



Painting the scene

Production designer Ana Miskell is bringing the *Shortland Street* set to life one wall at a time.

As Michael Galvin rehearses lines on *Shortland Street*, he's oblivious to the whirl of colour around him. The crew on the TVNZ 2 drama dash around him moving cameras, cupboards and even the kitchen sink into the set. The townhouse of Michael's character, Chris Warner, begins to form, and walls in Resene Green Meets Blue and half strength Resene Heathered Grey roll into place. When the director calls action, the Warner home comes alive with a heated argument between the characters. The drama feels authentic thanks, in part, to this ingenious townhouse on wheels, but its designer has fled the scene – she's already busy dreaming up the next incredible set.

Ana Miskell began her journey as an architecture student at the University of Auckland. Seventeen years on, she is now the production designer for New Zealand's longest-running television drama, *Shortland Street*. Ana was drawn to the art department since her first job as a runner driving around town collecting props.

"Every week here is different. There are lots of opportunities to be creative with the sets, and there are always new challenges that arise," she says.

As head of the art department, Ana oversees *Shortland Street's* two studios. The newest addition is the stately Warner townhouse, home to Chris Warner and his partner, Michelle. Ana says it was a big challenge creating a home for such an iconic character,

but everyone, including the man who plays Chris Warner himself, is excited by the result.

"I love the new Warner townhouse," says Michael. "Our art department is brilliant at what it does."

Resene products have been on the scene of *Shortland Street* since the show's onset in 1992. Ana's design process is complex and time-consuming, from creating sketches and three-dimensional models to finding the right colour balance using Resene testpots and colour swatches. Studio lighting makes colours appear lighter on screen, so Ana must select paint several shades darker than her intended colour palette.

With varying strengths of Resene Heathered Grey on the walls, the Warner townhouse glows with splashes of Resene Red Oxide on the staircase, and Resene Green Meets Blue on the alcove walls behind the kitchen. Resene Green Meets Blue is a favourite of Ana's, and she's used it in previous Warner homes.

"The deep tone of Resene Green Meets Blue works well with the actors' skin tones," says Ana.

A typical day sees Ana reading scripts and storylines – sometimes up to five months in advance – and designing the interior sets, selecting everything from props and vases to the Resene paint on the walls. These sets are constructed using 'flats', large walls on castors shifted around to form interiors. This allows for camera movement in tight spaces and means each set can be packed down to make room for another.

"We carefully choose our paint colours because many of the walls are used on several sets. It's a big revolving world in there." **H**

words Sarah Kolver
images South Pacific Pictures



doing it



Above: The rear wall is in half strength Resene Heathered Grey, with surrounding walls in lighter Resene Quarter Heathered Grey. The trim is in eighth strength Resene Heathered Grey and the staircase adds a pop of colour in Resene Red Oxide.

-  Resene Quarter Heathered Grey
-  Resene Heathered Grey
-  Resene Red Oxide
-  Resene Green Meets Blue

top tip

Resene SpaceCote Flat is a versatile waterborne enamel that can be used inside – in lounges and dining areas to bathrooms, kitchens and ceilings. It has a flat durable finish making it ideal for high-use areas such as the *Shortland Street* set.