

# *east meets west*

Kirstin Bailey's time in Singapore as a child influenced the renovation of her beautiful art decor family home

Text by **LeeAnn Yare**. Photography by **Kevin Emerali**. Styling by **Anna Church**.

This photo Kirstin Bailey relaxes at home with Orlando (left) and Sebastian. **Opposite** Paint a piece of MDF board in blackboard paint and create a message board and an ever-changing work of art in the kitchen.









s the director of  
New Zealand  
homewares


company Gorgi, it's no wonder Kirstin Bailey is passionate about her own home. When she had trouble sourcing contemporary products for her sons' nursery, she didn't just decide to make her own, she launched a company, Kidsroom. More recently, Kirstin developed a range of bed linen for adults under the Gorgi brand.

Eight years ago when Kirstin and her husband Paul Velich bought their first home in Onehunga, Auckland, it was "a complete mess, with no chattels, faux brick fireplaces literally falling off the walls, floorboards that had been left to ruin and a 1970s-style bathroom in stunning shades of pink and mustard!"

However, despite its unattractive appearance, Kirstin and Paul instantly fell for its original art deco features, and the long winding concrete pathway leading to the house that was hidden behind a jungle of tangled vines and overgrown hedges.

Back then, tackling a major renovation was quite a feat for this pair of first-home owners, with no experience whatsoever. "I have to say I was the interior girl in so far as the aesthetics of the house and Paul was the builder – the guy that basically got dirty," says Kirstin.

Work began on the kitchen, dining and art deco sitting room, where the entire interior was gutted and redecorated from floor to ceiling. Four walls were removed to create two large living spaces instead of the original four small living rooms.



A collection of black and white frames create an art and photograph gallery in the dining room, the large space of which serves as a play area for the boys.

The kitchen is a favourite feature of the house for Kirsten. Space under the island bench is an ideal place to hide away shelves or trolleys when not in use.







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## *who lives here?*

**Kirstin Bailey**, director of Gorgi, with **Paul Velich**, account director, and sons **Bodhi**, 15, **Orlando**, 5, and **Sebastian**, 3.

**Where is it?** Onehunga, Auckland.

**Kirstin, how would you describe our decorating style?** "Eclectic. I like to work with the harmony of the room, asking myself whether or not the pieces work together and if there is a consistent theme. I like order, and I like to work items in terms of their patterns. 'My little collections' is what Paul would say, where as I would call it working with design elements or styling with a point of focus."

**Do you have a favourite room?** The round sitting room. It houses 15 casement windows and on a sunny day is just beautiful. At night we draw the curtains and sit in front of the fireplace, totally encapsulated within its circular space.



When it comes to furnishings Kirsten goes for natural textures and wood for their warmth and rustic charm. She favours simple design pieces that can be moved around the house as her mood dictates.



Emma discovered the dining table and chairs at a Wellington second-hand shop.



The pokey house had a tiny kitchen that has been transformed into an entertainers' dream space where Kirstin and Paul have spent many nights enjoying wine and food with friends and family. Kirstin chose a German-designed kitchen from Poggenpohl, which she says "is my favourite thing in the entire house! It is so beautifully made and now eight years down the track still looks as good as the day we bought it."

A couple of years later the couple added a 200-square metre extension for their growing family, giving them two new bedrooms, a large tiled ensuite and a family living area.

Exterior walls were knocked out to install six commercial-grade ranch sliders

that flow out onto an open deck.

"It was a well thought through process, with a lot of time spent determining exactly how we would incorporate a contemporary extension with the original Spanish-style art deco bungalow," says Kirstin. "In hindsight, we were fortunate that the addition of a modern space worked in harmony with the square-structured features of the home."

"I am not a huge fan of fashion when it comes to interiors. A good classic colour palette will stand the test of time," says Kirstin. She loves to mix vintage finds with classic design pieces, and her magpie eye for interesting and collectable vintage pieces is evident in almost every room.

In the master bedroom, a pair of mid-



Gorgi linen and interesting accessories keep the master bedroom from becoming overly feminine. The bamboo print and red umbrella are from markets in Singapore.



century side tables are one of her most treasured items, which she says were an internet find. "At the time, I thought they were a waste of money," says Paul, "but with some TLC they came up beautifully and I have to admit I really like them."

Kirstin is a huge fan of Florence Broadhurst's incredible range of wallpaper and textile designs. "I love her art deco and Asian inspired prints," she says. "We have several pieces within our home that have an Asian influence, which comes from my love of the time I spent living in Singapore as a child."

One piece of advice Kirstin loves to give is "don't be afraid to use strong colour in your home, and mix patterns. It could be combining wallpaper and paint or floral with stripes, you will be surprised at the result," she says.

"Colour can be so mood inspiring and can add warmth," Kirstin says. "Gone are the days where neutrals and whites were the only choice. We have covered walls in our home using both wallpaper and paint and I love the depth that it adds to a room."

Eight years on and Kirstin and Paul are at a stage they can say the hard work has finally paid off. "Although, is a renovation ever really finished?" Kirstin laughs.

"This was our first home and we had no experience, so we have probably over capitalised on some of the design features. However, we both love beautiful things – blame it on me being a Libra and director of a design company – but we are so happy with the result and wouldn't have it any other way."

→ Find out how they got the look on **PAGE 130**.



**This photo** Have fun with grey by mixing striped wallpaper with blocks of paint, and complement with other colours such as red and white, as seen here in Sebastian's bedroom. **Opposite page** A large wall painted in Resene 'Foundry' gives the playroom a giant blackboard, while a classic white cube unit acts as a display case and storage facility for toys and spare linen.

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## ***Tips for creating great kids' rooms...***

**+ Engage your child from the start** This will ensure success. Work with them to build a story; you can do this by looking at their favorite book, toy or picture.

**+ Avoid themes** It is inevitable that they will grow out of them and you will be looking at a forced renovation ahead of time. By carefully choosing accessories that fit with 'the story' you will meet your child's objectives as well as minimise the investment you make in their latest pick.

**+ Dressing the bedroom** Soft furnishings are an important feature in any bedroom. Choose good-quality woven fabrics that are UV resistant and can be laundered with ease. Stripes are great for interest and also disguising marks, a carefully chosen stripe or patterned fabric can be used as the focus for floor coverings, paint and other colours in the room.





Kirstin's love of bold colour and pattern  
has extended into the garden

## **outdoor play areas**

✦ **Take the indoors outside** Treat the space where your children play outdoors as another room. Add the comfort factor with a table for food, a rug to sit on and a deck chair under the tree for you!

✦ **A line in the sand** The best outdoor spaces have defined areas. When you are giving your outdoors a makeover, take care to create a space that's an ideal play area for children.

Sebastian loves to entertain his friend Augustine in the back garden with a cardboard house that folds away.