



change of heart

Building their first house helped this Wellington family embrace bright colours

Text by **Sharon Stephenson**. Photography by **Nicola Edmonds**.

living & dining

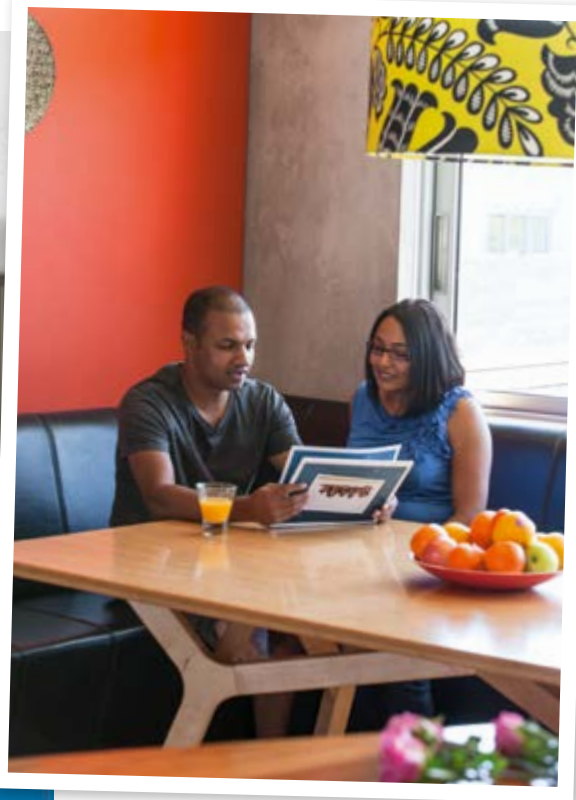
The dining room (opposite) features a custom-built leather booth and table. The wall is painted in Resene 'Orange Wood'. The colourful living space (this photo) connects effortlessly to a large north-facing deck and is used year-round.



**NEW
BUILD**

HOMES

“I realised that colour can work and that houses don’t have to be beige. I decided to give colour a go”



There are people who are scared of colour and then there’s Meena Parbhu. Four years ago, the Wellington lawyer was in the former category. But a visit to her sister in San Francisco helped widen her colour horizons. “She’d mixed oranges with splashes of intense blue and it looked fantastic,” says Meena. “I realised that colour can work and that houses don’t have to be all about beige walls. I decided to give colour a go.”

But it was some time before Meena could put this into practice. After returning from London, she and her husband Giri Dinamani spent three years trying to find a suitable home. “We looked at dozens of houses and put in several offers, but all of them were a compromise in terms of location, space, access or vibe.”

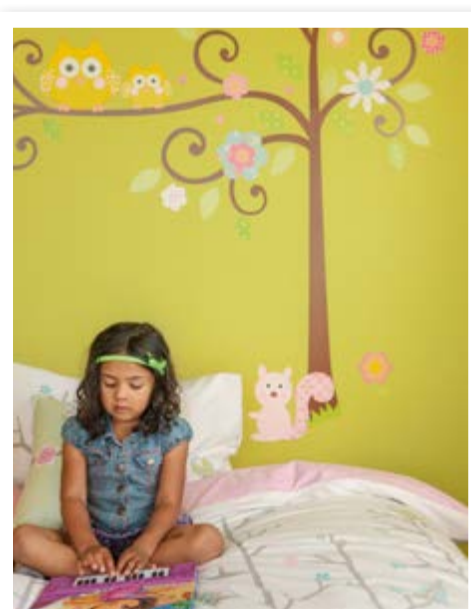
The couple realised the only way to get everything they wanted was to build. In 2007, they bought a section in the beach-front suburb of Seatoun, on land that had

kitchen Mixed working surfaces combine versatility and style. The Tasmanian blackwood island was designed by John Calvert, who employed traditional scraping techniques on the ply panels (which have been rubbed with various dyes) to evoke flax and natural elements.

in a nutshell

Who lives here? Meena Parbhu (lawyer), Giri Dinamani (director at Ascent Technology), Vishal, 7, and Sahana, 5.
Meena, what do you love about living in Seatoun? It’s flat, which is great for biking and scootering. There’s a great community, and the school and park are a few minutes’ walk away. We can go down to the beach or explore the rocks every day. It’s like having a holiday home in the city.

What was the biggest challenge of building this house? It was hard to get the curved seating on the deck to stay curved! We ended up installing a hidden steel brace.
Would you do anything differently if you were to build again? Nothing major, although we might think about changing the high windows in our living room from fixed pane to awning so that we can leave them open more often.



previously been a military base. Having spent so long house-hunting, they had a well-defined wish-list. "We wanted something light and warm, spacious and relaxing," says Meena. "Previously, we would drive up the coast for a weekend, but this place is near the beach, so it has the feel of a holiday home."

Meena and Giri brought in architect John Mills to design the 307-square-metre, two-and-a-half level home, attracted by his use of light, edgy design and ability to future-proof spaces for growing families. This forward thinking can be seen in the 'break out' room upstairs, which can be used for the kids' friends who stay over, and a multi-purpose study that can be converted into a guest bedroom.

The kitchen is the hub of this home. Fans of casual dining and restaurant booths, the couple installed black leather seating and, finding that all commercial dining tables were too small, commissioned local artist Nathan Goldsworthy to produce the oversized dining table that regularly caters for large numbers of family and friends. Meena also vetoed the idea of a separate butler's kitchen, preferring to be part of the action.

Artist John Calvert designed the 3.6-metre kitchen island, which mixes Tasmanian blackwood with stainless steel and silver to form one of the couple's favourite features. In keeping with her new passion for colour, Meena opted for a blue tiled splashback and a funky yellow and black lampshade in Designers Guild fabric that she sourced from a lawyer-turned-interior-designer friend.

One non-negotiable feature of the home was the adjacent media room where the

kids' areas Colour and fun decorations make the dedicated second floor kids' area a favourite with Sahana (top right), Vishal (bottom left) and their friends. Adjustable shelving keeps games and activities handy, while colourful containers are great for corralling small toys and stray Lego pieces.



colour cues

Venture outside a neutral palette. Meena never imagined her home would include vibrant greens, reds and oranges, but says she's glad she took a chance with colour.

Don't wait for the seal of approval from others, go with shades you enjoy personally.

Take inspiration from something you're attracted to and use it as an accent around the room. If you like a particular vase or piece of art, pick out colours from it and use them in cushions, an armchair, a feature wall, a rug or a throw.

Take a chance on things that can easily be changed like accessories and paint, and be more cautious about more permanent elements such as tiles. Painting a single wall won't be a big deal if you want to change it.



specially fitted audio system and large TV is the setting for regular family movie nights, but also means the kids can have their own sound-proof space when the adults are entertaining.

Artworks and cushions bought on annual trips to see family in California adorn the comfortable living room, where sliding doors let in the tang of sea air. Meena found the colourful Jamie Durie rug online and had a local store import it for her.

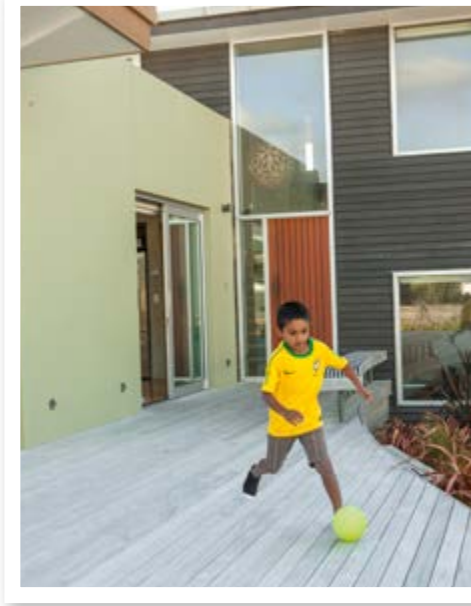
Follow the glass balustrade up one flight of stairs and you come to the kids' bedrooms, where Ikea bedding and furniture feature prominently. Many of the colourful decals hail from the US.

The generous 'break out' room separates the children's spaces from the main bedroom; it features an extended window seat, ideal for enjoying the morning sun and sea views. The ensuite bathroom is a replica of the kids' bathroom and the guest bathroom on the lower level, and features restful tones of beige and brown, Italian tiles and under-floor heating, which extends throughout the house. "But the house is so warm that even in the worst Wellington weather, we probably use the heating only three or so months of the year," says Meena.

One of their key intentions was to take advantage of the site's northerly aspect, so the kitchen and dining areas and generous elevated decking are oriented for all-day sun. Although it wasn't in the original plan, the couple is pleased they included the thick concrete and steel wall beneath their home's cedar exterior. "It added a lot to the budget, but because we're in a high wind zone, it makes the house super-quiet and stable. It can be stormy outside and you'd hardly know it." •

Find out how they got the look on **PAGE 157**.

living & outdoors Large sliding doors provide access to decks, and artificial turf extends playtime to nearly year-round. The landscaping was completed by Moa Garden. The couple spent hours choosing the coastal plants, which add colour with minimal maintenance. The exterior is painted in Resene 'Wild Willow'.



'BAHAMA
BLUE' PAINT BY
RESENE.

'SEAGULL'
PAINT BY
RESENE.



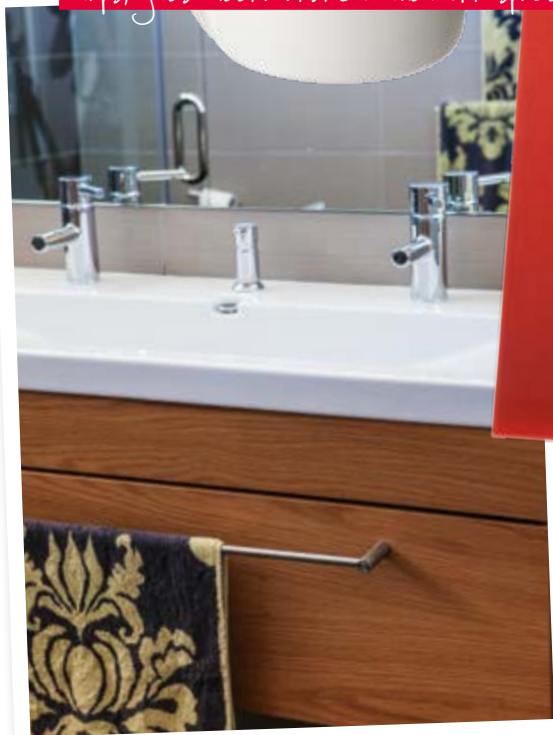
EXACT
MATCH

DESIGNERS GUILD
'COCONUT GROVE'
FABRIC FROM THE
'MIAMI' COLLECTION,
\$128 PER METRE,
FROM ALLIUM.

peek-a-blue

White **mug**,
\$14.90, from
Republic.

QUICK TIP *A generous basin, with 'his'n'hers' taps, gives Meena and Givi their own space.*



MAKE IT WORK

your way

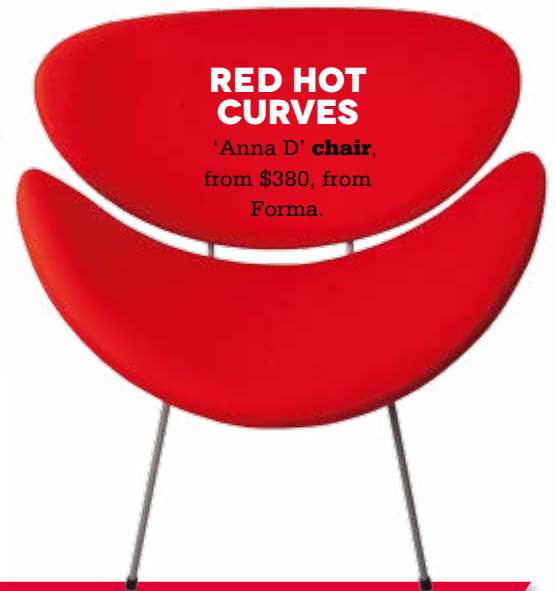
ADD PERSONALITY TO A NEW
BUILD WITH UNEXPECTED
SPLASHES OF COLOUR

RED HOT
CURVES

'Anna D' **chair**,
from \$380, from
Forma.

feeling flirty

Marazzi 'Flirt' Italian
tiles in 'Rosso', \$86.90
per sqm, and Marazzi
'Flirt' Italian **tiles** in 'Blu',
\$76.50 per sqm, from
Heritage Tiles.



Like what you see? Turn to pages **157** and **160**.