



Spaces great and small

Gina Berney's contemplative colour use transforms homes and hotels from modest to massive.

When you have a deep understanding and reverence for the power of colour, there are few things more disheartening than looking at real estate listings. When every space looks the same as the next, how does a prospective buyer choose? The strangely pervasive – and perhaps perverse – idea that all walls must be white in order for a property to sell has spooked many owners out of putting their own special stamp on their spaces.

For more than two decades, interior designer, stylist and colour specialist Gina Berney has been busy proving that colour isn't something to be feared in residential and commercial settings – but rather, it's the lynchpin of effective design.

Gina grew up on the northern beaches of Sydney, a time which she recalls being fondly filled with surfing, sunbaking and shell collecting. "I was forever making shell necklaces and little pieces of beach art with dried seaweed and shells. They must have been reasonably good as I remember having a stall at our school fete and selling out. Maybe my mother bought them all to keep my aspirations as a successful artist intact, maybe not," she jokes.



Resene Buttery White

It became clear, even back then, that Gina was destined for an artistic field. "I always knew I wanted a creative career, and although it took me a while to find that my talent lies in colour and design, the search actually created the foundation for success," she says.

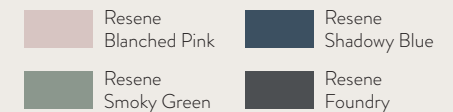
Prior to starting her own design business, Colour7Design, she worked in graphic design and typography. "It was the days before digital design, and that career being very much pencil and paper really appealed to me – typography, in particular, and I explored hand lettering and calligraphy in the process. I was still searching for the right creative fit when I overheard two women in a café discussing this new school where you could just study colour. All the bells started ringing in my mind! I quickly investigated and ended up studying a year of purely colour, followed by a year of styling then topped it off with a degree in design."

The school they were discussing was the International School of Colour and Design (ISCD) in Ultimo, NSW. And up until 2017, Gina ended up instructing on the principles of colour and design there before her own work demanded her full attention and creative vision. "I loved sharing knowledge and ideas with a class of open and enquiring creative minds. Artistic exchange does keep you fresh," she says.

Gina believes that her time working in a different design discipline has also helped her be a better interior designer and stylist. "Being exposed to design in all its forms is essential in being able to understand form, function and aesthetics."

above: Gina's recently completed Briars Inn project boasts a freshly painted façade in Resene AquaShield tinted to Resene Blatched Pink accented with windows in Resene Lustacryl tinted to Resene Buttery White and shutters and a door in a custom Resene black. For a similar look, try Resene Foundry. Renovation carpentry by Steve Cucuruto. Painting by MAB Painting. Image by Fliss Dodd, www.flissdodd.com.

opposite left above and below: Gina approached her local Resene ColorShop to create custom colours for the Briars Inn project, including a deep marine blue, a soft black and a greyed sage green. For similar colours, try Resene Shadowy Blue, Resene Foundry and Resene Smoky Green. Upper wall above batten panelling in Resene Buttery White. Renovation carpentry by Steve Cucuruto. Painting by MAB Painting. Images by Fliss Dodd.





For her, there is no job too big or too small if she knows she can improve a space. “I said yes to every job that came my way when I started out – and I still do. Not everything has to be high-end or luxury to entice me. There’s as much joy in completing a one bedroom apartment as there is in a mansion for me. A happy client is my sole motivation.

“My favourite type of work, if I have to pick a favourite, would be the work I’m doing in the Southern Highlands in NSW. I’m working on a 46-room boutique hotel, the Berida Hotel, and have just finished working on the beautiful, historic Briars Inn. I’ve been very lucky to essentially have been given free rein. The brief was simply to ‘make it gorgeous’, and I think on both those hotels, the brief has been met.”

On her recently completed Briars Inn project, Gina used three custom Resene colours that she hopes to use again in the future, now that they’re on file at her local Resene ColorShop. “I’ve named them ‘Middle of the Night’, which is a stunning black navy; ‘Winter Paddock’, a lovely greyed-off sage green and ‘Blacksmith’, which is the perfect shade of not quite black. On the exterior of the inn, we used Resene Blanched Pink on the main walls, Resene Buttery White on all the window trims and my custom colour, ‘Blacksmith’, on the posts, gazebo structure and new weatherboards.

“Resene has been a wonderful colour partner on my projects. I’ve had unending support and advice from the team and the palettes never fail. I love the greyed-off tones throughout the colour range and the whites and neutrals complement, enhance and complete my schemes perfectly.”

In her career so far, Gina has been able to make her mark on both sides of the Tasman. “I have very lovely and loyal clients, so when they move locally, interstate and even overseas, they call me to set them up with a new interior space. I’ve had two clients move to New Zealand, which has allowed me the privilege to work in Queenstown on a



lodge-style holiday home and in Christchurch on a large family home. I did a few site visits throughout the projects but was able to do the bulk of the work successfully from Sydney.”

When creativity is a struggle, Gina recommends switching gears for a while. “It’s hard to be inspired and ‘on’ all the time. It’s important to leave your desk and do something completely different for a while then come back with fresh eyes and thoughts. You can never predict when inspiration will hit you. I often get a brilliant idea when I’m daydreaming at the traffic lights! Forcing it never works but by creating some empty space in your mind you give inspiration some room to pop in.

“One piece of advice I wish I’d given my earlier ‘design self’ would be ‘believe in yourself’, as self-doubt ruins really great ideas. But if I were to give a piece of advice to someone else getting started in this industry, I would tell them to never say no to a tiny project because you never know where it will lead you.”

For Gina, this approach has brought her some of her most rewarding projects – boutique hotels – where visitors from far and wide are able to experience the magic she wields with colour in creating emotional, atmospheric spaces. www.colour7design.com.au

To see more of her work, check out her portfolio at www.colour7design.com.au.

left: Gina’s design for the Berida Hotel in Bowral, NSW features plenty of deep, moody Resene hues to create a chic and luxurious vibe. Games room walls in Resene Half Merino, ceiling and wainscoting in a custom Resene black (try Resene Foundry for a similar look) with details in Resene Half Merino. Conference room walls in Resene Black Forest and ceiling in Resene Olive Green. Build by Steve Cucuruto. Images by Sue Ferris Photography, www.instagram.com/sueferris_photographer.

Resene Half Merino

Resene Black Forest

Resene Olive Green