

The designers of this detail-oriented Greytown home put absolutely everything into it.

# HEART AND SOUL

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Partway through Susie and James Mackie's renovation of their Greytown home, they heard rumours people were wondering what was taking so long – and as owners of Mackit Architecture & Construction, they couldn't have that. "We had a 'Mackit project in progress' sign out the front," says Susie, "so we got another one made that said, 'It's our own place – we don't normally take this long'. It got a great reaction; even now, people say they loved our sign. And they realised we weren't useless!"

In actual fact, their project's steady pace was quite deliberate. Architectural designer and builder James has always been an old soul. With an affinity for the objects and ideals of eras past, he values heritage and craftsmanship, quality over quantity, and focused over fast and furious.

"We've got a bit of reputation as a company in terms of how much we ask of people," he says of the care and attention he, Susie and their team of architects and builders put into their work. "We're asking for that top 2% of attention to detail, above the industry standard – and even more so on our own project."

The five-year renovation of their 1960s home drew on >

**EXTERIOR** Extended to level off the existing home's 'L' shape, the front of the house is clad in dark Titan panels and cedar in a mix of blonde and warmer tones. **OPPOSITE** The final flourish on the project was the recent landscaping of the backyard. "The deck is awesome for barbecues," says Susie. "The floating kwila bench is flush with the kitchen bench inside, so we can slide dishes in and out through the window."

## THE PROJECT

Designer Susie Mackie and her husband James, director of Mackit Architecture & Construction, renovated this three-bedroom home in Greytown for themselves and their children Lucy (4) and Emma (2).





**DINING** The matte black tabletop the couple made; Stand table legs, Portobello chairs and Devonport chairs from Ico Traders; and Opus flooring by Karndean all tie in with the inky accents in the kitchen. The Large Seed pendant light is by Juliet Black of Blacklight.



**ABOVE LEFT** Highlights in the new kitchen include the custom copper splashback and some pendants from Città. Custom-made stools sit under the cantilevered rimu bench, which Susie and James designed so they can gather around it like a table, “unlike an island or a breakfast bar, where you all face one way”. **ABOVE RIGHT** The rear of the house was extended several metres and the ceiling raised. On the left wall in the living area is a vintage Don sofa the couple found on Trade Me and had upholstered to match their Elk chair from The Design Library pictured on page 95. The sofa in front of the sliding doors is from mid-century manufacturer Parker.



modernist architectural principles, from an influential period in which James says “the world was able to deal with things taking a bit longer to be done to a higher level” and many architects paid attention to every aspect of a home, “from designing joinery and built-in furniture, to choosing the furniture and paint colours”. “A lot of it is detail that people don’t recognise,” he says. “It almost becomes a subconscious thing, where we feel a sense of calm and ease in a well-designed building but don’t quite know why. The details work together to create a harmonious environment and have a profound influence on you.”

Susie and James’s finished home is rich in such details, all designed by them and built around the old bones. “We don’t want to be part of that throwaway society,” says James. “It’s pretty cool to keep an old thing alive. We swept through the house and cleaned it all up, while retaining the heart of the original cottage.”

Every aspect of their property received some TLC, with sustainable principles employed throughout in low-key but effective ways. Each space is oriented for sun and shade, using the oak tree at the front of the house and cedar slats at the back >



to filter light, and prevent overheating in the summer while allowing the low winter sun to pour in. The elevated ceiling at the rear lets in more light (and a view of the Tararua Ranges), and three openings in the living room wall help to circulate heat.

The expertly resolved details continue with windows in interesting shapes and configurations, and interior trim made from rimu recycled from the demolition. Board-formed to provide a timber texture, the cast-concrete front wall mimics the weatherboards, and the fireplace hearth is cast concrete too.

With plenty of texture in the cedar, rimu, concrete and copper heroes of the material palette, the couple kept the interior décor relatively neutral. Resene Black White on the walls contrasts with black, gold and sapphire accents throughout. The main source of colour in the living area, the bookcase was designed to be like a piece of art, and the Vertigo pendant light by Petite Friture overhead has a similar effect, its copper ribbons echoing the visual language of the slat wall below.

The furniture and homeware riff off pieces money can't buy, like the mid-century sideboard that belonged to James's late dad, ▷

**LIVING** This large, long area gives the couple the flexibility to move the furniture around to suit the occasion or season. "In winter, having the chairs by the fire is great," says Susie, "and we could easily put the dining table under the pendant light, then use the dining room as a formal lounge or playroom." The carpet in this space is Levante by Cavalier Bremworth in Glazed Grey.



**LIVING** The beautiful bookcase adds colour and movement, but was designed for sentimental reasons too. Susie's late father loved books. "He'd go to auctions and was always dragging us to second-hand bookshops," she says. "I was waiting to get this bookcase up because I had about 20 boxes of his books, and a lot of them were really special."



plus the taxidermied trout, duck and pheasant he caught; the blue armchairs in the living area that were Susie's grandparents'; and the chest from her mum's boarding-school days.

Indeed, the past is woven into this home in many more ways than one. "Because it's on a main thoroughfare, people often stop to look or take photos," says Susie. "One day, a lady was outside with her camera, so James went out to say hello. It turned out she'd raised her family in our house and operated her hair salon from the front room. Lots of people around town used to get their hair cut here and have their own stories about the house. It's so cool to have all that history."

Susie says the success of this project is down to an extraordinary amount of design time and close management of trades. But the real key was patience. "Although it was a hard slog, it's made the result better. It's also made us so appreciative of every little thing – like having door handles and a roof!

"Creating this house has been a huge chunk of our life. We really slaved away on it – every part is designed or made by us. Knowing how much effort went into it makes us even prouder." 🏡

**ABOVE LEFT** In the main bathroom, the vanity was custom-made with a Caesarstone Classico Pure White top, a recycled rimu shelf, tapware from Methven's Tahī collection and an Egg vessel basin by Plumblīne. The floor tiles here are Grafitti Corda Matt from Tile Space and on the walls, Oxo Hannover Blanco tiles from Tile Warehouse provide a textural effect. **ABOVE RIGHT** The five little windows in the master bedroom were inspired by the knots on the oak tree outside. "I love the way the light comes through them in the morning and gently wakes us up," says Susie. "They provide light but also privacy; the bottom ones are frosted."



**ENTRY & DINING** Recycled rimu slats separate the dining and living areas from the entryway and provide privacy for an office nook. The couple use their dining chairs inside and out; the powdercoated wire looks great with the concrete table and benches on the back deck.



**EXTERIOR** Standing tall on the newly levelled front lawn, the old oak tree is deciduous, so it adjusts the light and heat entering the house year round. "It's just so gorgeous," says Susie. "In autumn, the colours of the leaves with the cedar cladding look lovely together."

## DESIGN DETAILS

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP** Vertigo pendant by Constance Guisset for Petite Friture, \$2185, ecc.co.nz. Elk chair by Gus Modern, \$2745, thedesignlibrary.co.nz. Linear sideboard by Kurt Ostervig, \$3995, mrbigglesworthy.co.nz. Cobra Pink potted plant, \$79, plantandpot.nz. Velvet cushion, \$189, boconcept.co.nz. Olea cushion, \$45, freedomfurniture.co.nz. Pearl Strings potted plant, \$60, sillife.co.nz. Portobello chair, \$329, icotraders.co.nz.

