



THE COLOUR EXPERTS

Quirky collections and strong colour define the trademark style of Sonia Couling, our first Resene Colour Expert

A big colourful hug. That's how Sonia Couling describes the feeling of walking into her rainbow-hued north Auckland villa. Sonia is a fan of colour, which she says is "the key to adding personality to a home", and has experimented with it over numerous home renovations. One of her trademark tricks is to paint the walls, trims and architectural details in the same colour to make the room feel larger. Sonia's home featured on the cover of *NZ House & Garden's* August issue and will be in our Auckland (Matakana/Omaha) house tour (sponsored by Resene) on 4 March 2016.

WHY DID YOU PICK RESENE 'BOWIE' FOR YOUR DINING ROOM?

It was winter and I envisaged dinners alongside the open fire, in a room with a real sense of warmth and drama. I'm personally not keen on reds, as I find they limit what you can use with them. I loved this blue because it was rich and strong.

WHAT IS YOUR PROCESS FOR SELECTING INTERIOR COLOURS?

I like to start with an all-white space, like a blank canvas, then add colour to create a look or personality. It's important to think about the amount of light and work with that. If it's a dark space you can embrace that and go with deep colours to create a snug, cosy space, or you can add pale colours for more warmth and softness. Then I like to add a bit of quirk and surprise by using colour in unexpected places: like painting my French doors a strong yellow or doing the ceilings black.

HAVE YOU GOT ANY FAVOURITE COLOUR COMBINATIONS?

For a grown-up look, a dusky pink paired with a soft grey (right). Marble and copper are a match made in heaven. Crisp white with a dark indigo blue, opulent green or black is always right for a cool, sophisticated space.



LEFT: Sonia in her dining room: "I tend to be more conservative in the colours I wear than the colours I use in my home." She loves the rich colours in her taxidermied pheasant. ABOVE: Sonia changes the displays of curios to suit the season.

HOW IMPORTANT IS WHITE AND/OR BLACK FOR OFFSETTING COLOUR?

Very important. A black or dark shade can add depth and drama and really help to ground a room. Lashings of white makes a dynamic contrast alongside any palette.

WHAT IS YOUR ADVICE FOR BEING BOLDER WITH COLOUR?

Don't be afraid of colour! Think about the effect you want and ask advice about the tone of the paint: is it warm or cool? Then get yourself a couple of Resene test pots and have a play. Remember that adding a bold colour can be a dramatic change and a bit of a shock, so give yourself a week at least to get used to it. If you're still not happy, then paint over it again until you get a result you really love.

WHO INSPIRES YOU?

For years, I've been a fan of flamboyant designer and fashion icon Iris Apfel. She's now 94 years old and still embraces and is excited by colour. Truly inspirational.

