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Plus DUNCAN GARNER & DONNA WILKINS



Jason and Irene Hague-Smith

Seatoun

When Jason Hague-Smith and his wife, Irene, were searching for their dream house nine-and-a-half years ago, location was paramount. They had been renting on the flat in Seatoun and loved the suburb – but not the wind. So when Jason's sister emailed him a link to a property on the hill looking out over the water, he phoned up the agent and bought it sight unseen that night. The house was a modest 1910s two-bedroom villa that is barely recognisable today after the extensive renovations the couple have undertaken.

Very soon after purchasing the house, the couple employed architect John Mills to draw up some plans. They gave him a brief, and despite intending to live in the house for a year first, they started construction after just two months. The first stage of the renovations, consisting of the top floor, terrace, bedrooms and bathrooms, took 18 months; Irene describes them as “hellish”. Time and weather restraints meant that the roof was removed early, the result being that Jason found himself living with two small children and a pregnant wife in a house with no roof in one of the Wellington's worst winters.

The couple's reminiscences about gusts of wind that would bring in a wheelbarrow load of water are in stark contrast to the welcoming environment they have created. Bright colours and different shades of wood blend to create an inviting interior while not detracting from the stunning view, which is ever present in the house. Despite its impressive indoor–outdoor flow to the terraced garden, the house still feels warm and inviting – thanks not least to the excellent use of fireplaces. The home has three of these, one in each of the living spaces and a giant wood-burning fire outside, whose position between the outdoor bar and the spa pool creates the perfect environment for entertaining. This was important to the couple, who designed the upper level of the house with the kitchen at the centre, for maximum social benefit.

After a few years' break, the couple were at their renovations again. This time they reworked the driveway, which because of the slope of the section was a major undertaking. Jason, who is a builder and who undertook much of the work himself, says that the renovations of their house have been the hardest he has ever been involved in because of the steep access. For some deliveries they had to resort to using a helicopter.

This hasn't deterred them though, and they are well into the third stage of their renovations: a new entranceway and a cinema room on the lower levels of the house. It's easy to envy the couple, who have managed to create their dream home in their dream location, but with the time and effort they have put in, it's impossible to begrudge them.



Previous page: The upstairs kitchen, dining and living area makes a statement with its bold use of colour and innovative materials. The ceiling comprises painted and stained plywood, and the custom bench-top is made of plywood, tapa cloth and resin. **Above (clockwise from top):** The sea view is something the couple still appreciate every day; Jason Hague-Smith, a builder, has created an incredible two-storey playhouse for his kids that is the envy of many; A wood-burning fire is accented with hand-made tiles featuring native plants, and a coffee table by John Calvert brings warm wood tones into the room; Irene and Jason Hague-Smith enjoy the last of the afternoon sun in their sheltered terraced garden



Previous page (clockwise from top): The upstairs living area. When the couple entertain, they drag one of the couches out onto the terrace and turn the area into a dance floor; The hallway on the downstairs level leading to the master bedroom, where a bright splash of blue mirrors the stunning sea view; The house is full of quirky details that make it feel like a family home; The upper level of the terraced garden, with an impressive outdoor fire, spa pool and pool house. The couple's bright signature colour palette is continued here. **Above:** The couple imported the Wet Light bath from Italy and designed their bathroom around this statement piece; The stunning view out to sea is fully realised on the upper level; The outdoor bar, with its mirrored splashback, is perfect for parties



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