

# WORLD

LIVING & TRAVEL

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# SIMPLE LUXURY

BARBARA BARRY IS ONE OF AMERICA'S FOREMOST DESIGNERS. HER LATEST COLLABORATION WITH BAKER FURNITURE REPRESENTS A NEW DIRECTION FOR BOTH DESIGNER AND MANUFACTURER. CAVIT & CO HAS THE COLLECTION. MICHAL MCKAY HAS THE STORY.

**I** live unabashedly for beauty, both inner and outer and I see them as intimately connected." This is Barbara Barry's introduction on her stunningly beautiful website. Little wonder, then, that with such a philosophy her awards include some of design's highest honours: *Interior Design* magazine's Hall of Fame; *Architectural Digest's* AD 100; *House Beautiful's* Giants of Design; the Pacific Design Centre's Stars of Design; and induction into the American Society of Interior Designers' College of Fellows.

In New Zealand her work can be found at Cavit & Co, a company known for an interior design ethos that speaks volumes about its owner, Debbie Cavit. The two have been close friends for 17 years since they met at Baker in 2000 and Debbie arranged for Barbara to be a keynote speaker at Decorex in Sydney in 2002. A tour of New Zealand followed with a talk at Diocesan School plus lectures in Auckland and Christchurch sponsored by *NZ House & Garden*. They share the same thoughts on the ideal living environment – pared-back simplicity – and have holidayed together, most recently staying at Debbie's elegant cottage in Arrowtown (where Barbara fell in love with this slice of New Zealand paradise), and at Barbara's home in Los Angeles.

This mutual appreciation of style and simplicity is epitomised by the new collection of some 70 pieces Barry has created for Baker – one of America's leading fine home furnishing manufacturers for which Barbara started designing collections 20 years ago. It has been Cavit & Co's largest designer brand for Baker ever since. This latest collection will be available in December – "and we are delighted that it continues to be on trend," says Debbie. More than 10 pieces from the new collection, which includes case goods, upholstery, lighting and accessories, personally selected by Debbie Cavit, will feature in the showroom, but the entire range is available to order and is available in a variety of finishes and fabrics customised to client requirements.

Raised in a family of artists (Barbara loves to paint and Debbie is an avid learner/student), it is no surprise, then, that Barry's creativity is influenced by "the subtle nuances in the colour and forms of nature".

"I am motivated by the natural world," she explains. "By light falling on a subject, by the forms that exist in nature and by perfect proportion. I am also motivated by lightness, brightness. I love the light of day. I watch it spill across a room and I'm stimulated. And every day is pure potential."



Obi Lounge Chairs, Jewel Drum Accent Table, Arc Cocktail Table, Horizon Server, Lens Chandelier



While nature is obviously her constant inspiration, her latest collection also reflects a definitive change in her approach. One epitomised by her recently completed new home in California, designed in conjunction with architect Jack Lionel Warner. The phrase 'pared back' characterises her style, but now she acknowledges that it also describes her lifestyle today as she discards some things yet re-embraces others. "Living with less" is her new mantra, nature her backdrop.

Such a change of direction has been embraced by Baker Furniture – a company that, president Russell Towner reveals, is also looking at a new pared-back simplicity. Baker pieces are modern yet timeless, built in a curated blend of open-grained wooden finishes (oak, walnut, mahogany) yet given a contemporary feel with touches of bronze and textural fabrics. These materials tap into the current global movement in which relaxed and formal, couture and street fashion combine to give a whole new meaning to modernity.

As an artist, Barry begins with pencil and brush exploring form and colour. Layering soft colour washes, silhouette sketches and palette-building produces a magical mood that's reflective of the California light – all realised finally in curved silhouettes and shapes that perfectly blend balance and scale – and the ideal complement to contemporary, vintage or antique furnishings. Chenille, bouclé, velvet and crisp linens, in a palette of washed cinder, pink salt, bleached sand, are tonal, textural and seductive to the touch. It's a visual vocabulary that expresses her quiet approach: an unspoken serenity that is her set for living.

Barry's own lifestyle is anything but peaceful, lived at a hurricane speed that would leave even the busiest workaholics breathless. She travels the world constantly, creating collections for some of the leading luminaries of the interior design world. But, she says, "Time at home is sweet and meaningful because my work is so intense and demanding. When I do finally have a Saturday morning at home, I'm ecstatic!"



LEFT: Framework Sofa with warm bronze brass base

OPPOSITE PAGE: Panorama Platform Bed, Kona Chest, Pacific Table Lamp, Bench Press



She lives her life through lists and a disciplined approach to her work. And while lists outline her daily tasks, pencil sketches give rise to new products.

Barry is an ardent watercolourist and takes time off to disappear to places like Provence, the Austrian Alps or the Canadian Rockies to paint (Debbie plans to join Barbara and her group next year to have her first taste of painting en plein air). On these trips she can disconnect from business deadlines and demands, to reconnect with nature and refresh her imagination.

Her idols in the design world epitomise what she herself admires most in design. John Dickinson was a favourite. "I loved his plaster tables and subdued colour palette," she says, adding Jean-Michel Frank "for his great lines, modern elegance and beautiful materials". Then there are "all the Edward Lutyens tomes that document his country houses, such as Munstead Wood, as well as the houses he designed in France. Old photographs originally published in *Country Life* show interiors with finesse, character and superb interior architecture. I studied the floor plans of his work and love the central halls, his civic vision, the proportions of his rooms".

The architects she admires are John Pawson, Adolf Loos, Le Corbusier and Tadao Ando, who all "achieve complete integration of form, space and light". She also admires Ludwig Wittgenstein's 'laboratory for living' at Kundmannngasse in Vienna. "It was built in 1928 and for him every millimetre was important."

Barry's vast portfolio, assembled over three decades, reveals interiors, furniture, lighting, linens, tabletop décor, carpets, office and home fabrics and tableware. And apart from her private clients' homes, she has also designed restaurants in San Francisco, London and Los Angeles.

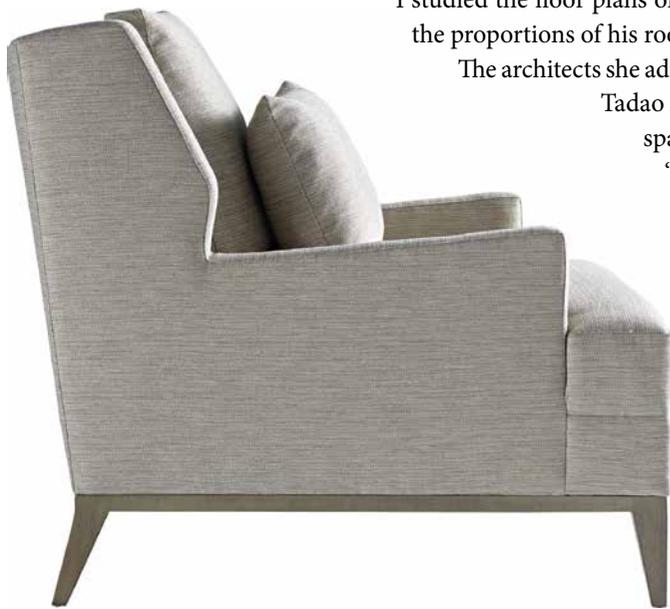
Barbara Barry is the first to acknowledge that all her work has a decidedly feminine sensibility. "I like softer lines, order, gentle not jarring colours and subtle silhouettes," she says. Her newest Baker collection

speaks to these ideals. The Barry-Baker collaboration began 20 years ago as a part of the much-acclaimed Guest Designer Series, which has brought her top-selling designs to market for years. Both parties view this newest range of case goods, upholstery and lighting as representative of a new, more relaxed, 'warm modern' way of thinking.

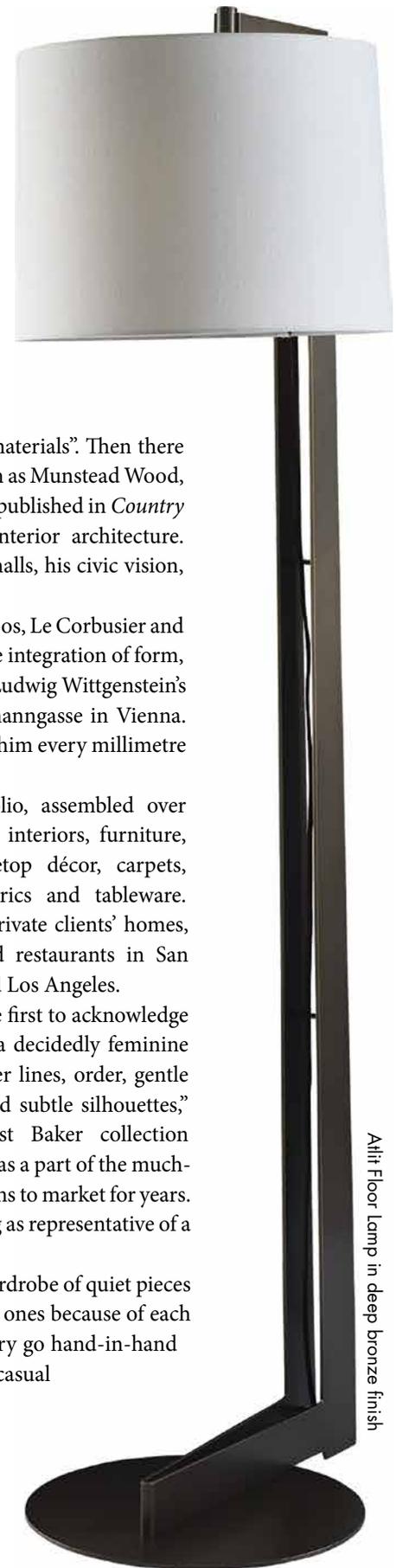
"What I love most about the collection is that it is not fashion but a wardrobe of quiet pieces that can be paired with more overtly modern pieces, or more traditional ones because of each piece's simplicity," Barry explains. It is a range in which utility and luxury go hand-in-hand – brass-detailed drawers lined with leather, for example. It also offers a casual counterpoint to some of her more classic designs.

The Barbara Barry look suggests quiet elegance, comfort and ease – a real reflection of her belief that living simply and with quality is the highest form of luxury. ■

[www.cavitco.com](http://www.cavitco.com)



Anchor Lounge Chair with Mahogany frame



Ailin Floor Lamp in deep bronze finish