



## RENOVATION: PART TWO

### WHICH COLOURS FOR YOUR HOUSE?

- On the dark side of the street, small windows:** Warm colours include red, orange and yellow and their gentler bases, cream, pink and peach. They generate feelings of warmth and comfort when used with care. Too exuberant (scarlet and primrose) and they can hostility and frustration. Red is the colour of excitement, speed and danger.
- Sunny, but dated and tired:** Cool colours are from the blue side of the colour wheel and include green, blue and purple. Greens, like nature, can be fresh and crisp, and blues have been linked to calm, relaxation and low blood pressure. Used in the extreme, these colours can be cold and isolating. Dark greens (like Harrod's green) say wealth and quality.
- Has small rooms you want to look bigger:** Monochrome schemes use black, grey and white. White rooms with touches of black can look sophisticated, but can also look sterile.
- Perfectly ordinary, but you can't decide:** Neutrals are always safe, but can be dull and predictable. Warm up a neutral a shade or two with more of the base colour. Grey is a relative newcomer to the style stakes, but it can make a house look darker and shady.

# A SPLASH OF COLOUR

Colour affects how we feel – calm, happy, relaxed or stimulated. A fresh and appealing house translates into better rents and better resale value, says **Sharon Newey**

**NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE** power of colour. With a splash of the right hue, a house can be transformed from flat to fabulous, dull to exciting, small to spacious.

Nothing puts off tenants faster than a scruffy, unkempt property. Even if it's spotlessly clean, scuffed paintwork, dingy porridge-coloured carpet, greyed ceilings and good old Spanish White paint used on every surface will make tenants feel uninspired – to rent the property or to look after it well.

One of the easiest and most cost-effective ways to add personality to a house and to clean up its largest surfaces, the walls and ceilings, is to get out the colour fan-decks and the brushes... and start painting.

New paint freshens the rooms and creates clean surfaces, and remember that clever colour choices may also give new life to existing decorative elements such as curtains and carpets.

For rental properties, paint is a better option than wallpaper for redecorating, simply because it is easy to re-do or to freshen up. If you use a washable paint, it's also easy to clean.

Wallpaper has the reputation of being fairly tough, but once it's scuffed or ripped, it's very difficult to repair effectively without repapering the whole room.

You may want the best of both worlds. If the walls have a few marks and dings, consider using textured wallpaper (anaglypta) then painting over it.

Textured wallpaper is very hardy and masks a multitude of sins. It also provides a flexible way of changing out colour in future. Or if you do have wallpaper which is outdated in colour and pattern, simply paint over it.

### WHICH COLOUR?

When you're deciding which colours to use for a rental property, it's all about striking

a balance between practicality and good looks.

Following current trends may work for a property you are about to sell, but not necessarily one you are continuing to rent. For example, recent trends have been for white or off-white painted walls, which will look crisp and beautiful for open homes, but will become marked and scruffy after a few months of tenancy.

If your own tastes are quite distinctive, now is not the time to impose them on others. Tenants will not necessarily share your penchant for purple. The last thing you want is for tenants to be turned off your property just because of the colour of the walls, the carpet or kitchen cabinetry.

Whatever scheme you choose, it needs to fit the profile of your prospective tenants.

Hardier mid-tone colours may be better for student flats or busy family households, while gentler, lighter schemes will work for smaller rentals or apartments where the

A modern interior space featuring bright yellow walls and a white staircase. A red circular graphic in the upper right corner contains the title. The scene is brightly lit, with a white door and a glimpse of a kitchen in the background.

**THE  
RESENE  
EASY  
DECORATING  
GUIDE**  
PART TWO.

Splashes of colour instantly make a house with few windows look more cheerful. Consider it for flats for students or townhouses for trendy couples.

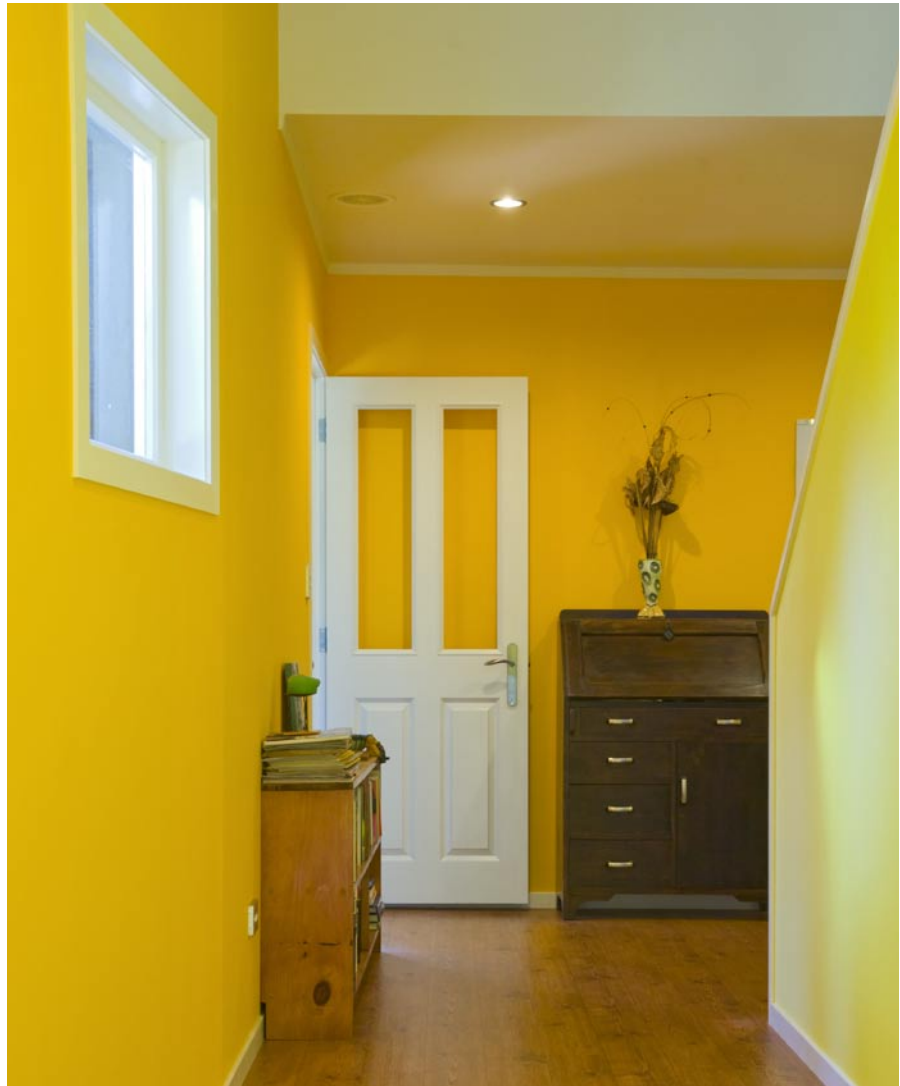
## RENOVATION: COLOUR



Above: Neutrals look good with wooden floors. The brown of timber is technically a neutral too.

Right: Hallways rarely have windows. Consider a warm glow of gold to increase their appeal.

Below: Red is traditionally a popular choice for a dining room. It encourages conversation and lively debate.

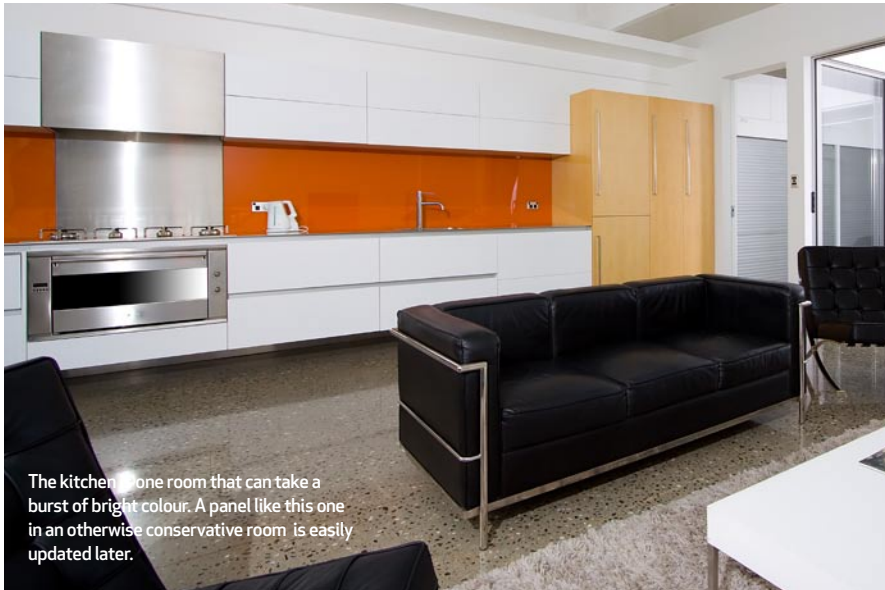


**THE MORE STYLISH YOUR PROPERTY, THE MORE RENT YOU ARE LIKELY TO RECEIVE AND THE EASIER IT WILL BE TO RENT.**

### TENANTS WITH TASTE

Some tenants are happy to redecorate themselves, and may even approach you for permission to do this. It's one way of avoiding downtime by having a property out of action, but they may ask for a reduction of rent while they do the work.

You need to make sure they're capable of doing a quality job. If your tenant does approach you with this request, it may be more worth your while to employ a professional, but let the tenant know that they need to cope with the interruption without reduction in rent.



The kitchen is one room that can take a burst of bright colour. A panel like this one in an otherwise conservative room is easily updated later.



In a trendy townhouse, you can be braver with kitchen cabinets.

tenants are professionals who come home only to sleep and unwind.

If your property is in a city fringe area or more up-market part of town, your tenants are likely to be more discerning and have more fashionable tastes. The more stylish your property, the more rent you are likely to receive and the easier it will be to rent.

### NEUTRAL TERRITORY

Spanish White aside, using neutral colours is a good idea for rental properties, simply because a neutral scheme will be more flexible. Tenants can more easily see that their furniture (no matter what its colour or style) will look good if placed against a neutral backdrop. They will be able to visualise adding personal touches.

But neutrals don't have to be white or cream, just non-offensive and easy to live with.

Resene's colour consultants Ashleigh Bennett (based in Hastings) and Meryl

Southey (in Auckland) have noticed that while Spanish Whites and similar colours are still sought-after, landlords are heading away from once-popular colours like Resene Tea and towards warmer neutrals like Resene Ash, Resene Drought, Resene Quarter Truffle and Resene Fossil. They may use darker neutral tones like Resene Akaroa, so that the walls aren't so light and easily marked.

These warm colours make the property seem more welcoming, warm and light to potential renters.

Classic colours like Pearl Lusta and Resene Tea have proven their worth time and again, but if you lean towards neutrals, Resene produces a very useful 'Whites & Neutrals' chart that has a range of choices.

A fail-safe scheme for any interior is to use a full-strength neutral for the walls, for example Resene Thorndon Cream or Resene Albescent White. You then use a half-strength version for the trims (architraves, skirtings, windows, doors), then a quarter-strength version for the ceiling.

### LOOK UP

Ceilings are the one surface where you can choose a very light or white paint. It will give the illusion of height and space and, of course, is less likely to be scuffed.

If you are at a loss on what colours to use, good inspiration for clever neutral schemes can be found in design-and-build show homes – either visit them in person or search for them on line.

Staff at your local paint shop (try a Resene ColorShop) will help. Most outlets include a colour consultant who will know tried and true schemes that are fresh and current. Resene also has a range of curtains to co-ordinate with its paint colours.

### KITCHEN CONFIDENCE

One room that may benefit from using

a stronger colour is the kitchen, particularly if you have white or cream cabinetry. Kitchens generally have much less wall space showing than other rooms, so a bolder colour, perhaps a wall of a rich red or blue will look punchy but not overpowering.

Consider also if the kitchen is part of an open-plan space, in which case it may be difficult to delineate between 'kitchen' and 'living room' walls and you may have to play it safe. Perhaps you could use colour to link a kitchen and dining area to create the illusion of space, or a kitchen and adjoining family room.

### BATHROOM BLISS

Bathrooms will benefit from good expanses of tiling – tiles are hardy, easy to clean, impervious to moisture and will keep looking good. This is the one room where white wins – white tiles, white basins, white toilet – with a darker floor surface.

As with most property maintenance or renovations, preparation and planning your colour makeover are the keys to success. As discussed in last month's article on structural renovations, you need to set a decorating budget and time-frame, and stick to them.

Not many people will consider a DIY job that involves moving walls or adding french doors, but almost all of us might be willing to paint to save a buck.

Do think hard, however, about whether you have the skill to do the work well and speedily. It may be more cost effective and less stressful to employ a painter.

### THE LIFE OF THE PAINT

One way to avoid wear and tear on walls is to use only high-quality paint. Cutting costs with an inferior product will only mean you'll be back there sooner doing it all again. Better quality paint will deter

## RENOVATION: CLEVER ROOMS

### USING THE SAME COLOUR THROUGHOUT MAKES MAINTENANCE AND TOUCH-UPS EASIER AND CHEAPER

shoe scuffs and furniture knocks. Paint with a higher gloss level is much easier to clean. It will show imperfections in the walls a little more, but is good for long-term wear and tear.

There are also additives that can be put into paint (Resene is particularly good at this) that will keep the finish looking better for longer, for example, paints with fly deterrent, or paints with mould-resistant properties for that fairly common situation of tenants not airing properties properly by opening windows and doors.

These are a must for bathrooms and kitchens where steam and water are issues, and where mould can easily take hold and wreck a painted surface.

Using the same colour throughout a house (and throughout your entire rental portfolio), makes maintenance and touch-up easier and cheaper. Rental properties will need repainting more regularly than non-rentals. Make a note of the name and brand of paint for future use.

Generally, hard flooring is easier to keep clean than carpet although hard flooring

may be off-putting to tenants who prefer the cosiness of carpet in winter.

A big villa in a university town is going to attract students – they'll take one look at your nice cream carpet and run for the hills in fear of future reprisals. Sand and polyurethane the floors instead. They will be hardy and easy to clean.

Vinyl flooring and cork tiles are good hard-flooring alternatives.

Tiles work well but only in small amounts unless you plan to go to the added expense of heating them from beneath. Be warned: once the first power bill arrives, they will be switched off.

Flecked or textured carpets show the dirt less than plain, cut-pile versions. We're not talking about those horrible oatmeal-coloured ones that used to be seen the length and breadth of the country. There are many much smarter carpets available. Choose a mid or darker tone for added practicality.

If you want a more bullet-proof carpet, also consider the many good nylon or polypropylene versions which are less affected by moisture and fading sun. ■

## STREET SMARTS

First impressions and street appeal are just as important for a rental property as they are for one that's for sale. Prospective tenants doing a drive-by will be put off a property that looks untidy and dowdy.

That may be as simple as having a freshly painted fence and a cheerful front door. And, of course, make sure the house number is clearly visible – you want prospective tenants to find you easily.

Good exterior lighting at the front and rear, as well as by any garaging, is not only practical but will make your tenants feel safer, and set off your wonderfully painted exterior.

