

Award-winning earthquake rebuild reflects a Modernist approach 📄



SUPPLIED

This award-winning house in Fendalton, Christchurch was built on the footprint of the original house that was destroyed in the earthquake.

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Christchurch owners rebuilding after their homes were destroyed in the 2011 earthquake have faced a similar scenario – how will we replace our much-loved home when a new home had not been part of our long-term plan?

For some families, it was enough to retain references to the original house, be it in the footprint, size, position of rooms, materials, or maybe the way a particular view was captured.

This award-winning rebuild project achieved most of these things, but also managed to introduce a strong Modernist architectural reference.



STEPHEN GOODENOUGH

Preserving this tree was a key consideration when it came to designing the house and deck.

Cymon Allfrey and Don Roy of Cymon Allfrey Architects, professional members of Architectural Designers New Zealand, won the ADNZ 2016 award for a Residential New Home over 300 square metres for the project, which ticked a lot of boxes for the owners.

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"The owners expressed an interest in the Mid-century work of several key Californian architects, such as Eichler," Allfrey says. "While this project wasn't about a restoration approach, the original bungalow did have some Mid-century nods. It had dark-stained weatherboards and interesting volumes with an exposed internal structure."



STEPHEN GOODENOUGH

The house is perfectly positioned at the top of the rise above the stream.

A STREAM RUNS THROUGH IT

Allfrey says the house was also positioned well on the picturesque Fendalton site that has a stream meandering at the end of the garden.

"We wanted to retain the nice rolling lawn that leads down to the water, and because the site is quite high we didn't have to elevate the building platform. The new house is largely in the same footprint as the original, which allowed the extensive tree-lined garden to be retained, with a strong visual connection to the home's interior."



STEPHEN GOODENOUGH

The 'front' or 'social' kitchen serves as a bar and gathering spot for friends and family.

The designer says the Mid-century reference determined the structural expression of the house. "It led us to the notion of an 'honest' timber structure, which is also a new interpretation of the existing timber home, so there was a happy co-incidence going on. It also meant we went out of our way to avoid any structural steel and that became a narrative to engage everyone who worked on the house."

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Five structural timber portals span the width of the home creating a grid-like exterior and a rhythm of timber that reinforces the language of the home internally. High clerestory windows bring light inside, reinforcing the geometry of the low-slung roof. They also offer views of the sky and tree canopy.

To maximise privacy outdoors, the team positioned the main outdoor living area on the east side of the house, while a smaller terrace faces north to the lawn and stream, which is the more exposed side. The main living space opens out in both directions, so the views and sun are also maximised.

Allfrey and Roy designed a central corridor that bisects the home creating east- and west-oriented private quarters. It means the family can enjoy the stream view as they walk through the house.

Both inside and out, dark-stained timber is contrasted with a mid-toned shade, each setting off the other. A much lighter shade was specified for the overlay oak timber floor, so it has a very simple, clean-lined aesthetic that doesn't "fight" with the other timber elements.

Another key feature of the house is a dramatic timber screen that separates the entry from the living space, yet allows glimpses of the view beyond. "All the 'heroes' of the site are revealed very quickly," says Allfrey.

KITCHEN OF TWO HALVES

The house is also notable for its kitchen, which has two clearly defined zones. Designed by Davinia Sutton, it comprises a social "front kitchen" and a highly functional "back kitchen". The front kitchen features a dark-stained oak island with matching stone top, and full bar facilities – this is where the family likes to socialise informally. The back kitchen is where all the food prep, cooking and cleaning happens. This room features white laminate cabinets and stainless steel benchtops.

Throughout the living space, walls are freestanding, so the ceiling appears to float above them. "We wanted to expose that ceiling plane as best as we could, within the constraints of the building," says Allfrey.

Hydronic heating is provided within the floor slab. But the team says the passive design of the house ensures solar gain is maximised in winter, yet helps to keep it cool during summer.

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