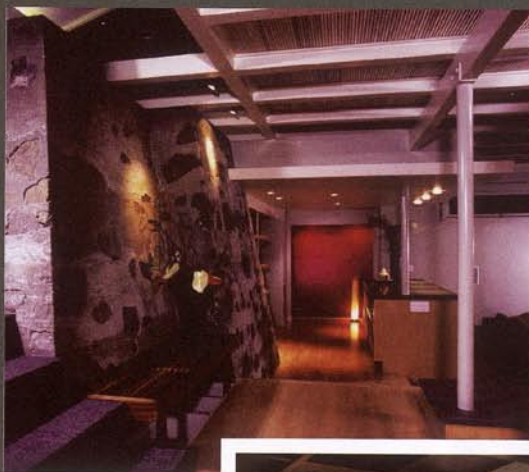


Pirl talk

Christa Pirl draws on her diverse upbringing in Scandinavia when working in her interior design business in New Zealand



I'm **excited** by the challenges presented by such a **diverse**, young country



RAISED IN OSLO AND MANHATTAN, I now find myself in the southern hemisphere. Adventure and the blend of cultures have drawn me to New Zealand, yet my design still reflects a sense of the north.

My family is typical of many Scandinavians. My mother was born in London to Norwegian parents fleeing the German occupation in World War II. After the war her family returned to our small ancestral island in the Oslo fjord—a popular artists' retreat. My father, a New Yorker, met and courted my mother while on business in Norway. They married and shuttled between Norway and Manhattan throughout my childhood.

Prior to WWII, Scandinavian design was a local affair. After the war, Norwegians returned to their devastated country with a reinforced sense of national identity and pride. Oslo and Norway needed rebuilding, as did much of Finland and Denmark. So began the era of great postwar Scandinavian design. After the boom of classic designers such as Arne Jacobsen and Poul Kjærholm in the '50s and '60s, other countries in Europe, especially Italy and Britain, took the lead.

Over the last 10 years Norway has experienced a renaissance of design. Wealth generated from North Sea oil has financed cutting-edge architecture and design, making Norway a world leader in style. High profile projects such as the September 11 Memorial in New York and the Library of Alexandria, Egypt have been awarded to Norwegian architects. Furniture by designers such as Norway Says is recognized around the world.

I find my design style is often influenced by my Scandinavian upbringing. The cold winters and short but brilliant summers create such contrast and a strong link with nature, which becomes a focus in Nordic design. Textures are always kept subtle, with an abundance of smooth,

reflective elements to gather and spread as much light as possible. We Nords, much like New Zealanders, are crazy about our sunlight. In the winter, style expresses warmth with the tactile quality of rich wools and furs. In the summer, everything is fresh and clean, with whitewashed pine and cottons.

The minimal Scandinavian look echoes historic origins, giving a strong sense of place and national identity. Norwegian folk art is replicated in warm paint colours and Viking wood carvings are still expressed in contemporary rooflines. Simplicity and functionality is the key in Scandinavia.

My design education began in Paris and finished in Manhattan with a year in London in between. I graduated from Parsons School of Design in New York, like my father 40 years before, who studied with notables such as Angelo Donghia. After graduation I worked on Upper East Side apartments in Manhattan as well as exclusive vacation properties in Hawaii. My parents export high end US-manufactured wall coverings and fabrics to New Zealand. They've enjoyed doing business with New Zealand designers for 30 years, so moving to Auckland was quite a simple decision.

On arrival in Auckland I worked with Freestyle Design and clients included TVNZ, IMB, and Colenso BBDO. I now run my consultancy, CPinteriors Ltd. and specialize in residential properties, city apartments, and boutique commercial premises. Current projects include the Cook Apartment and the Barfoot Residence.

New Zealand cities are changing rapidly, especially Auckland. Design has become more bold and adventurous, apartment living is more commonplace, and it's exciting to be a designer on the cusp of these changes. •

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