*

