

Ten Answers

Our new feature, The Answers, this month spotlights Andrew Cox. A Kiwi-Englishman who recently relocated from Wellington to Auckland with his design business, Andrew Cox Interiors, he works on both commercial and residential projects. He lives in Parnell with his seven-year-old son, Ishka.

How has the New Zealand interior design market evolved over the 20 years you've been here?

New Zealand now has an incredible pool of talent, especially with younger designers coming through; this is evident in the commercial, cafes and retail market, where creativity has more opportunity to shine than residential projects. Individualism in design is rarer in the residential market where there is more restraint for personal expression, a tendency to sameness or safeness. However I think this is evolving along with food and fashion where good design, and taste, is appreciated.

In the UK you worked with Christopher Smallwood and Nicky Haslam. What sort of projects did you do with them?

I learnt a lot with both these design practices; Christopher Smallwood is a traditional architect, restrained, with classical detail sensibilities, 'considered' would be a good expression. I designed the restaurant, foyer and bar of the Shellbourne Hotel in Dublin, and a company house for Seagram Distillers in Cadogan Square, London, a full refurbishment and decoration, big responsible projects. Nicky Haslam was something else, a bit of a whirling Dervish when it came to design. His style is hard to pin down, however a mix of traditional with opulence would suffice. He is constantly in the society pages, I met quite a few distinguished people whilst I worked there, and one of our clients was Bryan and Lucy Ferry, who had a large house in London. The design here reflected Bryan Ferry himself, 'cool', classical and established, they had a great art collection. My rather hackneyed story is the time he made tea — not often you get served drinks by a rock star!

What is the Andrew Cox design handwriting?

Interiors need to reflect my clients' taste and aspirations, kitchens and bathrooms in particular. I enjoy building a narrative for my clients, using some of their existing furniture and adding new contemporary furniture, antiques, art, decorative pieces, creating personable spaces. However I think it's art that eventually pulls a room together successfully. I avoid trends as they tire so quickly, I like to see my interiors endure timewise, considered and classical no matter how they end up looking from a creative angle.

As you prefer not to follow trends, what are you liking of what's "in style" for interiors at the moment?

I'm not sure if it's in style at the moment, however I have some design friends in Wellington who use bold wallpapers in some of their projects, that's brave and works well with good lighting.

What are examples of perfect design?

Levi 501s, the Citroen 2CV, the Eiffel Tower, the Chanel logo, anything created by Picasso, Concorde, my handmade boots from New York, and my Lennon leather sofa from Belle Interiors in Christchurch.

Who are your design heroes?

The interior designer David Hicks, French designers Jacques Grange and Christian Liaigre, Terence Conran, and a whole raft of artists and sculptors, 20th century icons who created the groundwork for designers and artists today.

A room is not complete until ...

The client can take ownership, in saying this I mean that they are confident, comfortable and enthused by the results.

What's the most unusual request you've ever had?

A client had a thing for Hummers, the American army Jeep, and wanted to have this expressed in his family kitchen. I ended up using a

metal grille for some of the door panels — he appreciated that. His wife wasn't so sure, however the completed result was stunning.

Complete the sentence, Austrian blinds should only...

have been used during the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Your Auckland base is Parnell. Where do you go for coffee, dinner and walking?

Rosie on Gladstone Rd for coffee, I'm not a regular but Cibo is my restaurant find. And walking, my son and I do a circular route, down St Stephens, around the Parnell Baths, and up through the trees towards the Rose Garden. There is this wonderful organic, climbing tree, its branches spreading all over the place. It's a great place for hide and seek, or catch, if I'm feeling energetic enough.



Andrew Cox photographed at his Parnell home. Photo: Stephen Penny