



PORTRAIT WENDY FENWICK



Diary of a renovation

Second in a series where we follow the renovation of Dunedin style meister **TAMSIN COOPER's** family home

Colour plays such a huge role in my day-to-day life now, but I used to be quite nervous of it. In my early 20s, my wardrobe was almost entirely black, with Kiwi designers Nom D and Zambesi being favourite choices, paired with black Doc Marten boots. Over the next few years colour slowly but surely stole its way back into my heart. It had always been there – the black phase was simply me working in student media and being oh-so-cool!

After travelling extensively in our colourful world I became inspired to launch my own fashion label. Now I design around 80 different products every six months, many of the pieces involving intricate colour combinations of hand-embroidered details. I deal daily with samples of silk, velvet, thread, beads, sequins, ribbon and my trusty Pantone colour swatch book.

Still, I was daunted when selecting the colour of our house. It's quite a big deal – after all, it's a choice that lasts at least a decade when you choose a quality paint, so you don't want to make a mistake or be too fashion-forward about your selection in case it dates.

When we bought the house, it was a peeling creamy yellow with dark green shutters. The colour had been pretty in its day with an old-world vintage charm and we toyed with replicating the look. My romantic notion that our house looks slightly European, coupled with my

PRODUCT PHOTOGRAPHY LUKE CALDER





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fanciful dream we're actually living in the South of France, led us to Google 'French and Italian houses with shutters'. We decided on a chalky white with Resene Sea Fog, offset with inky Resene Blue Charcoal shutters and trim. The result is clean, chic and oh-so-slightly French!

When we moved in the house was missing some shutters, which gave it a rather woeful look. Although I suspect the shutters were an early 70s addition, we decided to retain them as they seemed in keeping with the house – a little like eyelashes for each window.

We had the missing shutters handmade and when we fitted them in place the house suddenly seemed quite proud.

The external colour of the house now plays a part in the colour palette I'm choosing for my small flower garden at the front door. I removed the bright yellow dahlias and used them inside for a cut flower display, and I'm slowly but surely replacing them with blooms in a mix of dark blue, white, ruby red and the odd dusky pink, purple and mauve. Tall, exquisitely deep blue delphiniums and enthusiastic wee pansies are slowly but surely spreading throughout the garden.

Since I last wrote, my Etoile de Hollande climbing roses are shooting up (especially after



The exterior look was inspired by the house's European feel and architectural styles from the South of France. Resene AquaShield in Resene Sea Fog provided a chalky white shade for the exterior walls, while Tamsin chose inky Resene Blue Charcoal for the Mediterranean-inspired shutters. The result: clean, chic and oh-so-slightly French!

- The blue and white of the house is now shaping the colour palette of the small flower garden beside the front door
- Next up - the important question of what colours to paint the dining room, table and kitchen dresser, as well as a battered old wooden mantelpiece
- ... more on that next time!

a good dose of coffee grounds and sheep manure) and Louis's bean pyramid has wound its way heavenward and is flowering brightly. (Not in my chosen colour scheme, I might add!) But Louis did ask if there would be a giant at the top - so for this plant I'll make an exception.

My other son, Hugo, unearthed some vintage glass bottles and I've been decorating most rooms with wee repurposed vases filled with flowers from my very own garden. The colour and beauty of even the simplest flowers just seems to lend a sense of serenity to a room.

Inside the house, we're now grappling with the task of successfully mixing contemporary pieces with old and found objects. So far the second-hand finds seem to be outweighing the new!

Colour shapes who I am in my home as much as my designs - and it offers an ongoing challenge that I love.

