

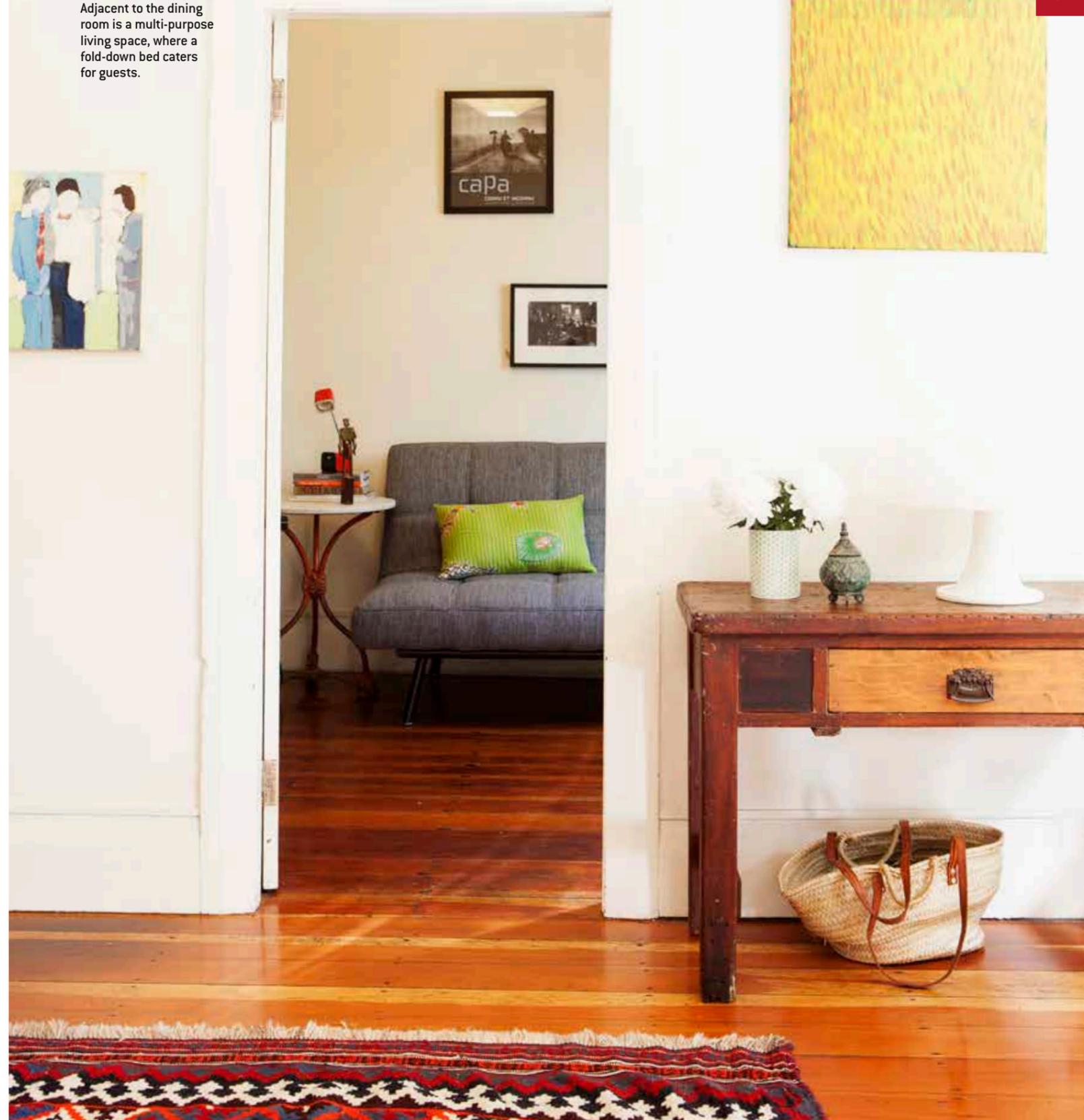


# STAY A WHILE

Splashes of bright red and ethnic collectables transform this rental into a warm family home

Text by **LeeAnn Yare**.  
Photography by **Larnie Nicolson**.

Opposite An art deco bookshelf in the hallway houses a retro Ericsson phone, a vintage silver lamp and pencil boxes by industrial designer Daniel Ballou, from The Object Room. This photo Adjacent to the dining room is a multi-purpose living space, where a fold-down bed caters for guests.



## who lives here?

**Mel Chesneau** (design blogger and mum), **Guillaume Chesneau** (country manager of Nespresso NZ), **Paolo**, 6, **Noam**, 4, and **Lou**, 2.

**Mel, where do you find inspiration?** Flea markets and brocantes in France. I love walking around, soaking up the charged atmosphere and finding treasures.

**What do you do with items you tire of?** We're at the stage with our belongings that we have just what we like. We've already replaced a lot of our 'starting out' items.



“There's a little bit of ethnic and a touch of the quiriness thrown in, which has evolved from the stories of our life”



**I**t doesn't matter where in the world you live, the objects around you tell the stories of where you've been and the memories you've created along the way. It's these layers that transform a house into a home, and Mel Chesneau and her husband Guillaume's home is testament to this.

The couple's rented house in Grey Lynn, Auckland holds their collection of favourite things. “We love mixing old with new and there's a little bit of ethnic and a touch of quiriness thrown in, which has evolved from the stories of our life,” says Mel.

The couple moved to Auckland from Sydney for Guillaume's work in 2012, settling on this concrete bungalow because of its central location, original character and renovated interior. It had a little bit more soul than your average rental, and good proximity to the local school. “We're inner-city people at heart so the Grey Lynn area appealed to us,” says Guillaume.

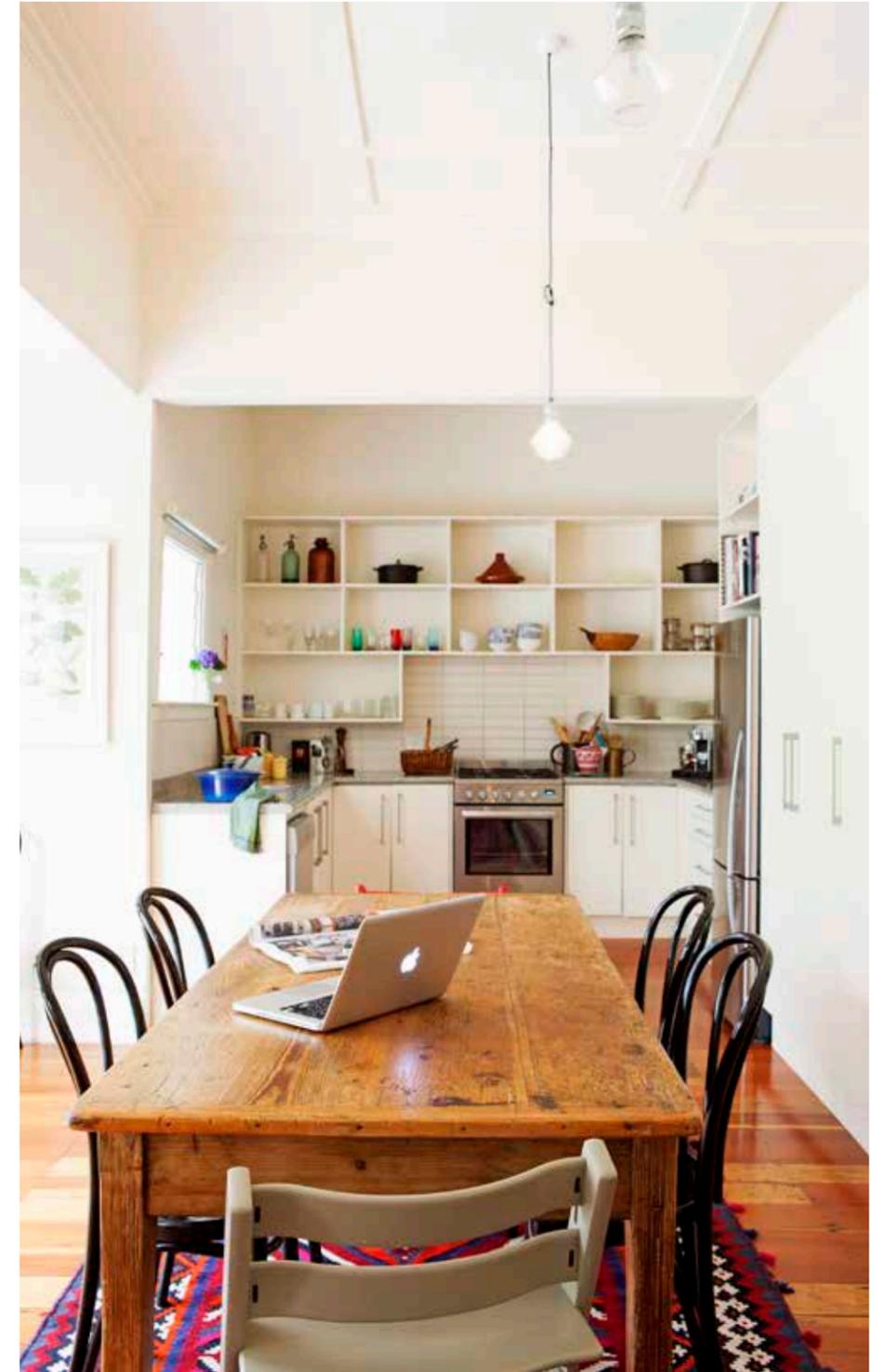
**living** The modular sofa is easily converted to fit into any room, and an occasional chair creates a sunny reading spot that can be moved to add extra seating for guests. The generous rug warms up the room, and the lightshade bought on a trip to Bali is a statement piece.

## simple pleasures

- ✦ **Make a rented home** your own with a few clever tricks. When choosing furniture give consideration to pieces that can work in any room. Modular sofas paired with occasional chairs can be moved into different configurations to suit rooms of any shape or size.
- ✦ **Change what you can.** There is no

reason why you can't change lightshades and fittings, it's a great way to integrate your own style.

- ✦ **Get arty.** Load up the walls. Ask your landlord if you can add more hooks, otherwise place frames on side tables or rest them on the floor. Removable decals are another great option.



**kitchen & dining** Open shelves and plenty of storage in the kitchen won Mel over. Displaying her kitchen collectables was an easy way to make the space feel more her own. A huge rug under the dining table creates a focal point in the open-plan room while adding a shot of colour and texture. The vintage table is Mel's favourite piece in her furniture collection and is surrounded by chairs from Donald Melville Antiques. The collection of sculptures includes an Aboriginal figure by Shorty Jangala Robertson, a vintage Japanese doll, a sculpted head by Guillaume's mother and a New Caledonian carving.



Mel met French-born Guillaume while she was backpacking through Europe. “We met at a flea market in his hometown of Toulouse, he then visited me in Spain and it didn’t take long for us to decide that I’d move in with him. It was a wonderful time. I arrived not knowing a word of French, but had very patient friends who knew how to speak English, which they were dying to practise, yet spoke to me in French so that I could learn.”

The couple are greatly inspired by people who are living their dreams, however big or small. They have translated this inspiration into their home through their collection of art, books, love of colour and texture, and the contrast between old and new. Mel’s favourite thing is the kitchen table, a vintage piece complete with the marks and scars of its previous lives.

“Our life revolves around it and it’s always been a dream of mine for it to be the place where the family comes together, and when the kids are older where they’ll feel comfortable to bring their friends to sit and hang out. It’s where I work, where I watch the children play, and where Guillaume and I share a glass of wine when the children go to bed.”

Obsessed with lamps, Mel has discovered that great lighting is easy to introduce into a rental. Many tenants don’t consider this option. “Most of the time it’s really simple to remove and store the landlord’s shades away and put them back when you leave. By changing them you’re adding some of your own personality and

**bathroom & bedroom**

Floor-to-ceiling tiles in the bathroom along with a dividing wall make the space feel much larger than it really is. Vintage sheets in the main bedroom (left) create a tranquil space, while mismatched bedside tables and lamps ensure the room has its own eclectic feel.



“We met at a flea market in his home town of Toulouse, he then visited me in Spain. It was a wonderful time”



This photo A big soft rug keeps Lou’s room warm and inviting, while plenty of storage maintains order. **Top left** The wooden figurines in Noam and Paolo’s room were a gift to the children from a friend in Sydney. **Below left** Noam and Paolo’s room features bunk beds from Urban Kids and a toy storage system from Ikea. The cloud-like lightshade is also from Ikea.



creating a cosy ambience in the evening, and the great thing about lighting is that there are so many interesting, inexpensive lamps available," says Mel.

She also realised pretty quickly that their new home wasn't insulated. "We only had one cowhide rug at that stage so we bought more rugs online and a vintage kilim on Trade Me. Then we extended the gas pipes so that we could install gas bayonets (with permission from the landlord) to keep us warm in winter. The expense of the installation actually saved us money with electric heating," she says.

Before having children, Paolo, 6, Noam, 4, and Lou, 2, Mel worked in the media industry. Now she juggles motherhood with a passion for writing and a fascination with interiors, creating her blog Armoire, Pegs and Casserole. "It's a reflection of what I like or discover, which could be vintage, design or artisan. I often share corners of my home, do product features, shop tours, or peak into the creative workspaces of people," says Mel.

Reaching different people through her blog is what drives Mel. "I had a lovely email from a woman in France whose dyed vintage linen sheets I featured on my blog, and because of that she now sells the sheets to a store in Hong Kong. I spoke to someone else recently who told me that they bought some other sheets after seeing a feature I did on them, and they love them so much they're going to buy more.

"It's moments like this that make me smile. It's really touching and extremely rewarding and it's nice to see real people behind the statistics." •

→ Find out how they got the look on **PAGE 126**.

**outdoor living** A vintage German beer table lives under a covered part of the courtyard, which means it can be utilised all year round. The tall ethnic drum that sits at the front entrance was bought from an African restaurant in Elizabeth Bay, Sydney. "It wasn't for sale but after admiring it the owner ended up saying okay. It was fun walking home with it," says Mel.



**in flower**  
+ Latte cup and teacups, \$12.99, each, from Trade Aid.

**EXACT MATCH!**  
+ COMPONIBILI UNIT, \$276, FROM KARTELL.



+ Copper bowl, \$39, from Collected.



**basket case**  
+ Woven lidded basket, \$179, from BoConcept.



**top heavy**  
+ Vintage steel and enamel standard lamp, \$425, from Mr Bigglesworthy.



+ Shopper with leather handles, \$44.90, from Citta Design.



+ Wooden chopping board, \$49, from Collected.

# MAKE IT WORK your way

NATURAL TEXTURES AND INTRICATE PATTERNS ADD AN INTERNATIONAL FLAVOUR

*QUICK TIP Kitchen utensils displayed in vintage containers are practical and pretty.*

Like what you see? Turn to pages **126** and **132**.

Styling by Viv Burrowes. Product photography by Bauer Media Group Studio.