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Resene KidzColour

Labour of LOVE

After a tough year followed by a hectic summer decorating, Christchurch mum Milly Woods can relax with her children and enjoy the serene and quirky space she's created for them

By **Vanessa Johnson** Photography **David Baird**



Milly found this bright yellow chair at an op shop.

When Milly Woods was a little girl, reading was her favourite thing. "I used to get caught reading under the covers by torchlight," says the 31-year-old single mum of two. Rex, three and Elsie, one, are following suit – so when it came to making over their room, books were always going to feature.

Over time Milly had been filing away clever decorating ideas that she hoped to use, such as converting a wardrobe into a reading nook. But 2010 and 2011 saw life take a few roller coaster dips and turns, putting decorating on the back burner. While she was pregnant with Elsie, Milly's relationship with the children's father ended and a few months later the February earthquake struck, damaging the family's home. Milly was single, aiming to complete her Masters in Environmental Policy by the end of the year and parenting a newborn and a toddler in a well-shaken house.

Winning our Resene Dream Room competition in December was a thrill – but a daunting one. Winners were given \$750 worth of Resene paint vouchers and \$750 cash, and just two months to bring their designs to fruition. "It was so nice to be able to afford to buy brushes, rollers, paint trays and tape instead of just thinking about it," says Milly. But she was also under pressure. With her hands more than full, she couldn't afford to waste time. "I started painting straight away. I worked a lot at night. Rex slept in

my bed and Elsie was in the portacot." Fortunately, the children go to preschool on a Tuesday so Milly had a regular spell of child-free time. "My cousin Georgie, who's 15, came and stayed for a few days too so she could watch the children, and my Auntie Wendy, Georgie's mum, helped me paint."

From the start Milly wanted to create a special place for her children. "As a kid I really liked having a wee corner. I wanted to make the reading nook their cosy space to curl up in."

A grey curtained wardrobe was crying out for a new look. Inside the plaster was cracked from earthquake damage. "Dad helped me line it with gib. The MDF shelving was already there but needed sealing and took a whole heap of Resene Quick Dry Waterborne Primer undercoat. I painted the entire wardrobe with Resene Magnetic Magic so the kids could play with their magnets on all three walls."

The seat had to be strong enough for Milly and the children to sit on together. Her dad Roger Woods helped cut and position the boards and Milly used foam squabs and batting from old cushions to pad it. "I have a thing for sheets from the 1970s, so I chose one from my collection and double-backed it with a plain white sheet so the fabric was stronger and then I used a staple gun to attach it to the boards," she says.

Books are displayed on wooden moulding attached to the wall and

Retro suitcases are great for storing clothes and toys.

Rex and Elsie's reading nook is becoming a favourite spot in their new room. Milly made sure they could all fit inside and that the seat is strong enough for them to enjoy storytime together. Her taste for the 1970s gives the room a unique twist.



Musical instruments are on the top shelf just in case the kids get the urge to 'jam' too early in the morning.



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Handy tips and tricks

- The butterfly canvas, below, is the clever work of Milly. Make a stencil of the butterfly shape, trace around it onto magazine pages, cut them out and paint the butterflies with Resene Multishield+. Once dry, they can be mounted onto the canvas with pins.
- Milly jumped at the chance to buy the rug, left, when she saw a \$50 'Buy Now' on TradeMe.
- The desk, chairs and suitcases were all op shop bargains and cost between \$3 and \$5 each.
- The bunting is from Tea Pea and Grandma found the vintage-looking alphabet cards on a trip to London.

stored in the baskets under the seat, which Milly painted in Resene Zappo.

"The owl with hearts wall decal was a gift from my friend Maggie who reviewed it on her blog. I liked the hearts and the fact that it's yellow - Rex's favourite colour." The wardrobe shelves contain the children's favourite toys and games and another set of shelves under the window are home to the ever popular dinosaurs. The shelves were then painted with Resene Lustacryl semi-gloss waterborne enamel.

Milly's mum Pru Steven made the curtains. "We found the fabric on sale at Lincraft in Christchurch reduced to around \$20 a metre and Mum added the pom-pom trim as a surprise."

When Rex saw his new room for the first time he said: "Mama, love it!" And, as amazing as the reading nook is, Rex loves his bed so much Milly can't get him out of it. "I bought the frame for \$10 on TradeMe, it's an old hospital bed but I had it powder-coated yellow which cost about \$200." The duvet cover came from Ikea in Sydney and was a gift from Rex's Uncle Jim.

Elsie's favourite thing in the room seems to be the pale blue Tom Boontje pendant shade - a cascade of flowers in the middle of the ceiling. It was a gift to Milly from the children's dad when they were living in London. From beneath it, snug in her cot, Elsie's bound to have sweet dreams thanks to her mum's labour of love.

Paint for effect Another retro touch: Four Little Golden Books are reborn as art. Milly painted the frames using a testpot of Resene Gulf Stream and included titles to please both Elsie and Rex.



Paper butterflies on canvas

A soothing shade of blue, Resene Mabel appeals to both boys and girls



Resene Magnetic Magic adds fun to all three walls in the reading nook