

**THIS PAGE** The original character features of Sophie and Simon Moutter's central Auckland home, which features on our cover, lent themselves to the use of colour on the walls (Aalto 'Zero'); four hand-cut bevelled mirrors were installed in the fireplace surround; the window seat cushions have been re-covered in Designers Guild Newport fabric in a soft turquoise blue.

**OPPOSITE** The furniture in the family room came from Sophie and Simon's previous house; the aqua and gold tones became the base for this room's palette.



## *Once in a blue moon*

*It's not often that a house combines central city living with leafy seclusion*

WORDS LEEANN YARE / PHOTOGRAPHS LARNIE NICOLSON



**M**AKING A CHOICE between the convenience of central city living, where all the essentials are close at hand, and peaceful, bush-clad surroundings with pretty sea views can be tough. More often than not, the result is something of a compromise, where privacy and views are combined with long commutes, or the convenience of city life is offset by an uninspiring panorama of neighbouring backyards.

There are no such trade-offs for Sophie and Simon Moutter, whose home, surrounded by bush with views directly to the Waitemata Harbour and Rangitoto Island, is improbably located right in the heart of Remuera in central Auckland.

"We bought our house in 2009, just before Jack was born," says Sophie. "We wanted a home in Remuera that had good separate spaces to cater for our two young children and Simon's older kids. We liked the property because of its layout, great location and private setting – the views and big, bushy section in the middle of the city really blew us away." Simon, who will soon take over as CEO of Telecom, is happy with his proximity to the city and Sophie, a stay-at-home mum to Ben, five, and Jack, two, loves living close to everything she and the family need.

"Newmarket, Parnell and the city are only minutes away, there are loads of parks and places nearby for the kids and we're close to great schools and kindergarten for Jack. There's great shopping and we love to go to Parnell's La Cigale market." >



**THIS PAGE** (clockwise from top left) Sophie Moutter. Leadlight windows are a notable feature of the house; this internal window is between the formal dining room and family room. Sophie is always on the lookout for interesting pieces in pale blue.

**OPPOSITE** The palette was reversed for the formal living room; the walls are in Porters Paint's 'Herd' and the sofas are covered in a soft blue velvet from Unique Fabrics; the Mokum patterned rug was custom-made for the room in Nepal.



**THIS PAGE** Sophie says the kitchen design is not what she would have chosen but it's functional; a few tweaks and some bold wallpaper are lined up for the near future. **OPPOSITE** (clockwise from top left) The entry walls have been wallpapered in a Designers Guild geometric design – Sussex in Duck Egg; Fez, a Mokum rug in darker tones, anchors the scheme. White ceramics and a vase of hydrangeas make a welcoming display in the entranceway. The playroom is near the kitchen, where Sophie can keep an eye on the boys; the storage unit is from Meluka.



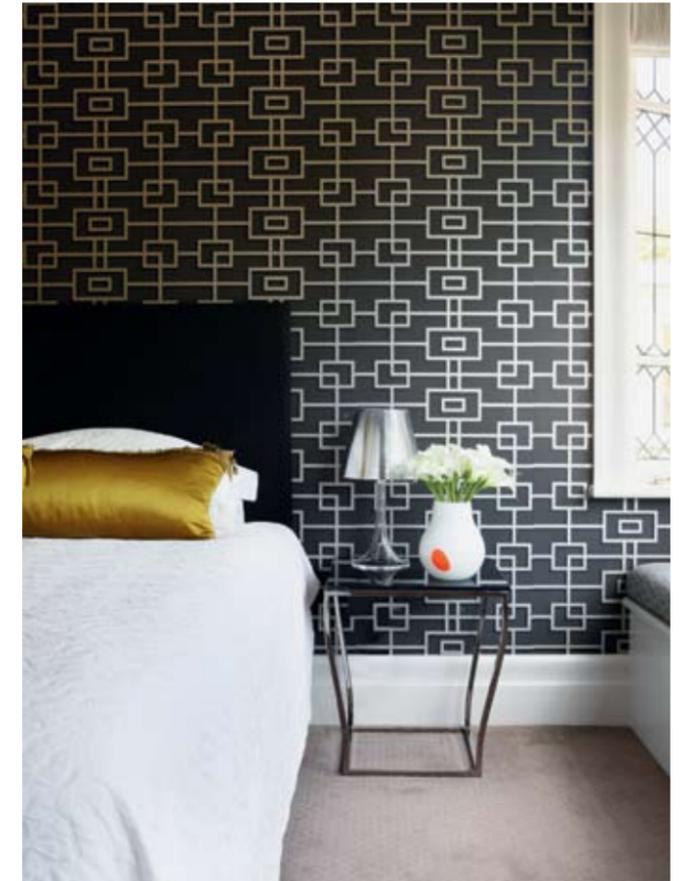
So, the traditional bungalow-style home ticked the location and lifestyle boxes. But it seems there were drawbacks, even with this winning combination. “It really did have great bones,” says Sophie, “but sadly lacked a lot of its original character and the colour scheme was cold and uninspiring. The exterior was grey, the inside walls were all quite dull shades of grey and some parts of the house looked very tired.”

Sophie drew on the experience of Helen Wilcock of design.spec to assist with the interior redecoration. “Helen worked with us on our previous home in Orakei and we really liked her approach and style. She is very responsive and understanding of life with small kids and the constraints that can create. Working with a designer you like is a great experience but we also think it can save you time and money. You can allocate resources more wisely and eliminate decorating mistakes.”

Helen’s responsibilities included selecting the paints, flooring and wallpapers and providing fabric recommendations. “Most important, she arranged and managed all the contractors and supervised their work. We think this is one of the biggest benefits of hiring a professional interior designer – they can manage many of the tradesmen that you would normally have to deal with personally,” says Simon. >



**THIS PAGE** The classic style of the master bedroom features a bed cover in Debussy, a quilted velvet fabric by Andrew Martin. **OPPOSITE** (clockwise from top left) A pair of Chaim Mae lounge chairs from Sarsfield Brooke provide a sculptural element in the master bedroom. The geometric pattern of Designers Guild Rheinsberg wallpaper complements the leadlight glass bay window in the guest room. In the bathroom, classic marble with a twist – a contemporary Kartell Louis chair.



*“I like an uncluttered look, but not one that is cold and sterile. I really like homes that feel personal and have a heart”*



Sophie describes her style as “a bit of a mix. I like an uncluttered look but not one that is cold or sterile. I really like homes that feel personal and that have a heart.” She’s a big fan of UK interior design stars Andrew Martin and Kelly Hoppen: “I like the way [Kelly Hoppen] contrasts matt with shiny and the way her designs seem to marry comfort and chic,” says Sophie.

A firm believer in the use of colour, pattern and texture, she focuses on individuality through design. “Anyone can have beige walls!” She has combined her own love of soft, delicate hues of blue with shimmers of silver and gold and bursts of pattern and texture. The result is a fine balance of feminine and masculine style, with just enough hard lines to contain the pretty factor.

Encouraged by what they’ve already achieved the couple are about to start work on the laundry, their en suite and the guest bathroom, and a few small modifications to the kitchen.

Would Sophie have done anything differently? “I would have designed the existing kitchen differently, but I am not sure we will change it for some time – functionally it’s fine. For now we’ll make a few minor tweaks and perhaps add some fabulous wallpaper that will give it a bit more wow.” >



For Sophie, the layout is the big success story – the easy flow of spaces is perfect for family living. “Our home really works for us because it has lots of different areas. A playroom area adjacent to the kitchen is great for keeping the littlies close at hand while I’m working in the kitchen, and the downstairs apartment is perfect for our live-in au pair. Simon and I love the lounge and dining for entertaining and the outdoor areas are great too.”

With a large family, Sophie thinks it’s important to have separate spaces so people don’t feel on top of each other. “But, to be honest, the thing I most love about our home is its location – we are super close to everything and moments from the city but, because we’re tucked away in the bush, you don’t feel that.

“The views are so inspiring and so iconic to Auckland too. We have often talked about moving and what we’d do next but it would be very hard to leave this home.” ■

**THIS PAGE** (clockwise from top left) A cobblestone pathway weaves its way around one side of the house, where a bromeliad garden has been planted. The unobstructed view out across the harbour to Rangitoto and Waiheke islands is one of the things Sophie loves most about the house. Ben loves to hang out in the playhouse, complete with slide. **OPPOSITE** Sophie rates the “huge, costly” exterior repaint of their classic Remuera bungalow as money well spent.



**Favourite kitchen appliance:** I love using my Le Creuset cast-iron cookware and bakeware; the quality is fantastic. Our Nespresso coffee machine also gets a lot of mileage.

**Best money we ever spent:** Repainting the exterior of the house. It was a huge, costly job (it took 13 weeks!) but it’s made such a difference to the feel of our home. The colour caused some debate. I thought we should go all white but I am pleased we listened to Helen. Choosing glass balustrading for the decks so the view is uninterrupted has also made a big difference.

**Best piece of advice:** That homes need a heart and to be lived in, not just be beautiful to look at.

**A good tip:** Plan your lighting at the beginning of a project. It often gets overlooked.

**Bravest thing we did around the house:** Probably the choice of blue velvet on the couches in the formal lounge – they are not at all practical but they are beautiful to look at.

**This weekend we will be:** Pottering at home in the garden with the boys or perhaps going to Omaha if the weather is kind.

**Best time of the week:** Saturday morning. We love waking up and starting the day in a leisurely way with the kids.

**And the worst time:** Monday morning. Isn’t it for everyone?

**Best moments in the garden:** Hanging out with the kids under the trees and playing with them on the trampoline and playhouse. Early evening in the summer is lovely in the garden.

**Happiest day in this house:** We have so many happy days in this house! It is such a great place to be with family and friends. Arriving home with newborn Jack is embedded in my memory as one of the happiest days though.

*Sophie Moutter*

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