

**THIS PAGE** In the main living area of Bernard and Candice Doyle's Westmere, Auckland home, podocarp ceilings slope upwards to a six-metre apex and frame a view across Meola Reef to Birkenhead. **OPPOSITE** Pohutukawa trees line the coastal stretch in front of the house; boating has become part of everyday life.



## THE BIG REVEAL

*An audacious add-on is concealed behind a humble 1930s art deco facade*

WORDS CLAIRE MCCALL / PHOTOGRAPHS TESSA CHRISP



**W**ITH AN UPTURNED tinny on the back lawn and a neighbourhood eatery serving five-star brunch a pleasant stroll away, weekend mornings mean a tough decision for Bernard and Candice Doyle. Fresh-caught snapper for breakfast or eat out?

The Doyles know how fortunate they are to live here at the water's edge on the city fringe. They sold up and rented for a year while searching for the right spot and were lucky enough to win the hotly contested auction for this property in Westmere, Auckland. "We were cashed up at the time or it would have been out of our reach," says Candice.

The little art deco brick and tile was built in the 1930s, a solid family home with 180-degree views over Meola Reef to the North Shore and the west. The original owner was a master bricklayer.

In near-original condition, the three-bedroom house had a front porch mosaic, elegant leadlight windows and charming listello detail in the tiled bathroom. A grassy bank punctuated by a knotted plum tree led down to the sea. The house also held a special place in local hearts. "So many people said it would be a real shame to knock it over," says Candice.

The couple agonised over the decision, living here for two years with their two young children, operating from a tiny kitchen and with only an outdoor toilet. When they finally decided to renovate and extend by popping out the back, they

asked architect Tim Dorrington of Dorrington Atcheson Architects for his input. It would have been easy to add on the standard, open-plan living room but Tim had a bigger vision. "Our simple plan morphed into something far more creative and architectural," says Candice. "We loved it."

The family vacated and work began. The key idea was to retain the best traditional features but to update the floor plan so a warren of rooms became a more simple arrangement. In the second phase of the project, a hallway, foyer and set of stairs were added, leading to two new blocks that effectively doubled the footprint. The couple had never renovated to this extent and Candice calls it "initiation by fire". >

**THIS PAGE** From the exterior, the bedroom block is defined by cedar battening, and zinc cladding wraps around the living zone.

**OPPOSITE** (clockwise from top left) The Doyle family, from left, Jake, Bernard, Phoebe and Candice, enjoy living on the water's edge. The pool is not heated but overflow hot water from the solar system is fed into it; its Graphite Quartzon coating is dark and moody on a dull day but sparkles in the sun. Jake practises the guitar on the front deck. Landscaper Sam Gibbs from ScissorFingers helped give the sloped section a beachy feel: "All the planting is native and we kept two very old plum trees and flax to attract the tui," says Candice.

**THIS PAGE** Plenty of warm timber was always part of the plan; the kauri dining table is nearly 20 years old and has a cluster of Tom Dixon pendants hanging above it; Candice asked architect Tim Dorrington to include space in the kitchen for displaying keepsakes such as her art deco tea set.

**OPPOSITE** (clockwise from top left) Sooty the cat sits beneath an oil painting of a rabbit by Finnish artist Silja Selonen. Blue wanders past an art deco telephone table bought off Trade Me; the lamp was inherited from Candice's mum. The bookshelf in the master bedroom echoes the slope of the zinc-wrapped form of the living block that lies beyond the window. The free-standing bath in the master en suite enjoys a view of the water while the timber screen ensures privacy: "If they can get permission, the children love to use the bath too," says Candice. >



**THIS PAGE** Stained glass panels bring colour to the stairwell leading down to the media room, laundry and guest suite; this intersection shows the three main architectural forms of the house - bagged brick walls on the original section, zinc for the living cube and the cedar bedroom wing. **OPPOSITE** (clockwise from top left) Candice and Bernard are keen birdwatchers - once, on a visit to Kapiti Island, a kaka sat on Jake's shoulder trying to steal his sandwich and the Flox painting at the end of the hallway references this memory; in the left foreground is an abstract work by Jon Petrie. In the bathroom, original 1930s tiles and a black and yellow listello were still in good condition: "We relined the bath and put in a new vanity that was in keeping with the art deco style," says Candice. Hand-painted wallpaper from Paper Hands features tui and kowhai and brings a sense of grandeur to the media room and bar.



Significant earthworks on a tricky site and earthquake legislation that required the double-brick walls to be rebuilt and retied proved testing. "At one stage, there was only half a house standing." Happily, all that is now behind them.

From the street, the home is still modest and of its era. The red bricks have been bagged and painted white, and a cedar-batten screen on the porch hints at something more contemporary. The typical central hallway remains, leading to bedrooms for the children, Jake, 14, and Phoebe, 11. Leadlight windows have been double-glazed for thermal efficiency and the matai flooring has 80 years of history in its grain. A foyer at the end of the hall marks a pause between old and new, where Mondrian-style stained glass windows throw light into the space. "I really wanted colour in the house," explains Candice, "and we used the stained glass in clerestory windows and the stairwell too."

Turn a corner and the new extension containing kitchen, dining and living brings the biggest wow moment. A view of the water is framed by a roof with a high apex to emphasise the experience, and an infinity deck cantilevers out into the scene. The family never tires of watching the ebb and flow of the tide, the meanderings of row boats, yachts and kayakers, and the sun sinking behind the Waitakeres. Candice and Bernard have become avid birdwatchers too, recording around a dozen species that are endangered or at risk. They've seen royal spoonbills, Caspian terns and bar-tailed godwits who fly to our shores all the way from Alaska. >

The outside of this quadrilateral addition is wrapped in zinc, and internally it is lined in cedar. “I think it gives the room quite a 70s feel,” says Candice, who asked Tim Dorrington to take design cues from that decade. The contemporary structure is balanced by the homeliness of timber furniture, inherited pieces and vintage finds from Trade Me. Built-in shelving and cabinetry made in Feilding and cork tiles in the kitchen enhance the feeling of warmth. Modern art is by a mainly New Zealand contingent, including Flox, Shane Hansen, Delia Woodham and Paul Hartigan.

The second cube-like addition clad externally in cedar batten contains the master suite with another must-have – a bath with a view, which Candice says is “very well used”.

While much of the house is outward looking, downstairs is a cloistered revelation. The media room has the glamour of a James Bond set, with hand-painted wallpaper featuring golden tui and kowhai on a deep green background and an entire wall of books. “We have the books arranged in sections like a library,” says Candice. A prized second edition of *Buller’s Birds of New Zealand*, published in 1888, is on special display. “We had a glass-topped coffee table custom-made for the purpose.”

The most intriguing aspect of this downstairs retreat is the bar that beckons from one corner. Spirit bottles are displayed on backlit shelves, in perfect formation. Colour-changing lights reflect through the acrylic backdrop and a collection of old shot glasses evoke the 70s. At cocktail hour, they’re again faced with enviable choices: the pool deck overlooking the harbour or the intimate den? Decisions... decisions... n

## Q&A

**WHEN WORKING WITH AN ARCHITECT:** They are the experts so give them the big picture then trust them to fill in the gaps. *(Bernard)*

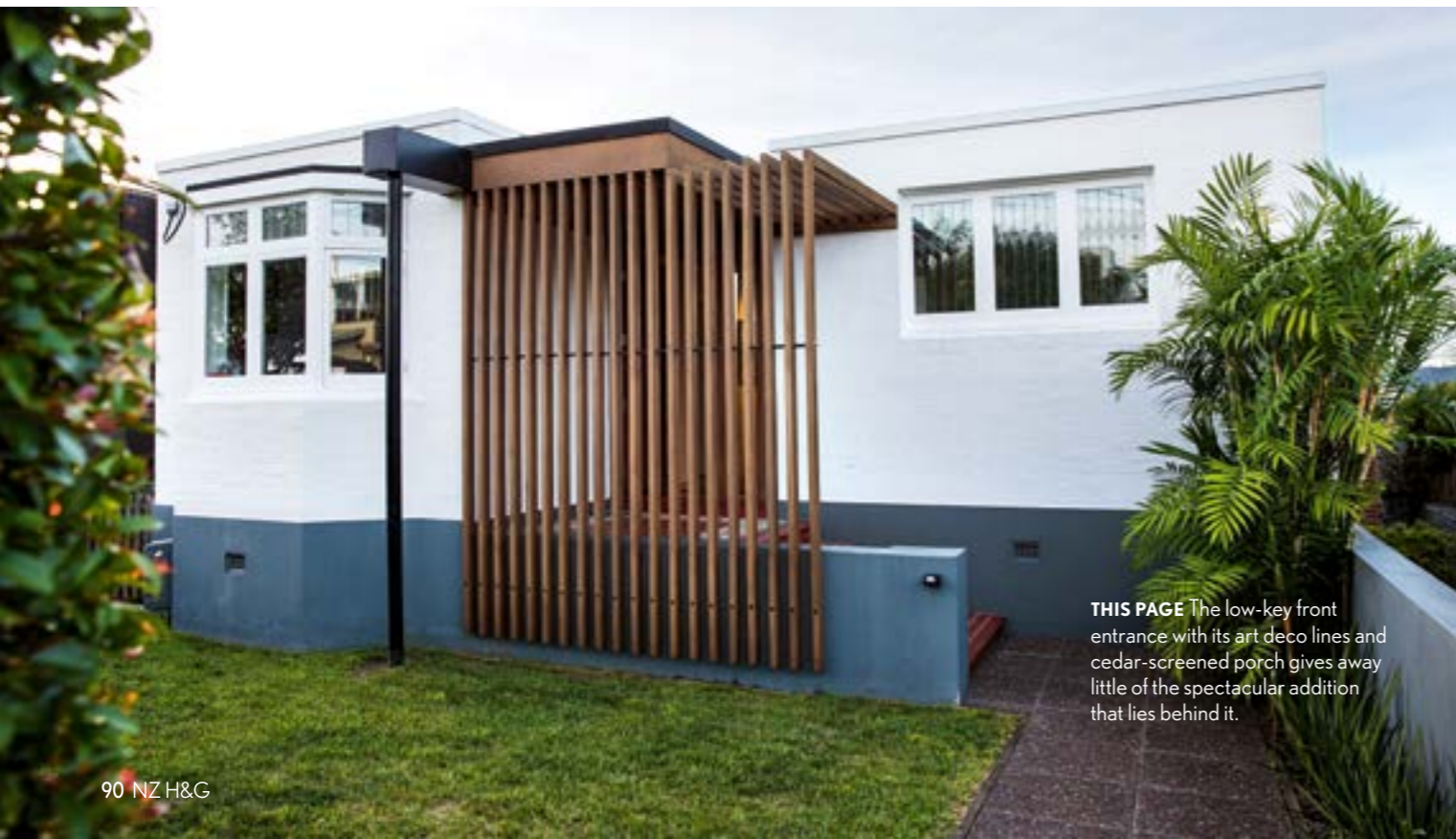
**BEST EDIBLE CROPS:** Bernie started with a herb garden on the deck then over time added three box gardens for tomatoes, beans, broccoli, beetroot, carrots, lettuce, cabbages and so on. *(Candice)*

**THIS IS A NEIGHBOURHOOD WHERE:** Kids can roam around, have their own adventures and make their own fun. *(Bernard)*

**WHEN RENOVATING AN OLD HOUSE:** Make sure to allow plenty of headroom in the budget for cost overruns. *(Bernard)*

**AT THE MOMENT WE ARE DRINKING:** Te Mata Cape Crest sauvignon blanc – perfect for barbecues. *(Bernard)*  
 Hammer Horror: any cocktail that combines coffee, chocolate and ice cream is going to hit the spot. *(Candice)*

*Candice and Bernard Doyle*



**THIS PAGE** The low-key front entrance with its art deco lines and cedar-screened porch gives away little of the spectacular addition that lies behind it.