

SPLASH PALACE

With a beautiful heritage home
renovated to fit your growing family,
what more could you wish for?
A pool house, that's what.

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YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY: EVERYONE should have a pool house. Okay, okay, they don't say that, but they should, and make that a man cave, too. One look at Louise and Lou Thompson's place in Mt Eden, Auckland, and we bet, like us, you'll start rewriting your list of wouldn't-it-be-nices.

"We dove straight in," says Louise of their decision to renovate the 1910 home from a poky single-level dwelling with narrow hallways, dark bedrooms and "funny little added-on areas" to three storeys that sprawl into the garden and over to the self-contained pool house. "In hindsight, it was probably the best way to go; we were completely ignorant of what was involved in a renovation, and it was exciting, a bit of a whirlwind."

"The real estate agent showed us through on a Saturday morning and we'd purchased it by the afternoon. Lou dreamed of having a sound-proofed entertaining space, so he walked straight through the house and down to the 'cave' below. I paid more attention to the house and the setting: the beautiful façade, the elevation and the space."

Located near the foot of the mountain, the bungalow was built on a lava flow, with one >

EXTERIOR The pool is lined with pebbles that Louise says "feel divine underfoot. It reflects the sky and the trees and feels quite tropical." **DINING** Around the BoConcept table are multi-coloured Ice chairs that match the stools around the kitchen island. **SNUG** "Books are like art in our house, so we repurposed the old ceiling beams from the kitchen into a shelf," says Louise. "It's nice to know we've retained a bit more of the original home."

IN THE FRAME The black and neon artwork in the dining area is by Beatrice Carlson. Concerned it might be too dark, the couple test-drove it for a year before purchasing by renting it through Art Associates; they ultimately discovered that its glossy finish actually reflects the light.





SWITCHED ON “I once read that lighting is the jewellery of the house, and I agree,” says Louise. The couple’s copper Tom Dixon Fat Spot light and embossed Flos Skygarden pendant are two of their most treasured pieces.



side on level ground and the other on stilts. No match for these two, over three years the main floor was extended to even out the additions, the spacious attic converted into a sublime master suite, and the lower level reshaped to house amenities, a fourth bedroom and Lou’s bar/theatre zone.

With such lovely bones at their disposal, Louise and Lou wanted to reuse as many of the existing design features as they could. Nowhere is this more evident than at the front of the house, where stained glass and leadlight windows lead from the entry foyer through to the formal living room, which retains its original wall panelling, open fireplace and wallpaper depicting fox hunts, plus exposed ceiling beams like those in daughter Alice’s bedroom across the hall.

Underfoot, sanded and stained rimu floorboards add character to the uncarpeted spaces. “I like that they’re marked, have borer trails and creak in places,” says Louise. “It’s what old houses are all about.”

She’s chuffed with the vintage light fittings in the entryway and living room, too. “I initially wanted to replace them, but I’m so pleased we didn’t as they’re beautiful in their own way. ▷



KITCHEN Louise confides that the extra-deep sink in the island has been a handy addition: “You can hide all the dirty dishes in it...” **SNUG** A Guns lamp by Philippe Starck for Flos illuminates this cosy relaxation zone. **FORMAL LIVING** Louise says one of her best finds is “Sealy” the stone seal, which she found at Flotsam & Jetsam and had wired to become a lamp. “There’s one like it at a bach where we spent our summers growing up; it feels like my childhood.”



MASTER BEDROOM With a pitched roof and a spacious walk-in wardrobe lit by skylights, the couple's restful bedroom has a view of the Waitakere Ranges to the west – Louise says the sunsets are heavenly. **ALICE'S BEDROOM** Fairy lights prettify the items in Alice's space, including the Porto corner shelves by Mocka. **BALCONY** Alice and William play in a Città hammock on the master bedroom's balcony.

They need to be rewired and the bulbs blow every other day; it drives us crazy – must be love!”

Complementing these classic hits are contemporary accents the couple took their time to find, Lou's crush on orange hues a key influence. “I'm glad he loves it because it's brought so much colour to the house – in subtly managed ways,” teases the more minimalist Louise. “I really didn't know much about anything before the renovation, and this is slightly embarrassing to admit, but we often chose paint colours based on their names. But I've since come to love architecture, interiors and design.

“I like black, white, brass and gold, and objects that feel personal. The deer head above our outdoor fire is from Lou's family farm in the Wairarapa; the Koko Classics hide in the dining room represents our heritage as farmers.”

As luxe as the interior of this home is, it's the great outdoors that's the star of the show. Sliding panels in the kitchen and dining area open the house to the deck and deep green pool, creating one enormous room; louvres overhead and a fireplace allow it to be enjoyed rain, hail or shine.

And how about that pool house? With its timber-enclosed sauna and pared-back appeal, >

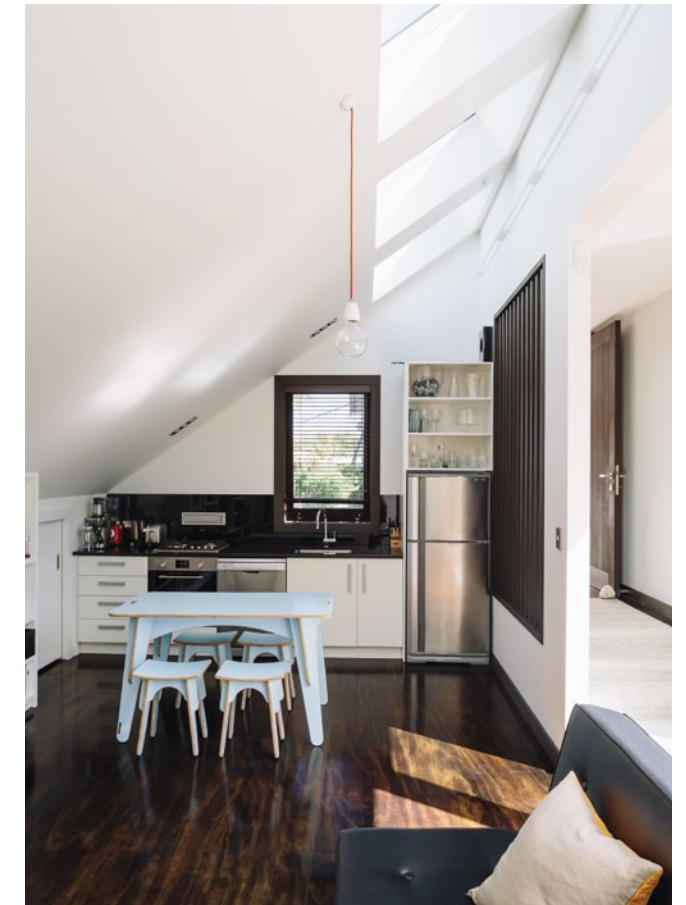
“I have a ‘black thumb’, so our houseplants are basically death row inmates, although I'm starting to believe the fiddle-leaf fig may get a reprieve...”



ENSUITE “Our bathroom is bigger than our bedroom and I never realised how good that would be – it's such a luxury,” says Louise. “We had to work within certain existing lines and it just worked out that way. And we're thrilled it did.” Little decoration is required in this calming space, a brass planter next to the bath from Chesters the single striking accent.



DECK Made from recycled wood from boats damaged in the Pacific Islands tsunami, the outdoor table was a bargain because it was wobbly; the couple bought it, then fixed it up. Louise's favourite spot on the property is the sunny deck at the far end of the pool, furnished with brightly coloured chairs by Mamasita.



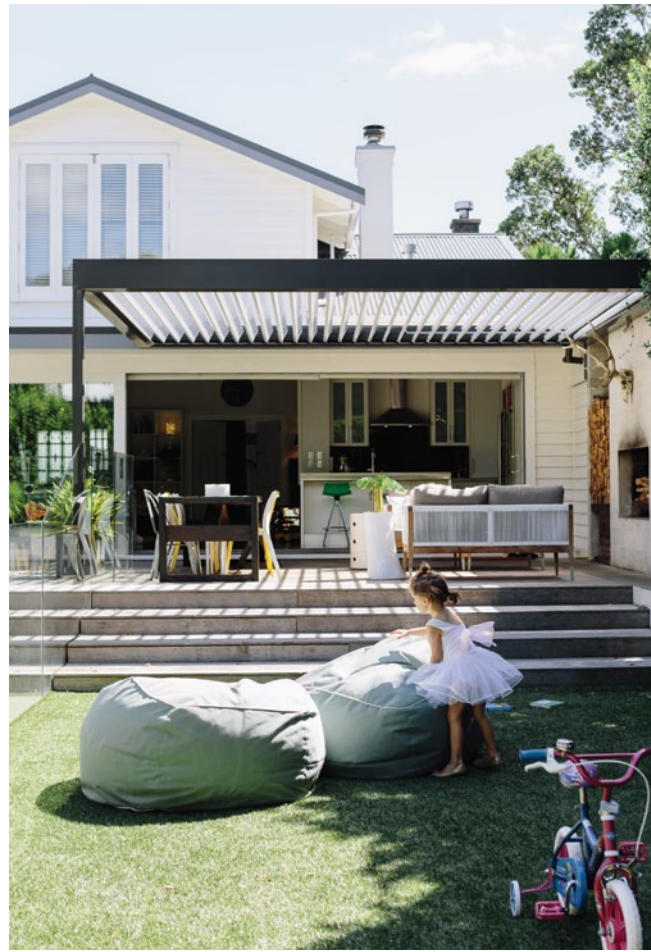
it brings a distinctly modern element to the property. "I love the slatted 'walls' – they feel a bit Balinese," says Louise. "You can glimpse the palm tree through the slats and it feels like you could be anywhere in the world, and when you lie down in the bedroom, all you see is sky. The doors open onto the pool and it gets all-day sun. We've actually had weekends 'away' there."

It's certainly a drawback for their Airbnb guests. Yes, that's right, if you want to check in here, you can. "When Lou travels for work, the kids and I sometimes stay with my parents or his mum, so we thought we'd try renting out the house," says Louise. "We weren't sure if people would be interested in a suburban home, but we've had some great tenants – Mick Fleetwood stayed for a month! You have to be flexible, but it's an amazing way for me to declutter, spring clean and contribute to our income while still being with the kids."

Louise says the beauty of renovating an old house is getting to restore a piece of history that tells a story. Her own has a happy ending. "We're homebodies and this truly is our haven – it's turned out to be the perfect family house. I love travelling, but never get the blues when I get back – it's such a treat for us to come home." 🏡



POOL HOUSE Positioned above the garage, the chic pool house has a monochrome colour palette enlivened by the bright red cords of pendant lights by Muuto and a baby blue flat-pack table by Mike Hindmarsh. "One of the best things we did was the ply flooring," says Louise. "At the time, it was a cost-saving measure and also something we thought suited a pool house: hard-wearing so we wouldn't mind if it got dirty or wet. We stained it dark brown and it came up beautifully."



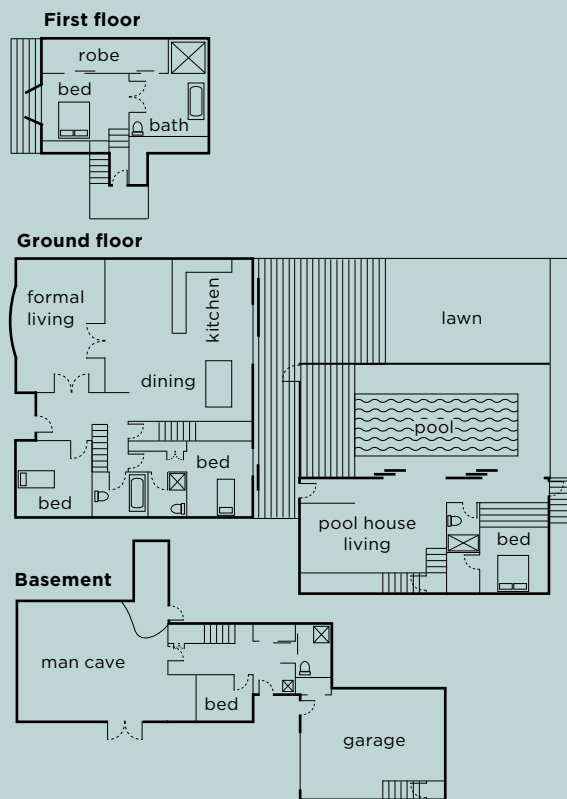
EXTERIOR "Lou loves the outdoor fireplace and barbecue," says Louise. "He's a 'pyromaniac' and derives great pleasure from lighting the fire and prepping the Weber for dinner. We've been known to let off fireworks on a random Saturday evening just for fun." Louise made the side table above using timber from the walnut tree that once dominated the backyard. It had outgrown the space, so was reimagined as tables and stools.

AT A GLANCE

The project: Full-time mother Louise Thompson and her sports marketer and manager husband Lou revamped a four-bedroom bungalow in Auckland's Mt Eden for themselves and their children Alice (4) and William (2), and their cat, Oscar the Thompson.

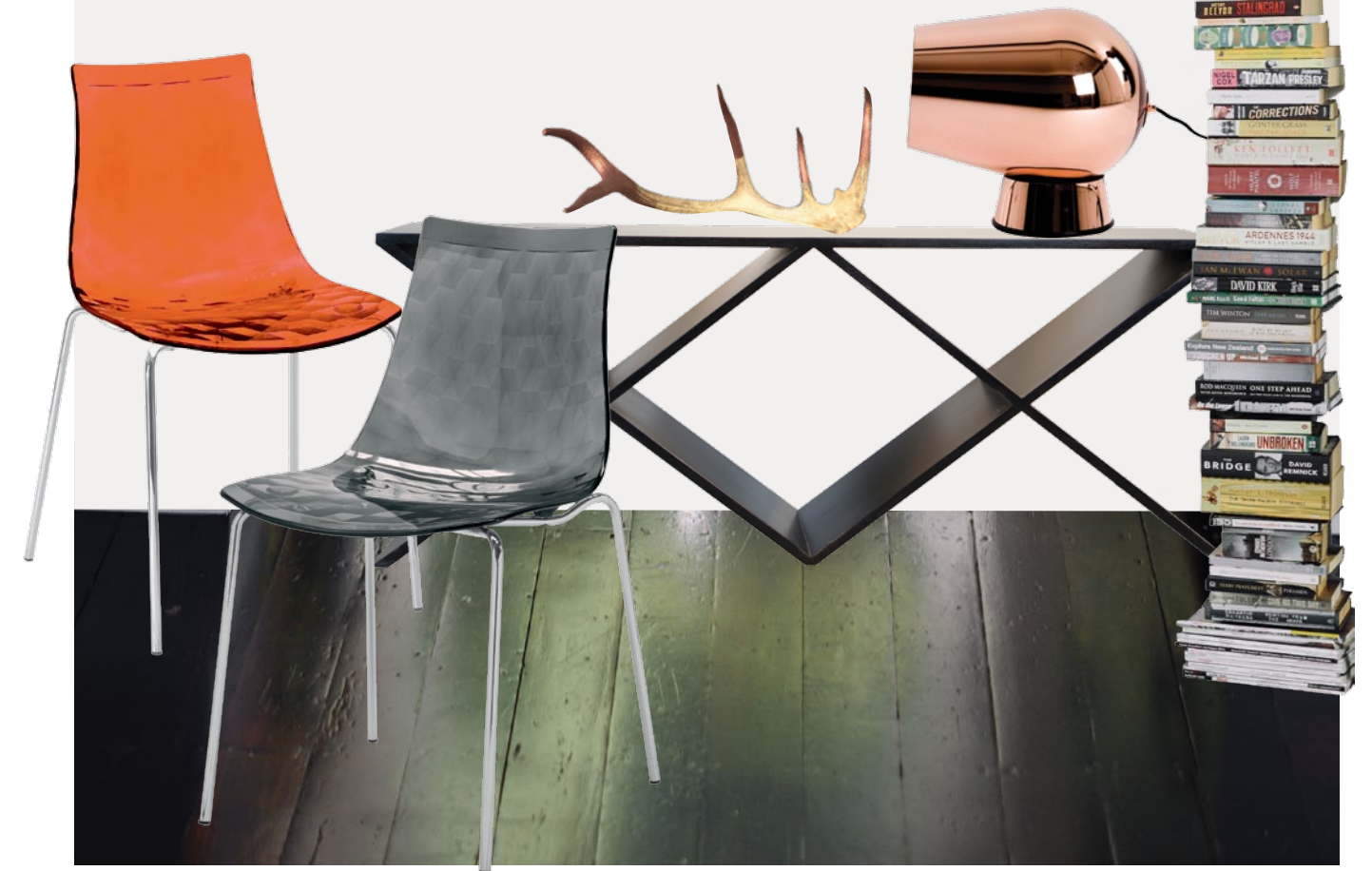
Louise, what advice would you give to anyone considering a renovation? Try to see the humour in the misses – it's not always easy but if you can laugh it off it'll be much more fun. And double your budget!

What are some of the key lessons you learned? **1.** We found that tradesmen would use their 'initiative' to do something completely different to what we wanted, so you have to be really hands-on the whole time. **2.** Always employ a specialist to do a specialist job. It wasn't until all the door handles started falling off in our hands that I discovered there are very skilled people who install door hardware for a living. **3.** The cheapest quote isn't always the best. It might seem like a saving now, but you'll end up spending a lot more money – and having more headaches to deal with – when it goes south. **4.** Don't feel the need to populate your house with 'stuff' immediately. Good things take time, so don't buy for the sake of it.



DESIGN DETAILS

Colourful accents and clever lighting make all the difference in this light and airy home.



TOP, FROM LEFT Skygarden pendant light by Marcel Wanders for Flos, \$5470, ecc.co.nz. Powder, Glitter print by Beatrice Carlson, \$2750, artbythesea.co.nz. **BOTTOM, FROM LEFT** Ice chairs by Calligaris, \$359 each, dawsonandco.nz. Diamond console, \$1495, republichome.com. Deer antlers, \$149, collected.co.nz. Fat Spot light by Tom Dixon, \$920, ecc.co.nz. Vertical bookshelf, \$525, collected.co.nz.