



## THOMAS CANNINGS

British-born art director and photographer **Thomas Cannings** recently swapped the world of magazine publishing for a global design role with a leading appliances brand. Here, he talks about the ongoing influence of art, architecture and interiors, at work and at home.

**You've lived in New Zealand for more than a decade now. Where did you train and work prior to this and what brought you to New Zealand?**

I first studied furniture design in London and then went on to complete a degree in Fine Art and Photography in Milan. I loved living in Italy and was there for about 10 years. I worked with some fantastic and well-established brands: from designing in-house for Versace, to art-directing photoshoots for a variety of brands, such as Armani, IWC Schaffhausen, Maserati and Park Hyatt. I started seeing some great design coming from New Zealand and Australia that felt completely different from what was coming out of Europe at the time so, when the opportunity to move over here came up, I jumped at it.

**As creative director of *Urbis* and *Houses* magazines, you have lived and breathed some sublime interiors and architecture. Has this influenced your personal life?**

I've always loved architecture and interior design so it's been fascinating to visit so many extraordinary homes

around the country, and to meet the architects and owners, designers and artists. When I work as a stylist in some of these spaces, I love the challenge of responding to the architecture, the finishing and the location. Sometimes, it's about adding just a few carefully selected and researched items that enhance the intent of the architecture and, at other times, you need to bring warmth, texture and character. At home, I'm constantly changing things around; you can quickly get accustomed to a space and I like interiors to evolve – changing configurations and moving art around lets me see each thing in a new light.

**What was the concept behind your artwork?**

As it is for many of us, the restrictions on travel in the last year or so have led to a rediscovery of my immediate surroundings and given me a deeper appreciation for nature. As lucky as we are in New Zealand to have fared much better than those in many other countries have and be surrounded by nature, there's also the awareness that there's been a shift and we're now further away than before. More isolated. So, this beauty in nature sometimes feels bitter-sweet. With this sentiment in mind and inspired by those ominous still lifes of the 17th-century Dutch artists who painted fruit bowls with insects and skulls, I wanted to create my own, slightly subdued still life that captured this moment in time for me.

**What led to your colour choices?**

I'm currently renovating a mid-century Californian-style bungalow surrounded by native bush, which has been largely unaltered since it was built, and have been looking for ways to update it that stay true to its style and character. I've been inspired by a clever restoration of a Claude Megson house, on Auckland's North Shore, by the owner, spatial design lecturer Rafik Patel. He's taken a modernist palette of primary colours and geometric black beams and translated these into bold teals, sage greens and ochres that keep the same design language but feel more fitting in a New Zealand setting and also more liveable in a home. I chose Resene Shark and Resene Sea Fog for the structural elements that soften the traditional black and white. Then the Resene Blue Smoke and Resene Pirate Gold – akin to hues from a Herman Miller mid-century colour swatch – add contrast and warmth. 🐠



Resene Sea Fog

Resene Pirate Gold

Resene Shark

Resene Blue Smoke



**THIS PAGE**  
Resene Shark,  
Resene Pirate Gold,  
Resene Blue Smoke  
and Resene Sea Fog.  
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