

OPEN SESAME

An architect's *much-loved but modest* family home is transformed by an extension that cleverly *blends old and new*

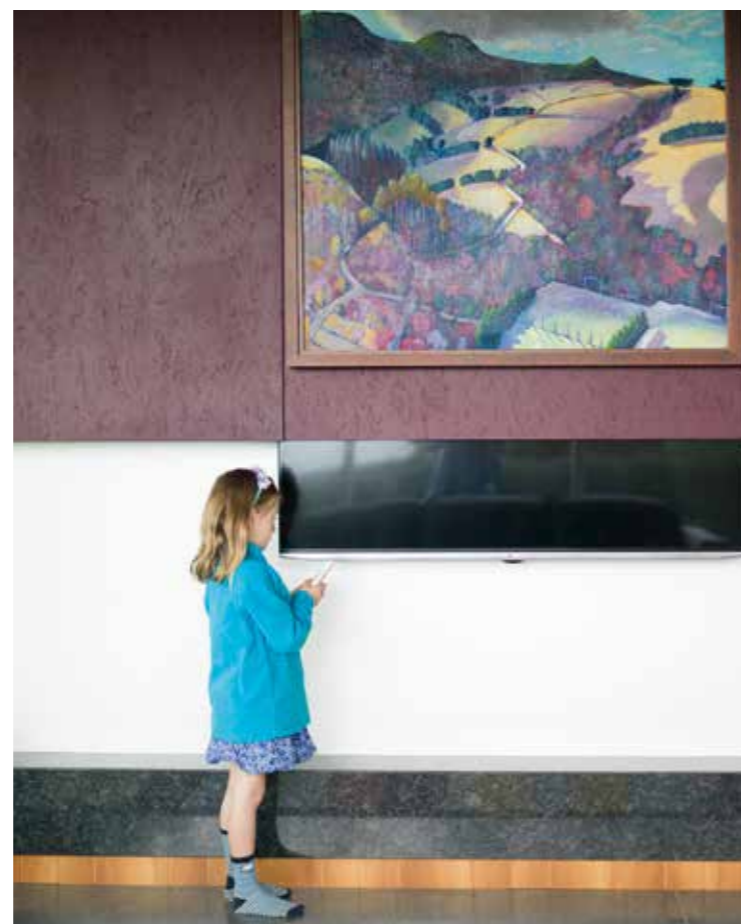
WORDS DENISE IRVINE
PHOTOGRAPHS JANE USSHER



THESE PAGES The living room in Evan Mayo and Natasha Grainger's Hamilton home opens seamlessly to the deck and garden; 1950s chairs by Ernst Plischke sit alongside a contemporary Spun chair by UK designer Thomas Heatherwick.



THIS PAGE The generous kitchen island is a gathering point for family and friends; the bold glass splashback features a pattern chosen by Evan and Natasha from Shutterstock and printed by Image Glass.
OPPOSITE (clockwise from top) The living room has acoustic ceiling panels custom-cut from seconds of matai veneer; the bright Arrow Feathers rug is from Designer Rugs in Auckland. The retractable television slides up behind a wall panel hung with *North East Valley* by Rodney Hamel. From left, Natasha, Lewis, Nina, Evan and Samuel.



FROM THE STREET, you can't tell what lies within this Hamilton home. You get a hint of old-school burnt orange Huntly bricks, some stylish glass panels and a new black brick garage tucked discreetly to one side.

It all unfolds from the intriguing entranceway to the surprising reveal of a new airy downstairs living room that has turned a modest 1950s home into a modern-day gem.

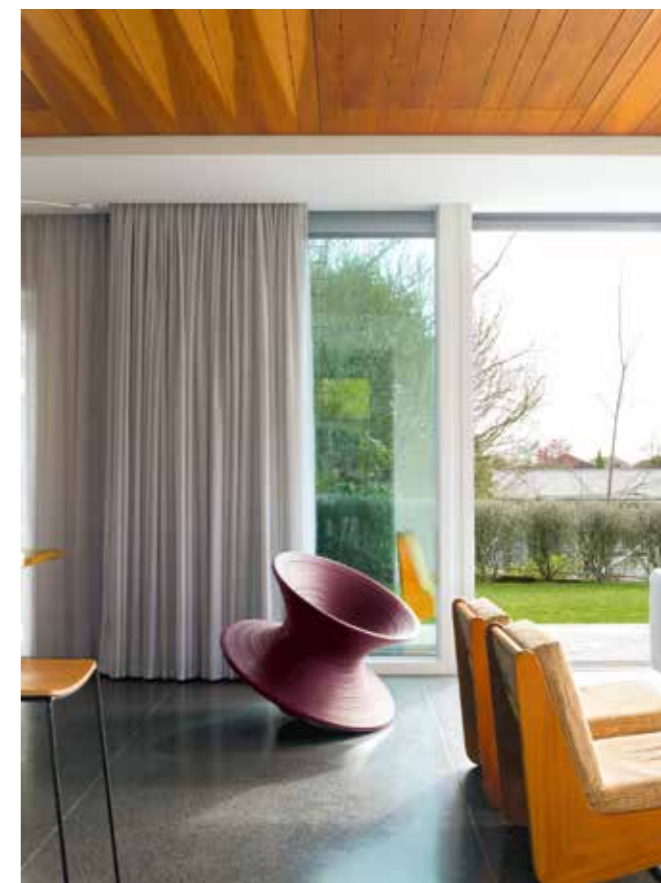
This bold renovation has won a number of architectural awards since it was completed about 18 months ago. More

importantly, though, it is the much-loved family home of Evan Mayo and Natasha Grainger, and their children Samuel, 10, Lewis, eight, and Nina, six.

Evan and Natasha bought the property in 2005. It was a standard brick-and-basement house of its era, with some attractive features and a few inconveniences. But they were drawn to the elevated site that had views to Mt Te Aroha, the Hakarimata range and Mt Pirongia, and they liked the unpretentious nature of their Forest Lake neighbourhood. >

THIS PAGE The Tin Man dining table by Raglan's WRW & Co is rimu and powder-coated steel, and the chairs were \$17 each, spotted on sale at Briscoes; the Ella light came from About Space in Melbourne and the polished concrete floor is Firth's Half Black pebble mix.

OPPOSITE (clockwise from top left) Lewis, Nina and Samuel on the stairs that lead down to the ground floor extension. The living room walls are painted Resene 'Sea Fog'; the Spun chairs were a mission for Natasha and Evan to bring home from London. The master bedroom has a bespoke recycled matai bed and headboard by Hamilton's Kingwood Furniture.



"WE'VE LIVED HERE A LONG TIME. WE HAD A GOOD FEEL FOR WHAT WE WANTED TO DO"

They hung their art on the walls and made the place their home, occasionally bemoaning the lack of connection with the garden downstairs, and the hard-to-find front door that often saw visitors blunder into the dining room. They started a family, and kept talking about renovating.

"We've lived here a long time," says Natasha. "We had a good feel for what we wanted to do. We absolutely loved the house; we wanted to stay here."

It took them 10 years to get underway and in the end it wasn't difficult, thanks to their resident expert. Evan is an architect, the director of Hamilton firm Architecture Bureau. He designed and managed the renovation from go to whoa, drawing on his professional skills and his personal experience of knowing every inch of the house.

"Doing the drawings was really easy," says Evan. "Except that my imagination was bigger than what our pocket could afford." Says Natasha: "I thought we would clash a lot more. But we didn't. I trust Evan's judgment." >





THIS PAGE The library, tucked off the living room, has generous bookcases and a recycled matai desk.

OPPOSITE (clockwise from top left) The hallway - with original matai floorboards - is lit by NUD pendants from Mr Ralph in Paeroa; the custom-made balustrade is from Hamilton's Artform Steelworks. Samuel and Nina in Samuel's bedroom; the *Idiot* painting is by New Zealand artist and filmmaker Greg Page. The children's bathroom has a free-standing bath; the blue wall tiles from the UK were bought at Tile Warehouse. The playroom, the house's original living room, where the children's Lego-building skills are displayed on custom-made shelving.



They added 100sqm to the previously 180sqm home. Natasha says that in the first few weeks after it was finished it seemed like they were living in a giant house. "But we've grown into it."

Evan's design made thoughtful connections between old and new. This starts at the front door - now easy for visitors to find - combining a wall of the Waikato's own Huntly bricks with contemporary glass panels. Three slithery ceramic eels by artist Samuel Ludden decorate the bricks, a playful nod to Natasha's work as a freshwater ecologist with the Department of Conservation.

The children's domain and a guest room are in the original house. Nina's bedroom is in the old dining room, Lewis' room incorporates part of the old kitchen, and Samuel's is in the former master bedroom. The previous sitting room has become the children's playroom.

The original matai floor has been stripped and polished to honeyed beauty and the stairway that once serviced the basement

garage has been widened. Nowadays it leads to the ground floor living room built at the rear, encompassing a new kitchen, dining room, living room and library nook.

The extension follows the footprint of the upstairs but the basement was further excavated to create more height, plus space for a master bedroom, en suite, laundry and storage. The excavated soil was used to form two distinct levels on the previously sloping section and a 10,000-litre underground water tank was installed so the house's utilities could be run off recycled water from the roof.

With a high standard of insulation and a polished concrete floor in the living room that holds the sun, the house naturally maintains a comfortable temperature on winter nights. So far Evan and Natasha haven't used heating.

In summer, banks of glass sliders open the room seamlessly to the deck and lawn, banishing any feeling of disconnection with the outdoors. >



THIS PAGE (from top) The timber deck has been cantilevered over an existing retaining wall. Recycled timber flooring at the entrance is from a demolished bach in Piha; the ceramic eels are by Samuel Ludden, and the painting is Antonia Beckett's *London Plane*.

OPPOSITE The number 4 in Huntly brick is set into a new boundary wall in Austral Distinction bricks in Caviar.

Q&A

IN THE WEEKENDS: We provide a ferry service for kids' sport, we enjoy family adventures into the wild and play board games.

FAVOURITE LOCAL CAFE: The Sugar Bowl on Maeroa Road, our Forest Lake local.

FAVOURITE KITCHEN APPLIANCE: Having two full-sized ovens to feed our extended families.

BEST SEAT IN THE HOUSE: The blue chair in the library (see page 80). It's a sunny spot that overlooks the garden.

BEST STORAGE IDEA: Have plenty of it - the old house had very little.

BEST PIECE OF ADVICE WE EVER RECEIVED: To move out during the renovation.

Evan Mayo

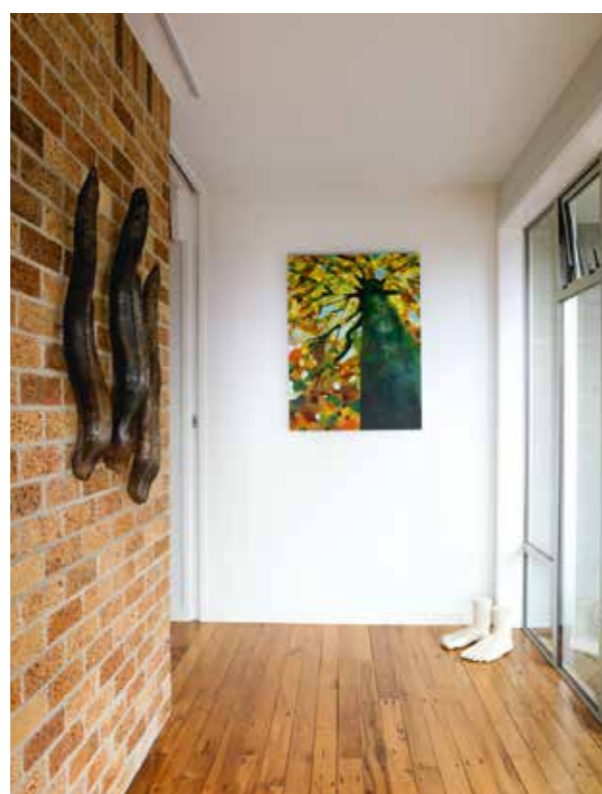


Evan and Natasha are minimalist in style and they enjoy their extensive collection of New Zealand art. The bold hues of a Rodney Hamel painting are picked up in a bright floor rug, dining chairs and a patterned splashback in the kitchen.

There are two contemporary Spun chairs by UK designer Thomas Heatherwick, bought by Evan and Natasha in London, and two 1950s wooden-framed chairs by Austrian-New Zealand architect Ernst Plischke, found by Evan on Trade Me.

Although from different centuries, the chairs sit comfortably in the same room: a metaphor for the harmony of the home.

"It's easy to knock old houses over," says Evan. "We wanted to blend old and new rather than start again." ■



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