How concrete polished up its act

Sculpted spaces at every turn in this a well-designed, functional house that still boasts the odd touch of whimsy, writes Kate Williams

2B ELIZABETH ST, FREEMANS BAY

Artist Teresa Canal laughs that she and her engineer husband are very impulsive people. But the building project they have just finished in Freemans Bay with architect Tim Dorrington, is anything but. Minutely considered from its disciplined palette of materials (concrete both rough and smooth, steel, cedar, strandboard) to the siting of the house on the land, the placement of windows, even the selection of door furniture, this is a house that suggests of hours of careful thought. "My husband engineered the site with a massive

retaining wall — it took two months to source the right clay and countless truckloads to level the site. Then he handed it over to me to run the building project," says Teresa. No pressure, then. The brief to Dorrington would have been a joy for

any architect: the couple specified a house that was social, so needed a space that could fit people. dogs, loads of kids . . . a good house for a party. The focus of the brief was functional, nothing extraneous. Dorrington responded with a deceptively simple design — a double-height concrete rectangle, intersected at an angle by a cedar-clad box for the double garage.

But it is his detailing that makes the spaces exceptional. The mansard-style steel roof reflects the shapes of the surrounding villas. Upstairs, instead of vast expanses of glass everywhere, he poked in irregular square windows as a modern reference to odd attic windows of centuries past. A concrete bridge intersects and frames the vast

Dorrington also played with light and dark. Richly stained strandboard covers the entry lobby (with boot closet and hidden guest loo) and wraps around the kitchen storage. A deep recess housing cookbooks opens to a south-facing studio for Teresa with French doors to the garden. The kitchen bench segues from serviceable stainless to



Size: House approx 275sq m; land 499sq m. On the web: barfoots.co.nz #516165 Open homes: Sat/Sun 12-12.30pm. Contact: Carl Madsen, Barfoot & Thompson, ph 021 953 152 or (09) 376 3039.

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strandboard satisfied Tim's brief. This intimate space then opens to the soaring ceiling and sliding glass walls of the living room. Off this are another

Lit by in-ground spot lights ("the electrician will never forgive me"), edged with glass, this is a sculpture as much as a functional fitting. From the bridge, perfectly shaped windows frame a Stanley Palmer-like landscape of cabbage trees and lawn of the neighbouring Costley Park.

staircase she designed with Justin from Concretec.

Upstairs the bedrooms are in two wings. The master suite, complete with a simple origami-like tile, has Teresa's one luxury demand — his and hers closets so the couple don't have to deal with each others' mess. The children's wing is truly delightful: double rooms and a lounge are anchored by a vibrant column of painted stripes. Open the curved door to Teresa's folly: a light-filled bathroom with a glass skylight, bouncing the sunlight from pearly mosaic tiles, and a curved doorway — more building headaches. Teresa confesses.

Butmaybe the couple are impulsive after all.











