

Brooklyn cottage keeps its character

Home has never been sweeter – or sunnier – for a Brooklyn couple who have deftly rejuvenated their 1920s cottage with the help of renovation experts realtyRETURNS.

WHE WON'T ever move now," Cathie Payne says of the two-bedroom house she and her husband, Simon, bought 15 years ago.

While they liked its period charm, the steep property's chief appeal lay elsewhere.

"It was in a leafy cul-de-sac with views," Simon says, "and we could afford it."

But its lack of light, space and indoor/outdoor flow soon started to loom larger than the spectacular view, which stretches from Cook Strait, across Evans Bay, Newtown and Mt Victoria, to the harbour and Hutt Valley.

"We came back from a stint overseas in 2005 and the house was smaller than we remembered it," Cathie says.

Even so, they did not rush to renovate. Indeed, they spent six more years considering their options before commissioning realtyRETURNS to design and project manage the medium-sized renovation.

"Cathie and Simon engaged us

at the Wellington Home Show in 2011," realtyRETURNS managing director Michelle van Dinther says.

"While they loved the location of their home, it didn't meet their needs.

"Using an architectural designer, we created concept plans that illustrated two ways we could provide the spaces they were looking for that were sympathetic to the character and style of the house."

"It's a 1920s two-bedroom cottage and we did not want to lose that feel by adding something inconsistent and characterless," Simon says of the concept plan they chose.

"But we wanted more space, more sun, more accessibility to the outside. Previously, we had to walk through the bathroom/toilet to access the back of the property."

So the house was extended to accommodate a new living room that opened both to a large, east-facing deck and a sheltered, west-facing courtyard where previously a garden shed basked in year-round sun. The old deck was rebuilt and

extended, while the courtyard's bright colours and organic forms were inspired by Austrian architect Friedensreich Hundertwasser's work.

"Cathie and Simon both liked the Hundertwasser style of tiling," Michelle says, "so we had the courtyard designed to reflect this using a combination of terracotta tiles and locally made individual tiles."

The retaining wall was rebuilt, plastered and painted, with tiles inserted randomly to tie in with the patio.

"By having glass doors on both sides of the new living room, Cathie and Simon can enjoy the view from the new courtyard as well as from the deck," Michelle points out. "The deck's balustrade provides privacy where needed while glass inserts strategically retain the view when sitting down."

An entertainment system was installed in the living room and connected to independently controlled speakers in the courtyard and the original lounge off the front entrance.

The new living room also has a stylish and compact Bosca woodburner in the corner, and skylights.

Another skylight was added to the original dining room, the kitchen floor was replaced and the house recarpeted throughout.

In keeping with the age of the cottage, solid rimu floors sourced from the old University of Waikato library were laid in the living room, main bedroom extension and guest toilet.

"The richness of the timber floor complements the warm Moroccan colour of the walls that was chosen to reflect the time that Cathie and Simon spent in Morocco," Michelle says.

The beautiful Moroccan light fitting bought on one of their trips hangs in the corner, emitting decorative light patterns on the walls.



Brooklyn beauty: "By having glass doors on both sides of the new living room, Cathie and Simon can enjoy the view from the new courtyard as well as from the deck," Michelle van Dinther, from realtyRETURNS says.
Photos: JOHN NICHOLSON/FAIRFAX NZ

A new wardrobe was built in the main bedroom, which was extended out to meet the line of the lounge and second bedroom.

This created a lovely, relaxing space for reading or enjoying the view – which was improved with the addition of french doors.

Another feature of this addition, which was matched externally with rusticated weatherboards, is the HardieGroove lining that evokes the match lining common to the era of the cottage.

The renovation has "totally changed" how the Paynes live in the house and feel about it.

"Most of the work on the courtyard made it usable by the time this great summer kicked in, and we ate outside every night," Cathie says.

CONTINUES NEXT PAGE





Opened up: The renovation has "totally changed" how the Paynes live in the house and feel about it.

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

She and Simon continued to live in the house during the renovations, even though it meant sleeping on the dining room floor for two months and "living in a bit of chaos".

"However, the builder and his team kept the dust and mayhem to a minimum, and just worked around us," Cathie says.

"The planning and compliance phase took about a year, due to the number of parties involved, but the construction started in mid-August and we moved in over Christmas, with a few jobs being finished off by end of January."

Their advice to other homeowners contemplating a renovation as significant is to thoroughly plan for it.

"So before talking to anyone, start to collect images of some of your ideas," Simon says.

"That way Michelle can get an understanding of who you are, what you have in mind and then she can translate that into how much it will cost."

Michelle worked through all the detail and specifications with Cathie and Simon to create a property improvement budget that included everything from building to door handles and light fittings.

As a renovation agent, realtyRETURNS is independent of any supplier so Michelle could tailor products to Cathie and Simon's style, house and budget.

She also organised the resource and building consents needed to

undertake the renovation, briefed the contractors and managed the quote phase.

"Many homeowners find the consent process a bit daunting so we handle this process for them because we understand it and have a great relationship with the council," Michelle says.

"There are a lot of rules and regulations that have to be met for plans to be accepted and consents granted, and understanding what the council require makes the process so much smoother."

"We felt comfortable dealing with Michelle right from the beginning," Cathie says, "They seemed to have a process that was complete and thoroughly thought through."

"Michelle could demystify everything," Simon adds.

"She was always efficient but made everything feel so relaxed.

"Due to the nature of the site, things didn't always go to plan but Michelle always had a Plan B ready to go, and she kept our feet on the ground when she could see we were getting carried away in an idea that would end up costing a lot but achieving little.

"Most important, Michelle never said 'That's impossible' or couldn't come up with an alternative if we hit a roadblock.

"It would never have come together if realtyRETURNS had not been behind the project all the way."

realtyRETURNS is exhibiting at next week's Wellington Home Show in the TSB Bank Arena, where a touch screen display of a sample of their projects can be browsed.



Wooden character: In keeping with the age of the cottage, solid rimu floors sourced from the old University of Waikato library were laid in the living room, main bedroom extension and guest toilet.



Tile style: "Cathie and Simon both liked the Hundertwasser style of tiling," Michelle says, "so we had the courtyard designed to reflect this using a combination of terracotta tiles and locally made individual tiles."