

25 BEAUTIFUL HOMES

HOUSE TO HOME *Inspiring real-life transformations*

RESTORATION DRAMA

A house fire prompted
a fresh start

BY THE SEA

A stylish coastal
retreat in Cornwall

Design advice
for every room

PATTERN AND COLOUR CONFIDENCE

CLEVER TIPS FOR WALLS, FLOORS
AND FURNITURE



A SEA CHANGE

Melding beautifully with its surroundings, Vanessa and Richard Owen's laid-back home fits perfectly with their family's idyllic lifestyle

FEATURE RACHEL LEEDHAM | PHOTOGRAPHY CAROLINE MARDON



UNIQUE

HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY A 1913 villa, relocated to the coast
LOCATION Kerikeri, New Zealand
ROOMS Hall, sitting room, kitchen-diner, scullery, two studies, utility, four bedrooms (one en suite), bathroom
PURCHASED 2005
PREVIOUS PROPERTY 'Before, we lived in a plantation-style house nearby,' says Vanessa.



EXTERIOR

The family enjoy these gorgeous views for nine months of the year and go travelling for the other three. This house, plus four cottages, are available for holiday rentals (driftwoodnz.com)



VIEW TO SITTING ROOM

An unusual bentwood pendant light draws attention upwards. Roll pendant by David Trubridge, from £675, Holloways of Ludlow. For a similar natural rug, try Jute Bouclé in Flax, from £79, West Elm



STUDY
In order to create a focal point in this room, the couple fashioned the fireplace from offcuts of wood, then plastered it over. Find similar Georgian wing chairs, price on enquiry, at Leather Chairs of Bath



KITCHEN
The table, once used for playing ping-pong, has been with the family for more than 30 years and is on its eighth top. Pendant light painted in Oval Room Blue, £60 for 2.5L, Farrow & Ball; for a similar industrial design, try Skinflint, £390



HALL
Nods to the couple's British heritage add a homely touch. The Happy Jack shopper bag is similar, £15, Notonthehighstreet.com



KITCHEN
By positioning the Aga in front of the window, the couple are able to enjoy the beautiful views while cooking. Four-oven range cooker, from £12,110, Aga. Traditional kettle in Almond is similar, £90, Le Creuset



HALL
The painting honours Vanessa and Richard's 30th wedding anniversary. Painting by Paula Coulthard, price on request

Back in 1988, newlyweds Vanessa and Richard Owen set sail from their native England for New Zealand. After a few long sojourns en route, they finally arrived at their destination six years later and have lived there ever since. It was their passion for sailing that drew the couple to the Te Puna Inlet 13 years ago. 'We used to sail past it and stop to picnic on the beach,' recalls Vanessa. 'Then we discovered that a stretch of land was for sale, and knew we could create our dream home here.' But rather than build a new property on the land, the pair had a more

left-field idea. 'We had a specific notion of our New Zealand nirvana, which entailed a beautiful Georgian-style house,' explains Vanessa. 'Of course, there aren't many of them along the coast, so we knew if we wanted one, we would have to bring it here.' After a two-year search, the couple, who now have four children – Dione, 25, Poppy, 23, Milli, 19 and Reef, 11 – found a former retirement home in a nearby town and trucked it, lock, stock and barrel, to the site. They stripped the house back to its bare walls and reconfigured it to suit their lifestyle, while retaining its high ceilings,

timber floors and wraparound verandas. Fortunately, as property developers who had already renovated more than 20 homes, the couple were unfazed by the project. 'We worked on one room at a time, completing each before moving on to the next,' recalls Vanessa. 'It was the only way we could manage it with four children and a full-time business to run at the same time – I could retreat to the completed spaces and pretend the house wasn't a building site!' The kitchen extension, which was added five years ago, is the true hub of the home, with its generous table and decidedly British

Aga. 'In so many ways we are Kiwis, living for the great outdoors and catching crayfish by hand, but then we come home and make a pot of tea on the Aga, much to the mirth of our friends,' she says. Still keen travellers, the family rents out the house for three months each year, which Vanessa took into consideration while decorating, favouring a style that she describes as 'bombproof'. 'The travertine flooring in the kitchen copes brilliantly with all the sand and salt, and there is absolutely nothing precious here,' she says. The palette is inspired by the surrounding coast, with muted blues,

REEF'S BEDROOM

The Warhol-style print immortalises the family's first dog, Spot. Try Etsy for similar custom pop art prints



MAIN BEDROOM

With its soothing palette and private terrace, this space provides a calming retreat from the busy family areas. Provençal rattan white chair, £249, The French Bedroom Company, is a similar style. Walls painted in Light Blue estate emulsion, £45 for 2.5L, Farrow & Ball



BATHROOM

His-and-her sinks bring a luxury hotel touch to the room. Orchard Eden countertop basin, £49.99, Victoria Plum, is a match



MILLI'S BEDROOM

A monochrome theme gives this room a calm, sophisticated air. Classical rattan bed, £882, Sweetpea & Willow, is similar



greys and whites running throughout the home. 'There is a very specific light by the sea – a lot of these colours would look entirely different, often quite drab, further inland,' explains Vanessa.

After learning that the original owner of the house, a Scotsman, had attempted to replicate English oak panelling by treating Totara, an indigenous wood, Vanessa dug out his formula and painstakingly replicated the method. 'It was incredibly complicated and involved rubbing potash into the grain,' she recalls. Vanessa's talent for upcycling is apparent in every room, from the lampshade in the hall,

fashioned from a log basket given to her by a friend, to the coffee table in the sitting room, formerly a ventilation grille salvaged from a library in Auckland. 'I have reached the point in my life where I only want to be surrounded by things I truly love, so I'm constantly re-evaluating the decor and giving pieces away,' she says.

And despite how much they have done, Vanessa says the house will never be finished. 'It gets heavily used by us and our guests all year round so there's always something that requires replacing or is in need of a lick of paint – it's a labour of love.' 🏡