

Resene  
Colour Home  
WINNER  
2009

**This page** In the kitchen Scott and Sharlene have offset the warmth of recycled rimu with plenty of crisp white (Resene 'Bianca') and a flash of red (Resene 'Bright Red').  
**Opposite page** Large established trees create a shady play area for the couple's three boys.

# LIFE *is* SWEET

White walls provide the perfect backdrop for this couple's love of candy colours

TEXT BY JANE BINSLEY. PHOTOGRAPHY BY HELEN BANKERS.







## WHO LIVES HERE

Sharlene Woolston (an emergency nurse) and Scott Woolston (a furniture maker) with George, 6, Oscar, 4, and Luca, 18 months.

### What's your favourite room?

**Scott:** "I tend to like the room that I've just finished renovating! But the living area has a nice, relaxing, comfortable feel to it. I love the big windows and the indoor-outdoor flow."

### What would you do differently if you did it all again?

**Scott:** "Nothing really. With everything we've done we've had a chance to think about it and do it well. But because I design and build kitchens for a living I often feel like doing something different with ours."

**Sharlene:** "What I love about it is I feel like we've done the best that we could with every room. If we'd done it all at the same time I think we'd probably already want to change things."

**This page** Sharlene's colour choices are influenced by the work of Tricia Guild.

**Opposite, clockwise from top** The inside of the kitchen door is painted with Resene Blackboard Paint; Scott made the lounge's double doors from two ornate metal grilles that Sharlene dug out of a pile of rubble in India and carted home in her suitcase; family snaps.







**For most of us,** renovations are a sure-fire way to empty the bank account. But for creative Hamilton couple Scott and Sharlene Woolston, renovating their home has netted a \$5000 windfall.

Scott and Sharlene's unerring instinct for brave and playful colour caught the eye of the judges in our Resene Colour Home Awards, who named them Supreme Winners of the annual competition – a coveted title that comes with a \$5000 cash prize.

But, whereas most winning home owners might be tempted to pump their prize money back into new blinds, carpet or furniture, this resourceful couple have other plans. They will spend the money travelling to India for six months to do charity work. Sharlene, an emergency nurse, will work in a clinic for destitute people, while Scott, a furniture maker, will do maintenance work and teach the local men building skills. "We've dreamed of doing it for a long time, but we didn't know how we were

going to be able to afford it," says Sharlene. "Now it's all fallen into place. When we got the phone call to say we'd won, it was just so cool. It's not every day that you win a major competition, but this came just when we needed it more than ever. How bizarre is that?"

The trip will put a temporary halt to the couple's continuing renovations; but after nearly four years of hard graft, they're due a breather.

When they bought the four-bedroom farm cottage just outside of Hamilton, it was in quite a state. Untouched since it was built in the 1950s, its décor was scruffy and dated and its kitchen was rotting away. "It was a real dump," recalls Sharlene. "The people who owned it had done nothing to it for a long time."

But this optimistic couple saw that as a bonus. "We didn't want to buy something that was finished because that would feel like cheating, like living in someone else's house," says Sharlene. "Scott's so clever at what he does that we wanted a house we could put our own





## DECOR DETAILS

**If you're hesitant** about colour, start with white walls then add colour. "I love colour so it was hard for me to paint the walls white," says Sharlene. "When you've got nothing in the room it seems boring, but then you can throw in as much colour as you like and it never looks too much."

**Practice makes perfect.** Scott tried the colours for the wall stripes on a piece of wood until he got the balance right. "The floors took a while to get right, too," says Sharlene.

"We originally did it with heaps of colours but that looked tacky so we painted some white."

**Don't worry** what others think. "We get stuck thinking we have to do our homes like everyone else's, but the privilege of being a home owner is you can go crazy with colour and do whatever you like," says Sharlene.







**Clockwise from this photo** Scott included Resene 'Shocking' pink in the wall stripes "because he felt sorry for me for being the only girl!", says Sharlene; a favourite photo makes a great poster; the colourful drawers in Luca's room were made by his dad. **Opposite** Oscar and George in their bright bedroom.



mark on. Now everywhere we look it's totally Scott and Sharlene's house."

Having set their hearts on the one-hectare property, which came with an established garden and workshops perfect for Scott's furniture-making business, there was just one small hitch – someone else had a conditional contract to buy the house. Scott and Sharlene were forced to bide their time, and sure enough their faith was rewarded. "The sale fell through, we made an offer and it was ours," says Sharlene triumphantly. "It was meant to be."

The kitchen's state of disrepair put it firmly at the top of the couple's "to do" list. Out went the floor-to-ceiling cupboards that made the space feel cramped, and in came new plasterboard walls and recycled rimu cabinetry custom-made by the talented Scott.

Wary that an all-wood kitchen might look too heavy against the wooden floors and window joinery, Scott painted most of the cupboards with a distressed white finish and the couple

paid a local signwriting company \$50 to paint their bland white fridge in glossy red enamel.

On a roll, they tackled the children's rooms next. Although Sharlene's instinct was to paint the walls a bright colour, Scott talked her around to creating a neutral canvas with Resene 'Bianca', onto which they could layer the bold hues she loves so much. "White is such a great colour to add others to," he says. "You have room to go a bit crazy if you want to."

And go a bit crazy they did, painting the floor of George and Oscar's room in blue (Resene 'Sulu'), green (Resene 'Anakiwa'), red (Resene 'Bright Red') and yellow (Resene 'Gorse') stripes finished with Resene polyurethane, then echoing those colours in the bedding, curtains and the quirky drawers.

"We've done all the things we might not have been allowed to do when we were kids," says Sharlene. "I'd love my bedroom to be like that as well."

The family has managed to stay in the house







**This picture** Scott built the patio from sleepers and concrete. "It was hard work physically, but it's a job we should have done as soon as we moved in as we live out on the deck now."





## DIY STYLE

**Practical makes perfect.** Much of the family's furniture has been finished with Scott's trademark distressed effect, not only because it suits the rustic nature of his woodwork, but also because it's practical with three small boys in the house. "I love how our furniture is indestructible," says Sharlene. "All the stuff Scott's made you can be hard on it and it just adds to the character. It doesn't worry me a bit when the boys jump up on the coffee table and pretend they're in a band."

**Aim for maximum** indoor-outdoor flow. New French doors open the children's rooms to an outdoor play area complete with sandpit, swings, slide and skate ramp. "The minute they get up the doors are open and they can run in and out without having to go through the house," says Sharlene. "We were reluctant to replace the existing window with doors because it meant we wouldn't have much wall space, but it was a really good move."

**Think out with the new,** in with the old. The previous owners had replaced some of the wooden window and door frames with aluminium joinery, but Scott and Sharlene were delighted to find the original wooden joinery stashed away in an old shed, so they're slowly returning it to its rightful place.





**This photo** Unusual colour combinations are Sharlene's trademark. **Right** Shabby-chic chairs add colour on the patio. **Below left** Scott made the tyre swing. **Opposite** Taking time out from renovating to have fun with the kids.



throughout the renovation, moving from room to room as necessary to keep ahead of the mess. It's hard to say who had the toughest assignment – Scott, who tackled most of the physical work, or Sharlene, whose job it was to keep the kids out of the way. "There were times when I took them to the beach for a couple of nights to let Scott get some work done," she says.

After 10 years together, the couple work well as a team. "We're always talking and planning what we'll do next," says Scott. "Sometimes I can be a bit conservative and Sharlene can be quite crazy and over the top with some of her ideas, but we work well by compromising and meeting in the middle."

"I do have some unrealistic ideas," agrees Sharlene. "He'll say, 'No way', but then usually if I go on about it enough it happens. He's so clever – for a guy. He really visualises things and how they'll look. He loves surprises and he'll often surprise me with a new piece of furniture he's created for the house."

An avid fan of Tricia Guild, Sharlene is not afraid to use some of the British interior designer's signature clashing colour combinations in her home. "I love how she uses amazingly funky colour," she says. "She's so bold with it. I've got all her books."

Although the couple have yet to tidy up the house's plastered exterior or tame the extensive garden, Sharlene says this has its advantages. "From the outside it just looks like an old house that nobody's done anything to. People don't expect much when they drive up, so it's a real treat for them when they come inside."

The exterior will have to wait for now, as the couple are focusing their considerable energies on their upcoming sojourn in India – a country known for its love of vibrant colour. No doubt they'll return brimming with inspiration for the next stage of their renovations.

"I'm not sure what we'll do," says Scott. "Definitely something fun though."

➔ For more details see our fact files on page 132



# Congratulations!

It was **Scott and Sharlene Woolston's** fearlessness in choosing colours that impressed the judges in our hotly contested Resene Colour Home of the Year competition. "Not everyone would think of painting red, yellow, blue and green stripes on the floor, and teaming them with equally bold wall stripes, but somehow it works," says *Your Home & Garden* editor Leanne Moore. Our judges, who selected the Woolston's home from six other finalists that have featured in the magazine over the past six months, admired Scott and Sharlene's ability to create a beautiful home by combining their do-it-yourself philosophy with loads of personal style.

## Resene

the paint the professionals use

