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NOVEMBER
2006

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A vibrant palette sets off the thoroughly modern aesthetic of a home north of Wellington

STORY: ANN CLIFFORD PHOTOGRAPHS: PAUL McCREDIE



Wellington architect John Mills is known for his use of colour so when Linda and Graeme McIneer said "You are the expert, go for it" things looked bright.

In fact Linda has quite an eye for colour herself and sons Daniel (nineteen), Ryan (sixteen) and Jake (thirteen) were soon in on the act too – giving the expert a run for his money. Linda laughs when asked who chose the house's palette of blues, greens, oranges and reds.

"I originally wanted to but it is John's big thing. So in the end he said if I went through the charts and took out all the colours I didn't like he would put together some suggestions. It worked really well."

The McIneers gave John the basic requirements for their new home. They wanted five bedrooms, a large open-plan living room and separate space for adults and teenagers.

John then filled in the gaps, asking about the way the family used their space, what each person's interests were and how they liked to relax.

The resulting house sits on a double section in Whitby, a growing suburb north of Wellington that overlooks the Paremata Inlet. The McIneers used to live further up the hill looking out over the site of their present house, which was then vacant land being marketed as a holiday house plot.

Having cut their teeth modifying the plans for their previous spec-built home, they were keen to start again from scratch and undertook nearly five years of negotiations to secure the site from its offshore owner.

Its generous proportions are mirrored in the house, with its views of the inlet and the Pauatahanui hills beyond. Three wings, each with its own pitched roof and a slightly different angle, take in a unique aspect of those views.

Early on, John asked Linda about her thoughts on materials for the house exterior. He was keen on timber, she liked plaster. "We decided to compromise and have some of each." The three wings are consequently plaster on the left, timber on the right and zinc panelling in the centre. ▶

THIS PAGE: Jake and Linda in the kitchen, where the maple joinery and maple, copper and black walnut island bench are complemented by glass doors opening to a walk-in pantry.

FACING PAGE: Graeme in his wine cellar, seen through an inset glass panel. The oil painting in the dining room is by niece Tricia McIneer. The curvy stair banister was made by Kevin Elliott.



THESE PAGES: The master bedroom's deck wraps around the north and west sides of the house. The master en suite is in lime green with black tiles and features another benchtop by John Calvert, made from a product called black armour, routed and inlaid with aluminium.

The double section has allowed for a generous garden and pool area where the McInteers do a lot of entertaining (as demonstrated by the size of the barbecue). The pool is a great drawcard. "One of the reasons we wanted to build a house with a pool was because it means the teenagers bring their friends here and we get to know them," Linda says.

Local history also gets a look-in. Though most of the garden is planted in easy-care natives, the front lawn boasts a bona fide golf green. The former Whitby golf course was being turned over to housing at the time the lawn was laid so grass from one of its greens was transplanted on to the McInteers' garden. "The greenkeeper put a hole and flag in as a bit of a joke," says Graeme with a smile, "so I've kept mowing it shorter around there".

Graeme, one of the owners of IT company Zephyr Consulting, didn't try to stamp his style on the house's design but he did have some non-negotiable requirements. A wine cellar, which he particularly wanted to be placed underground, became something of a sticking point.

"We saw a piece of glass inlaid into the ceiling of an entrance-way in a Firth show home and we really liked the idea. So we thought, 'Why not do something like that here and you could look down through the glass into the wine cellar?'"

Not without some difficulty, it turned out, as there was a vein of rock running through the section. "It got to the point where I thought, 'If I can't have this I'm not building the house.' They had to get in a bigger digger but we got there in the end."

The central wing features a double-height area that includes the entry and kitchen/living space and a mezzanine from which the boys' rooms open. The mezzanine contains a billiard table (another of Graeme's requirements) and computers. "Because it is open to the kitchen below I can get a feel for what they are up to without being in their space," says Linda.

The home's aesthetic includes a number of elements that owners of other John Mills houses might recognise. There's the use of colour (from black and lime green in the master en suite to pale blue ceilings and blue and orange insets on the stairs), the scale of the front door and vaulted entry, the mix of timbers (jarrah floors and stairs, kahikatea doors with rimu beading and inset rewarewa panels, maple in the kitchen), the raised kitchen floor and the curvy island bench (designed and made by John Calvert from maple ply, copper and black walnut).

From negotiating the purchase of land to choosing the interior colour scheme, it's been a long road home for Linda and Graeme but both agree their new house was well worth the wait.



FACING PAGE: Expansive decks, with views of the Pauatahanui inlet and hills, lead down to a pool and a flat lawn.

