



makeover magic

This Kingsland kitchen perfectly balances classic and modern villa styles, "It. Was. Major."

Heritage renaissance

Interior designer and property expert Jessica Driver and her husband Thomas Ward are experienced hands at house renovations, but even so, the makeover of what was then their home in Kingsland, Auckland, was a huge project.

The couple, who own their own property business I Am Developer, bought the original villa mid-lockdown. Having been a rental for many years it was in a fairly sorry state. "Think Dunedin student flat but worse," Jessica says.

Undaunted, the couple took on a major makeover, at the centre of which was a fully redesigned kitchen, extended to include a new walk-in scullery and laundry and connected to a beautiful open-plan living area. The spaces are divided by a stunning modern fireplace, the feature of which is a curved finish, designed to mirror the shape of the bespoke kitchen island.

"We opted for different shades of white and cream that would allow the heritage panelling and features to be the main focus and stand out. Old villas tend to be dark and cold and we wanted to eradicate that and give it a modern makeover that ties in with the new extension."





Above top: Creamy Resene Albescent White walls trimmed in Resene Thorndon Cream with Resene Eighth Thorndon Cream add warm contrast to the bright white cabinetry in Resene Alabaster. Resene Gull Grey on the island was chosen to reflect subtle grey notes in the adjacent fireplace.


Above: Jessica says her and Thomas' design aesthetic is influenced by a lot of different eras and styles, all of which they take elements from and combine to create a balanced look. The bespoke curved fireplace, painted in Resene Albescent White, also houses a small inset bar. The kitchen island is painted in Resene Gull Grey and the ceiling is in Resene Eighth Thorndon Cream.

Resene Albescent White Resene Alabaster

Left: Part of the villa renovation included replacing the joinery throughout the home. Once complete the joinery was painted in Resene Thorndon Cream with cabinetry in Resene Alabaster. Double doors open the kitchen to an outdoor area with weatherboards painted in Resene Half Alabaster. The kitchen walls are painted in Resene Albescent White.

 Resene Gull Grey

 Resene Eighth Thorndon Cream

 Resene Thorndon Cream

top tip

You can easily repaint cabinetry yourself with Resene Lustacryl semi-gloss waterborne enamel or ask your kitchen manufacturer to use Resene AquaLAQ, a durable finish especially made for cabinetry. Opt for the Resene AquaLAQ SoftTouch finish to reduce fingermarking.

but I think we really pulled it off."

Another key part of the original vision for the kitchen was to have the cabinets running almost floor to ceiling but with an original stud height of 3.4m that was a big ask. To solve that

problem the couple opted to drop the ceiling height. That allowed the cabinets to not only almost run to ceiling height and still be usable, but they were also able to add in a practical overhead storage cavity, all while satisfying their goal of clean, even lines through the whole space.

The scullery door is tall and thin to match the cabinet shapes, and the main kitchen is clear of bulky appliances, with just a wall oven and cooktop visible. "We knew we wanted a big double fridge, but that went into the scullery. Instead, there's a small bar fridge in the kitchen island for the practical things, along with the dishwasher."


"We moved our family into the house partway through the renovation," Jessica says. "We'd just had our second daughter, who was a month old, and we had a three-year-old. We went through all the lockdowns with no kitchen, lounge or dining. It was trying times!"

And though the couple have renovated other properties for clients there was a difference when it came to tackling their own home.

"You have more ownership, and I think you can be more creative and push the boundaries a bit further when it's your own place," Jessica says, adding that there is a unique satisfaction knowing that their efforts are now being enjoyed by new owners.

"It was an absolute labour of love, and we feel very proud of the journey this property took us on. We turned it into a warm luxurious home and restored its heritage." H

design Jessica Driver and Thomas Ward
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words Kerri Jackson
images Taylor Wilson

Resene
Half Alabaster 

The kitchen walls painted in Resene SpaceCote Low Sheen in Resene Albescent White from the Karen Walker Paints collection provide a subtle contrast to the bright white cabinetry in Resene Alabaster, ceiling in Resene Eighth Thorndon Cream and trims in Resene Thorndon Cream. The same colour scheme is used throughout most of the home's interior.

"The warmer Resene paint colours bring out the richness of the wooden flooring. The clean whites accentuate the high ceilings and create a spacious tranquillity."

As well as keeping the kitchen light and bright the mix of cool and warm neutrals honours the home's history, Jessica says.

The commitment to a cohesive look is a defining feature of the finished kitchen renovation. Jessica and Thomas laboured over each element of the kitchen to ensure it not only satisfied their vision for the finished kitchen but worked well with their design choices throughout the open living areas. Colours in the island benchtop influenced wall colours, flecks of grey in the stone base of the fireplace influenced the colour of the kitchen island and the marble splashback.

Jessica says the vision started with the quartz island benchtop and went out from there. "We chose the stone first. We knew which one we wanted so we took photos of it and started modelling up the kitchen we wanted."

The couple worked closely with friend and cabinetmaker Matt Taine of Rabbet Design who added his expertise on what was possible before making all the kitchen cabinetry, including the centrepiece kitchen island, which features an elegant curved end in both the marble and the fluted wooden panelling painted in Resene Gull Grey.

Jessica says the island was one of the biggest challenges of the kitchen, but also one of the most rewarding aspects of the finished design.

"It was a balancing act getting all the elements working together; creating that curve, then adding the fluted panelling and the stone,