

# At home with colour

Writer and stylist Tracey Strange Watts chooses paint to colour her world

## How did you get into styling interiors?

I trained as a journalist and spent a lot of time working in women's magazines. I've always loved the business of fashion — not just clothing but also beauty and home trends. Years ago, I edited a magazine called *Style*, and it was natural for me to focus on those subjects. Being a writer, too, I've been able to put different looks together — whether it be a room, an outfit or makeup — and then explain how with words.

## How do you describe your style?

I have no interior design training — I am in awe of clever designers — but I think that's been a benefit. I'm not really interested in rules. If it looks good to me, I trust it. Everyone should feel like that when it comes to their own living space. Live with what you love.

## What is your approach to colour?

I used to be afraid of it. When my husband Stu and I bought our mid-century house in Auckland's Titirangi, I thought of turning it into a white Scandinavian box with pale walls and a wooden floor. It would have been so wrong. But I thought I couldn't live with colour, that everything had to be neutral and restful. I soon abandoned that idea. Our house is like a treehouse — high up and surrounded by kauri and bush. It needs to reflect those colours, to be grounded by them. So, we have completely renovated it — every surface has been touched — and there isn't a white wall in sight. We've been here more than 10 years, and it still feels fresh.

## What colours do you live with?

The primary colours are grey and green, predominately Resene Double

Gravel and Resene Secrets. The kitchen is in walnut with a deep grey basalt stone floor. The ceilings, skirtings and window surrounds are all in Resene Rice Cake. If I could change the walls as often as I change the arrangement on our coffee table, I'd add in rich tan-mustards like Resene Noosa one day and reddy browns like Resene Desperado the next. I also love unexpected shades such as Resene Poet, a soft smoky lilac, and even moody reds like Resene Lusty — both of which go so well with the colours of the bush. But, for now, I have to restrict those colours to accessories.

I'm slightly embarrassed to admit that I also appear to have coordinated our home with our animals. Birdie, the silver Labrador and Zorro, the black-and-tan Schnoodle, blend in perfectly. It wasn't by design; let's call it a happy accident. I just love living with greys, browns and tans.

## What advice would you give anyone wanting to be more adventurous with paint colours?

Get someone to hold your hand. I did — the staff at Resene ColorShops are excellent. Go in, study the paint charts and then base a look on your favourite colours. It can help to use A4 paint swatches (called drawdowns in the trade) rather than the small chips on a chart or fandeck. Then, buy some Resene testpots and sample the colours on the wall before deciding. That way, you can see how they perform in light and shade. Pushing yourself a little can be a huge amount of fun.



TOP: The walls of Tracey's home are painted in a subtle grey-green, Resene Secrets. She painted the artwork on the far wall in the sweet-but-smoky Resene Poet.

TOP & BELOW: Tracey with Zorro, the much loved but wilful Schnoodle, often referred to as Beelze-'pup'; the bedroom is painted in Resene Double Gravel.

