

STAYING TRUE



A couple took on the renovation of a mid-century Auckland home with relish... and a touch of nervousness

WORDS SHARON NEWEY
PHOTOGRAPHS JANE USSHER

LEFT In Bridget and Owen Catchpole's Auckland home, *I Don't Like This Kind of Living* by Simon Kennedy hangs above a teak sideboard by Younger, a feather box carved by Owen's grandfather and fruit bowl by Bordallo Pinheiro. **RIGHT** The dining room is a favourite spot for Greywacke the cat, where *Crash 6* by Sara Hughes hangs above a vintage rosewood table and dining chairs by Thonet and France & Son; the Tage pendant light is by C/O Bankeryd and the custom-made carpet is by Chiara Corbelletto for Dilana Rugs.



Research Tom Atkins



THIS PAGE A scoria rock wall runs through the entry, inside and out, and forms one of the living walls; the orange modular Togo sofa is by Ligne Roset; a vintage Louis Poulsen light illuminates a vintage walnut Broyhill Brasilia side table, the rya rug is from the 70s and the cushion is by Emma J Shipley.



Bridget and Owen Catchpole's love affair with mid-century style was cemented when they lived in the iconic 1968 Allan Wild-designed Jellicoe Towers on The Terrace in Wellington. "We love mid-century architecture so when we moved to Auckland, we looked at a few places. When we saw the scoria rock wall here, we fell in love with the house."

Then the nervousness set in. The house was double the size of their former apartment: "It felt enormous," says Bridget. The couple and their daughter Rosa, 11, spent time settling into the larger space, seeing how the light worked in each room and planning what changes might be needed.

"For a long time we didn't have much furniture but gradually started, room by room, thinking about the colours and furniture we needed," says Bridget.

She's a self-confessed lover of furniture shopping so happily scoured auction houses and stores like Karakter and Mr Bigglesworthy. Finding a limited supply of original mid-century pieces available locally meant Bridget also brought in various pieces from overseas dealers: the dining table came from Australia, the main bedroom furniture from the US, a rya rug from the UK and a sideboard from Amsterdam.

Local architecture, however, has been an inspiration since Bridget's childhood years in

ABOVE LEFT Bridget, Owen and Rosa on the deck of their 1970s Auckland home.
ABOVE RIGHT A cowhide rug, Bitossi pottery and a Bubble pendant light by George Nelson decorate the entrance hall; the intriguing window beside the front door with its built-in shelf is an original feature.



Christchurch. “Christchurch is home to some of New Zealand’s best mid-century architecture, and I particularly love the explosion of art and design that happened in New Zealand from the late 1950s. I really wanted to capture a bit of that style in my own living space.

“I love spaces that are visually consistent and true to a period. Back in the 90s I completed a course on British art that included a module on interiors. Seeing rooms anchored around lemon, strawberry and turquoise colour palettes was incredible, as most New Zealand homes of that era had quite neutral colours, like Spanish white or tea tones. Those

older British homes are a great reminder that crisply executed colour can be incredibly fun. If you keep it tight, it stays cohesive,” says Bridget, who now works as a communications manager.

Sadly, the house’s early records, including who designed it, had been lost in a council fire but enough of its original character remained as a guide.

Today, there’s a mix of neutral tones with a judicious use of an early 70s-inspired palette of burnt oranges, zesty yellows and olive greens that beautifully complements the home’s original scoria wall and rimu floors that they have stained dark.

Owen, a research scientist, and Bridget had wanted a home to which they could add their own personality – and this house certainly met the criteria. It had undergone a cheap renovation in recent years using unsympathetic colours and finishes.

The layout was also odd with a second living room accessed only through the main bedroom. Initially, the family used this as Rosa’s playroom but having hoards of her friends traipsing through the bedroom soon became tiresome. So they moved the main bedroom into the playroom, and turned the former bedroom into an office and hallway.

Downstairs, a rumpus room has been

converted into a guest bedroom with ensuite.

Another curious configuration common to houses of this era was a trio of “bathrooms”, in a row and dedicated to different functions. Owen and Bridget found this weirdly practical so rather than convert them into one family bathroom and add an ensuite, they have two bathrooms side by side. “Owen uses one and Rosa and I use the other,” says Bridget.

The kitchen’s original position in a separate room next to the living area was also embraced by a family who don’t entertain often. With a slightly updated layout, the new walnut cabinets and stainless steel benchtop are a gentle echo of mid-century style.

ABOVE LEFT A dynamic pink artwork, *Untitled, 00529 Essay, 20050* by Judy Millar, hangs over the Togo sofa. **ABOVE RIGHT** A La Chaise by Eames, a PH 5 pendant by Louis Poulsen and a Persian rug are an eclectic mix in a corner of the living room.

ABOVE LEFT The elegant new kitchen has walnut cabinets and a stainless steel bench; the black tap is by Meir, a Marimekko plate is displayed on the floating shelf and a Moon light by Verner Panton is suspended in the corner. **ABOVE RIGHT** A playful cluster of Bubble lights by George Nelson hangs in the stairwell, where an artwork created from a piece of Marimekko fabric and a Panton chair by Verner Panton brighten the space.

THIS PAGE The headboard and pillowcases in the main bedroom were custom-made from Halftone Clouds fabric by Florence Broadhurst; a Crown Lynn swan is filled with flowers and sits beneath *Twin Mother* by Rohan Wealleans.



TOP LEFT The guest bedroom is painted in Resene Galliano and features curtains in Kaivo fabric by Marimekko, *Night Walk* by Gretchen Albrecht and a bedspread from Bed Bath N' Table. **TOP RIGHT** The bathroom tiles are Ghiaccio Plus in Miscela 20 by Bisazza, the matte black taps are by Meir and the sink is by Corian. **ABOVE LEFT** Rosa relaxes in her room with a whimsical forest scene wall decal. **ABOVE RIGHT** Quirky shelves and wooden dolls by Alexander Girard for Vitra add a touch of whimsy to the guest room.



FAR LEFT A photograph by Ans Westra called *Lunchtime Concert, Cuba Mall (1971)* hangs in the hall and reminds Owen of his childhood; the other artwork is *Frightened* by Tony de Lautour.
LEFT Panton chairs join a steel table on the deck.
TOP RIGHT The original lava rock wall signals the entrance to the house, where the balconies were rebuilt and cabbage trees are a favourite spot for tūi in spring. **BOTTOM RIGHT** A pebbledash driveway and dark marble steps lead to the cantilevered house which is painted in Dulux Lyttelton Double.

Q&A

with Bridget Catchpole

THOUGHTS ON RENOVATING A MID-CENTURY HOME: I don't think you should be slavish about it but make it a nod to the look and feel of the era. Be true but bring it forward to today.

BEST TIP FOR USING COLOUR: British historic homes are a great example of how to use colour judiciously – don't use a lot, just execute it in a tight, crisp way. Then it stays cohesive.

TO MAKE A STAIRWELL LESS BORING: A great tip is to get a great piece of fabric and stretch it over a big canvas. We used Marimekko's Ystävät by Maija Louekari for a colour pop in an otherwise functional space.

HOW DO YOU CHOOSE LIGHTING: Light makes or breaks a space – so think about the proportions of the lights you choose.

TO DRESS UP A CHILD'S BEDROOM: Decals and transfers give a child's room an instant facelift, can be playful and whimsical and easily removed when tastes change.

FAVOURITE FURNITURE STORE: Stores like Auckland's Mr Bigglesworthy import amazing mid-century pieces – and today it's so easy to look online to get an idea of styles and shapes that could work in your home. But it's always helpful to get out and see a piece before buying online so you can get a sense of scale and proportion for your space.

FAVOURITE ROOM: The laundry because previously it hadn't been touched. It was ghastly and housed feral spiders.



Work on the renovation was due to start just before the first Covid lockdown. To complicate matters, the couple's original builder became unavailable. But from a bad situation, something very good happened – enter builder Daniel Hawke-Mills of DownRight Construction.

"He was phenomenal. Everything was delivered on time and to a high standard. He was a great problem solver and really got us through. He had a team of young builders and we were working from home a lot. It was fun to have them around, almost like they were flatmates, and it was sad to see them go."

Alongside the couple's carefully curated collection of furniture, many of their artworks have special meaning. In the hallway, Ans Westra's *Lunchtime Concert, Cuba Mall (1971)*

reminds Owen of growing up around Wellington's Cuba Mall: "The pharmacy shown in Ans' photo is Burlington Pharmacy, which was my family's business and owned by my grandfather and father. Growing up in Wellington, I spent a fair bit of time in Cuba Mall in my childhood, and I remember those elevated sound stages where local singers would perform. It's a real slice of nostalgia."

Christchurch artist Tony de Lautour's *Frightened* hangs nearby and is a prized possession. Says Bridget: "I've loved Tony's work over the years. I love the detail, layers and intensity of this work."

With the family's love of collecting art and classic design pieces, this house may continue to fill up, bit by bit... and not feel so scarily large after all.