

# MY DESIGN FOR LIFE

They moved *out* of a dream beachfront home and into a suburban do-up! But for this design-savvy Tauranga couple, it was the best decision ever

Text by Sue Hoffart. Photography by Rachel Dobbs.

## MEET + GREET

**Kathrine McDonald**, 43 (interior designer), **Bain McDonald**, 54 (property consultant), **Ella**, 11, and **George**, 9, plus Lucca the dog (being dog-sat by the family)

## PROBLEM

Limited backyard living and no flat area for outdoor furniture.

No second living area.

## SOLUTION

A retaining wall and deck helped to provide flat entertaining areas at the back of the house.

The laundry was moved up to the living level and the office shifted downstairs. The space once occupied by the office and a relocated powder room became a second lounge for the kids.



**1 BACKGROUND** With the benefit of hindsight, it's easy for Kathrine McDonald to laugh. But at the time, it didn't seem funny that her husband, Bain, had convinced her – his pregnant wife – to leave their beloved modern beachfront home and shift into the rundown house he had bought as an office space. “I remember standing in the pantry crying because of what I'd left behind,” she says.

Thankfully, the misery was short-lived. Kathrine quickly came to appreciate the elevated ocean views and protection from chilly winds that the move had afforded them. She realised her husband was right: the home's layout was better suited to family living, with more outdoor space for kids, and was closer to the local school, movie theatre, great shops and cafes. And now that she's able to reflect on the decision, she says they made the right call.



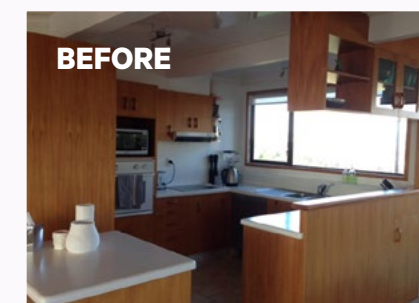
BEFORE

“People have romantic ideas about living by the ocean but our old beachfront deck was freezing when the sea breeze hit and it was shaded in the afternoon.”

What was supposed to be a short-term stay – the couple planned to move back into their seaside house after giving it an upgrade – started to look permanent. “We had to make a choice about which property we were going to renovate,” says Kathrine. “We never got back to the beach.”



Blonded tawa floors run throughout the home, creating a laidback, beachy vibe as well as complementing the cool white and grey of the marble kitchen benchtop.



**3 BACK TO BASICS** In January 2015, the McDonalds moved again, this time into a rental down the road so demolition and reconstruction could begin at their house. It was stripped back to its framing and rebuilt, with an internal entrance and second living space added. Removal of a sun room, plus excavation and the addition of retaining walls helped extend the garage space. "Lots of people find renovations really stressful but I loved it and it was a fantastic learning process for me," says Kathrine. "Our builder was great and Bain and I have a similar design aesthetic, which really helped."



**2 GOING ALL IN** Lifestyle advantages aside, their house of choice was showing its age. Fishing line held the guttering in place, balcony balustrades had broken and decks were leaking. Having changed careers, former teacher Kathrine was itching to put her interior design skills to work on the dated decor. So after seven years in residence, she and Bain sketched out plans within the home's existing footprint that played to its strengths. They also planned a new pool and better integrated indoor living areas with the addition of decking and outdoor entertainment spaces.

The McDonald home has been decorated in a warm, neutral palette, which allows the colours and textures of their art collection to stand out.





## 4 FLOOR MANAGEMENT

In general, Bain was content to yield to his wife's interior design expertise. Their sole disagreement occurred over the tawa flooring; she wanted lighter boards, he didn't.

"That freaked me out a bit because I had designed the whole colour scheme around blond floors. I'd worked from the ground up. Even the builder didn't think I was heading down the right track. In the end, they had to trust me. Thankfully, they really like them."

## 5 CUSTOM QUIRKS

Builder Vaughan Craven was also somewhat dubious about Kathrine's choice of white for the front door and dubbed it "the fridge door". Their joiner's brand of humour was similarly cheeky: when constructing a tricky cupboard designed to hold keys, school notices and other household detritus, it became known as the "I-hate-you-Kath cabinet".

Custom-built cabinetry features heavily in the house, which also includes a Murphy pull-down guest bed in the office. Mt Maunganui furniture designer and friend Dan Gillingham gave the couple one of his signature coat racks as a wedding gift and was commissioned to make a bench seat, two chairs and two sofas. His style fits with the McDonalds' love of clever design and pared-back aesthetics.

In the kids' bedrooms all the bright colours and fun of childhood take the limelight against a neutral background broken up by occasional blocks of colour and pattern on the walls.

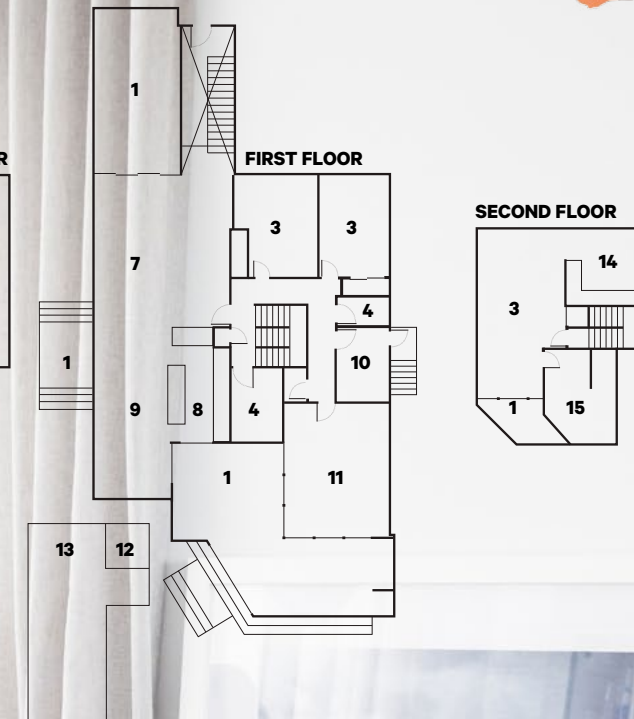
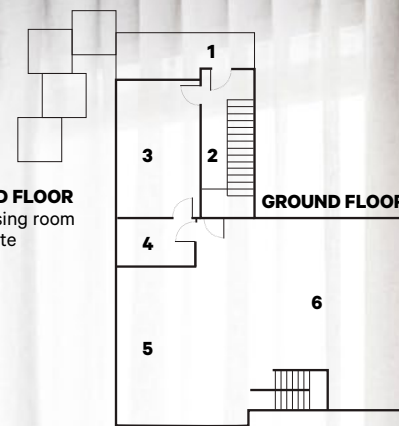


## FLOOR PLAN

**GROUND FLOOR**  
1 Deck  
2 Entrance  
3 Office/guest bedroom  
4 Bathroom  
5 Boat park  
6 Carpark

**FIRST FLOOR**  
7 Living  
8 Kitchen  
9 Dining  
10 Utility room  
11 Family room  
12 Spa  
13 Pool

**SECOND FLOOR**  
14 Dressing room  
15 Ensuite



RENO



Navy blue accents in the master bedroom introduce richness and depth, while the brass occasional table adds a touch of luxury.

## 6 COLOUR

The interior is quiet, calm and neutral. Surfaces have matte finishes: the marble benchtop is honed, the tawa flooring has been blonded and all the cabinetry has a satin finish. The colour scheme is restrained and tonal, flowing through to furniture, art and accessories. Black accents have been used throughout on handrail fixings, lighting, front door handles and cabinetry, plus the tapware in the kids' bathroom.

This calm background allows the couple's art collection to sing, including pieces by Martin Poppelwell, Ligne Roset, Leanne Culy, Lola Donoghue, Bron Alexander, prints from Paper Plane Store and artwork sourced from overseas through Kathrine's interior design business.

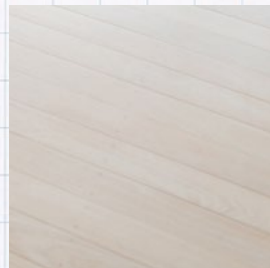
# Renovation worksheet

## CONTACTS

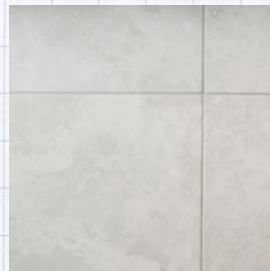
**Architect** Graham Price at First Principles, [firstprinciplesarchitects.com](http://firstprinciplesarchitects.com)  
**Builder** Craven Builders, (07) 544 3704  
**Electrician** Brook Gartshore at Energised Electrical, [brook@energisedelectrical.nz](mailto:brook@energisedelectrical.nz)  
**Floors** Brendon at Platinum Flooring, [platinumfloorsanding.co.nz](http://platinumfloorsanding.co.nz)  
**Furniture** Dan Gillingham at The Earnest Workshop, [theearnestworkshop.co.nz](http://theearnestworkshop.co.nz)  
**Joinery** Seaform Joinery, [seaform.co.nz](http://seaform.co.nz)

## SUPPLY SHOP

- > **Bathroom tiles** from Bay Tiles and [black-white.co.nz](http://black-white.co.nz)
- > **Carpet** from Gerrand Flooring
- > **Kitchen, bathroom vanities, wardrobes and custom cabinetry** by Seaform Joinery
- > **Kitchen island and benchtop** in Carrara Statuarietto marble from PSP Stonecraft
- > **Kitchen splashback tiles** from European Ceramics
- > **Lighting** from Simon James Design, ECC, Vogue Lighting, Bauhaus, Mr Ralph
- > **Paint** Dulux 'White on White' and Resene 'White Thunder'
- > **Tapware** from Chesters Plumbing
- > **Wooden floors** from Century Timbers, blonded by Platinum Flooring



Flooring



Bathroom tiles



Kitchen splashback tiles



## 7 STANDOUT SPACE?

Kathrine still gets a kick out of her gorgeous kitchen. "I love the way the beautiful Carrara marble benchtop dominates the space and is offset by the black tapware and black feature light," she says. The splashback tiles were an extra-special choice. "I have had a crush on these tiles for years and years," says Kathrine. "They are designed by one of my favourites, Patricia Urquiola, but they were all crooked – not square or flat. The poor tiler, he had to work a bit of magic there. We joked that only the straight ones ended up in Italy, while all the wonky ones got shipped to New Zealand!"

## TIMELINE

- 2004**  
Purchased house as office space and bolthole while beachfront home is renovated.
- 2007**  
Moved in.
- OCTOBER 2014**  
Earthworks begin on the retaining wall at the back of the property.
- DECEMBER 2015**  
Renovation begins.
- SEPTEMBER 2016**  
Renovation completed.



**BATHROOMS** The marble look in the kitchen is carried through into the master ensuite (above). The kids' bathroom (opposite) features black tapware, which ties in with other black hardware used elsewhere.

## 8 THE PERFECT PLAN

Kathrine says the revamped abode meets all their needs and works for the family exactly as planned. "This is not a new build, so we didn't go ultra modern," she says. "We tried to embrace the existing structure and give it more of an understated, timeless feel."

The house has also offered the McDonalds a sense of community and they're relishing life a few blocks back from the beach.

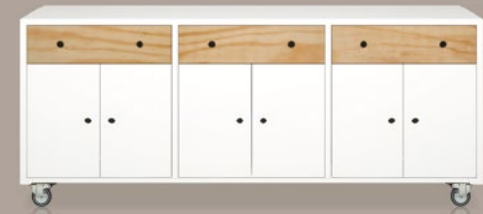
"The location is fantastic: the proximity to downtown, the beach, our friends and the children's school is ideal," says Kathrine. "We love entertaining on the back deck in summer and the children and their friends live in the pool. Lots of our friends are coming back from Auckland and overseas and have bought around here. One of them was saying it's like a giant camping ground, with all the kids biking or scootering to each other's houses. Some weekends I don't even use my car."

Will they move again? "This is going to be our forever house," she says with certainty. "I'd have to drag Bain out of here with a crowbar."

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