

- Resene Eighth Black White
- Resene Brown Derby

# winds of change

The duo behind Whirlwind Designs may have moved from windy Wellington, but their popular whirligig decorated sculptures will continue.

**M**ost people would call Michelle Fyson and Nick Blake artists, but they aren't keen on the term. "We're makers," says Michelle. "We're generalists. We're not ceramicists or woodworkers or metalworkers, but we do all those things."

Michelle and Nick have combined their skills into Whirlwind Designs for many years, with the resulting sum, they say, better than their individual talents. For eight years, the couple – partners in business and life – ran a Wellington shop in the heart of arty Miramar, packed with cool, quaint and colourful delights, nearly all designed and/or made by the pair, including their extremely popular "whirligigs".

At the end of last year, they closed the shop, packed up and moved north to calm and warm Mangawhai. But the move from windy Wellington doesn't mean they've run out of the puff needed to make their whirligigs, the colourful garden wind sculptures Nick carefully shapes from pine board ready for Michelle to finish them in Resene paints.

Each bird, all New Zealand natives, begins with Resene Quick Dry primer before being given a basecoat of Resene Lumbersider tinted to Resene Black or Resene White, depending on the bird (the kiwi begins with Resene Brown Derby). Then bird-appropriate colours are applied, such as Resene Smashing and Resene Time Warp for the pūkeko or Resene Stroboli and Resene Pioneer Red for the kererū, with some Resene FX Paint Effects medium (a tintable acrylic medium that allows you to create unique paint effects easily) added for sheen.

Resene FX Metallic products are then applied with a dry brush and rubbed with a cloth to mimic the iridescence of feathers. "For the kererū, for example, I use two different metallics, Resene Time Warp

and Resene Lucifer, along with Resene Mulberry mixed with Resene FX Paint Effects medium. So, greens and blues, but also purple as a wash," says Michelle. Nick then finishes each bird's details and creates the stands and mechanics.

"Often the pūkeko is the favourite, but some weeks we might get orders for five kererū," says Michelle. That's good because Resene Lucifer (a hypnotic peacock blue) is one of Michelle's favourite colours.

When Michelle met Nick 20 years ago and started painting the birds, the choice of paint was obvious. She's been a massive fan of Resene paints since she and a friend started a decorative effects-painting business in Whāngārei back in the 90s.

As untrained painters, she says Resene paints were extremely easy and forgiving to use, and, as they afforded such great coverage, the pair might have to do only two coats on a wall instead of four. "Decorative effects-painting is very physical work, but it was great training in what can be done with paints. And Resene has such a huge range of colours."

Resene paints are so long-lasting that Michelle says you can still find some of her murals she painted in Whāngārei 30 years on.

Now happily domiciled in Mangawhai, Michelle and Nick are turning their attention to making an old double garage into a small but special new home. The project will certainly involve a lot of Resene paint. **H**

To see more of their designs, visit [www.whirlwinddesigns.com](http://www.whirlwinddesigns.com).

**words** Lee-Anne Duncan  
**images** Michelle Fyson

- Resene Pioneer Red
- Resene Dynamite
- Resene Black



Resene Red Berry

Resene Mulberry

Resene Stroboli

Resene Smashing

Resene Lucifer

Resene Time Warp

Resene White

**Above top left:** Michelle Fyson works with her partner Nick Blake to create whirligigs that have had customers in a spin for more than 20 years.

**Above right:** The pūkeko is one of Whirlwind Designs' most popular wind sculptures. The pūkeko is painted in a basecoat of Resene Black with layers of Resene FX Metallic Time Warp for the feathers. The beak and feet are Resene Red Berry with a colourwash of Resene FX Paint Effects medium mixed with Resene Dynamite.

**Above left:** To create the tūi, Michelle and Nick paint a basecoat of Resene Lucifer before applying Resene FX Pearl Shimmer, a pearlescent glaze, followed by Resene White for the throat tufts and feather accents.

## top tip

Help bright colours keep their colour for longer in the harsh sun with Resene Clearcoat UVS. It provides an extra clear layer of protection to help your project stay bright and beautiful.