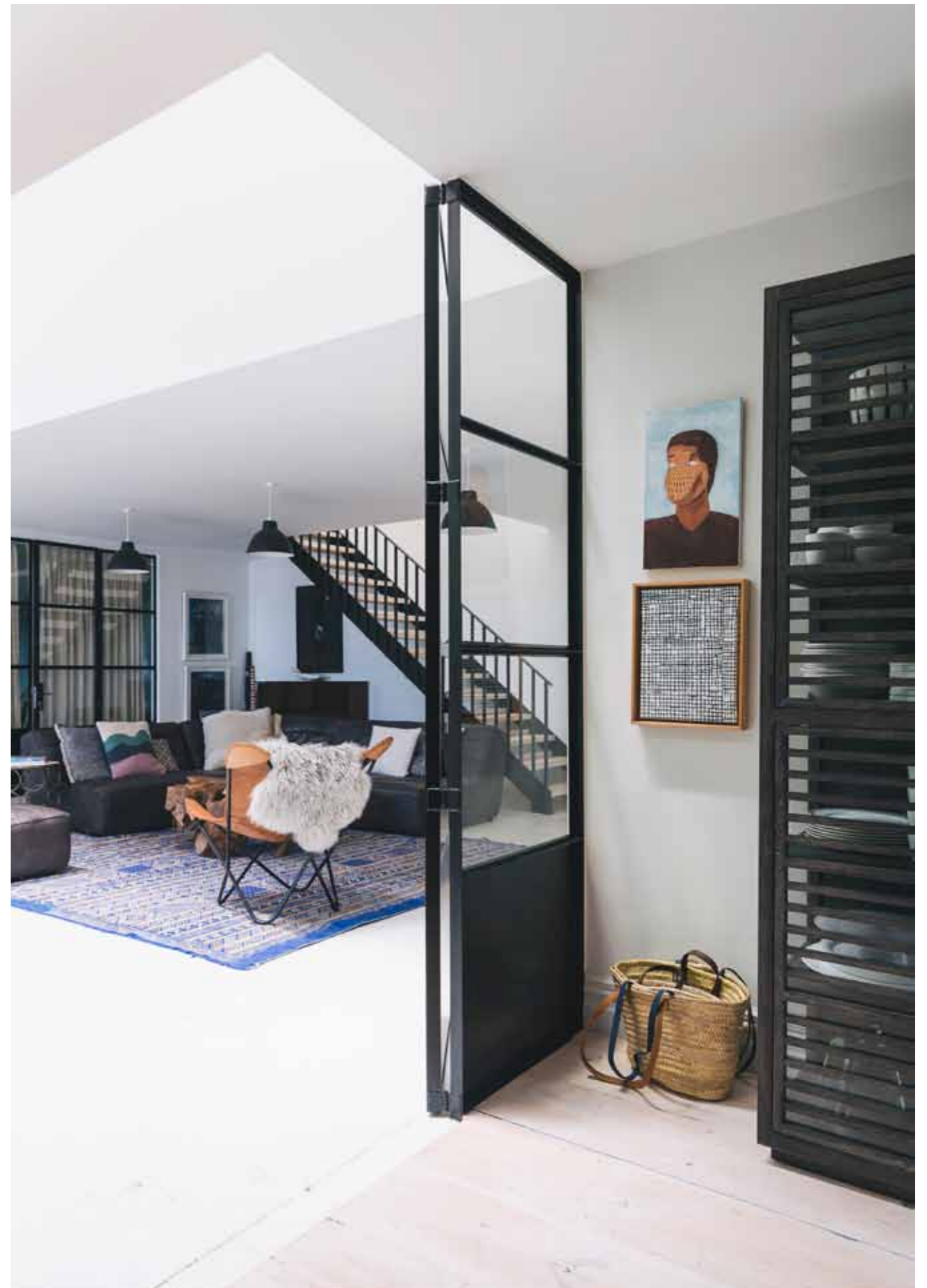


Living large

This giant warehouse reveals itself as a series of beautifully decorated spaces, each with its own distinct narrative.

WORDS
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PHOTOGRAPHY
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EXTERIOR Along with the foliage of some already-established plants, palms in pots from Arterdomus and chairs from ECC frame the home's front door. Inside, the concrete flooring is softened with rugs Sam sourced on a trip to Morocco.



THE CLASSIC WEATHERBOARD HOME is a Kiwi favourite, one that Auckland's Jenny and Sam Porter have enjoyed in various forms over the years. But during their recent search for a new place to live, they decided to go for something outside the box.

"We weren't exactly sure what we wanted, but we knew what we didn't want: another villa," says Jen. "When our agent contacted us to give us the heads-up that this home was going to be listed that week, we visited it immediately and bought it that night."

The 200m² Grey Lynn dwelling was less of a house and more of a warehouse. Previously a mechanics' workshop, it had been converted into a large, open-plan central living and dining space with internal glass doors leading to an office, another living space, a kitchen and a formal dining room. Wide sliding doors flood the high-ceilinged space with natural light that flows through to the rear wall and up to the mezzanine level. Here, the master bedroom is perched above a floating staircase and a door leads to an additional zone with more bedrooms, a bathroom and yet another living space with a second kitchen.

Reminiscent of a New York loft, the black-steel and concrete home creates a dramatic impression and is the perfect backdrop for the couple's extensive collection of furniture and art. "The previous owner kept it very simple to show off the industrial style," says Jen. "It was such an easy home to move into and make our own."

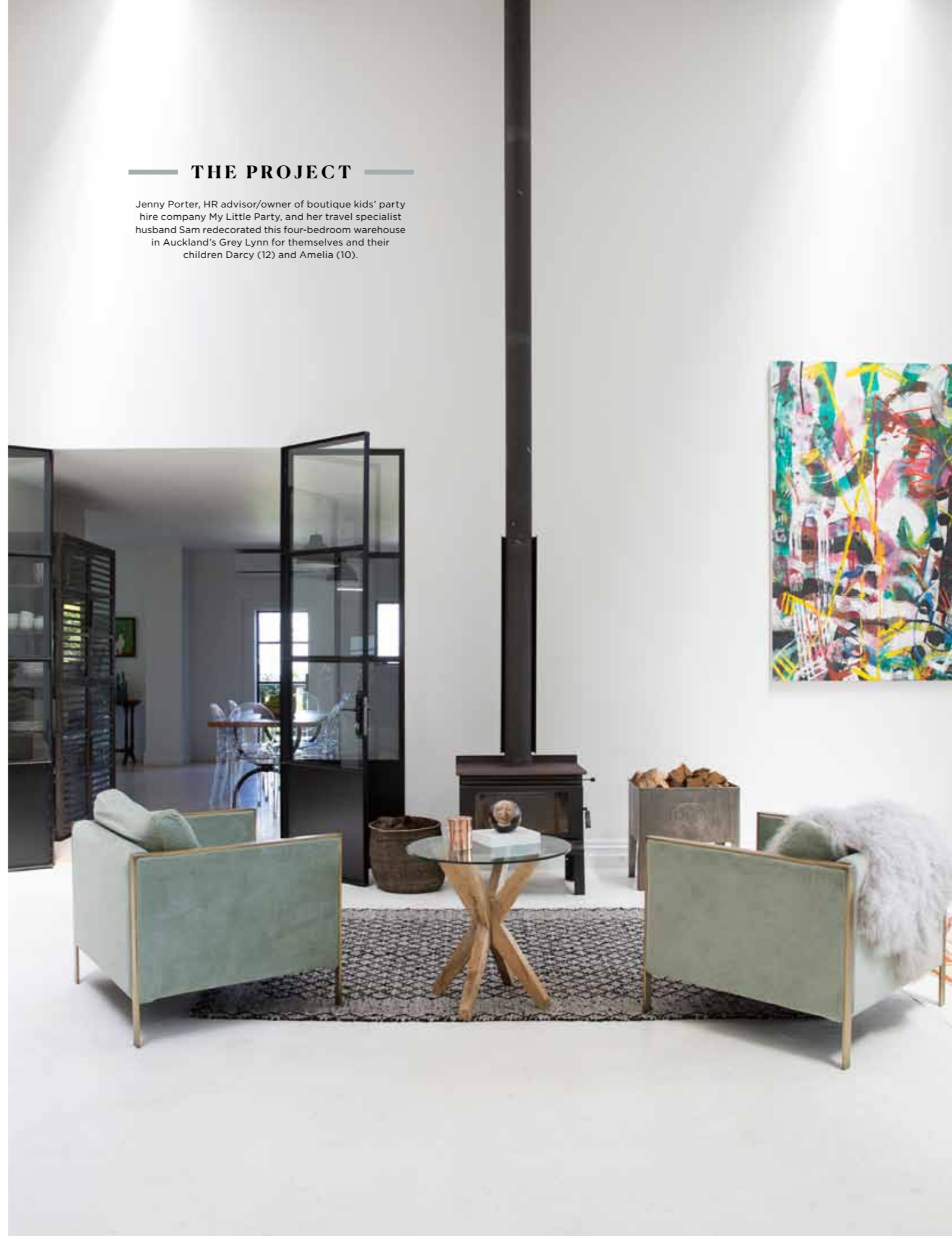
To soften the industrial aesthetic, Jen has combined leather couches, velvet chairs, rugs and stacks of cushions that encourage a cosier feel. Her love of renovating vintage pieces and partnering them with more contemporary purchases creates a beautiful >



ABOVE In the casual dining area, a wild bunch of flowers from the garden prettifies a sideboard from French Country Collections. The red Victoria Ghost chair is by Kartell. **LEFT** This living area near the stairs is decorated with a sofa from Dawson & Co, and leather chairs and an ottoman bought in Sri Lanka. A side table from French Country Collections, a coffee table made in the Coromandel from kauri timber and an artwork by Micky Durang round out the scene. **OPPOSITE** A pair of plush velvet Knox chairs from French Country Collections creates a quiet conversation zone beside the wood-burning fire. The coffee table is from Città and the artwork is by Philippa Blair.

THE PROJECT

Jenny Porter, HR advisor/owner of boutique kids' party hire company My Little Party, and her travel specialist husband Sam redecorated this four-bedroom warehouse in Auckland's Grey Lynn for themselves and their children Darcy (12) and Amelia (10).



KITCHEN All the dining options are covered with more seating at the kitchen island, where Jen, Darcy and Amelia often congregate to talk about their day. Quality food and quality time are both important to Jen, and she loves that the kitchen's separation from the living area means the TV is never a distraction.



contrast. With an eye for unique finds, she knows what she likes and doesn't follow trends. "Although there's a lot of black and white in this house, I am inspired by colour, flowers and art. There are a handful of artists whose work I just love, including Jessica Pearless, Philippa Blair and Shane Bowden."

Although Jen and Sam's two children attend school on the other side of town, the pros of the home outweigh the daily commute for the school run. The public park next door is a highlight for the kids, and Jen, an avid cook, is a daily visitor to nearby food store Farro Fresh. "I seriously think I should invest in shares!" she laughs.

Cooking for guests is one of her favourite pastimes, and the spacious kitchen provides a luxurious environment in which to do so. "Jen always has something in the oven, just in case people pop in," says Sam. "She reckons she doesn't want anyone leaving our house hungry, but there's really no risk of that."

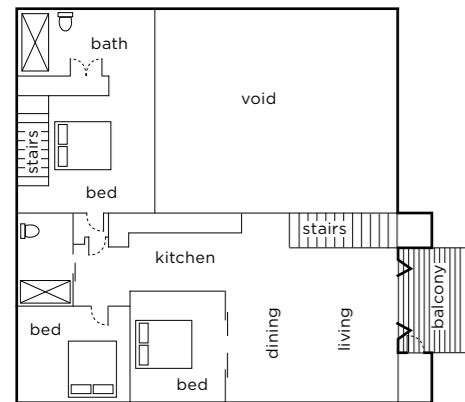
In fact, they both love to throw a good party, and the casual living and dining area sees regular gatherings of mates, whereas the formal dining room is perfect for entertaining in a more intimate setting. The home is spacious enough to comfortably accommodate overnight guests, and attached to the far side are two three-storey townhouses that the couple rent out – one to permanent tenants and the other on Airbnb.

Life is certainly good for the Porters right now, but it was the long-term benefits of the property that were the clincher. "We feel like this home is future-proofed," says Jen. "We love that there's another wing with an additional living area and kitchen and external access, so the kids will be able to enjoy their own space in their teenage years and beyond." 🏠

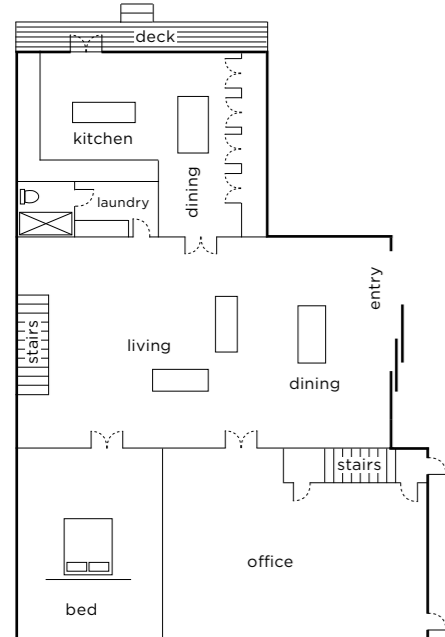
ABOVE The Tulip table in the casual dining area is from French Country Collections, and the sculpture on it is by Bronwynne Cornish; it was a gift to Jen from Sam when Amelia was born. **RIGHT** The formal dining table was also a gift – this time from some dear friends. It's teamed with more Victoria Ghost chairs by Kartell. **FAR RIGHT** In the master bedroom, Fred the cat passes the time on the Wallace Cotton duvet and throw from Città. The blue cushions are by Sheridan, and the pink cushion and bedside lamp are also Città finds. Decorating the wall are photos taken by Jen and one of the children's nannies.



First floor



Ground floor



ABOVE The playful décor in Amelia's room includes bed linen and a rug from *Citta* and a *Chanel Chanel Chanel* artwork by Shane Bowden. The chair belonged to Sam's great-great-grandfather – Jen repainted and reupholstered it. **FAR LEFT** Initially, Jen filled the upstairs kitchen with ingredients so the kids could prepare food in it, but they made such a mess that they're now banned! Instead, the family uses it when the main part of the home is booked for shoots. **LEFT** Sliding doors separate Darcy's room from the kids' living and dining area.

OFFICE The artwork on these newly painted walls includes pieces by Shane Bowden (top left) and Philippa Blair (bottom left and centre top). The taxidermied fish was caught by Jen's grandad and painted by Jen to make it a bit more palatable.





EXTERIOR A balcony (with chairs from Design Warehouse and a side table from Thread Design) connects the kids' living and dining area to the outdoors.

DESIGN DETAILS



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Knox chair, \$2195, frenchcountrystore.co.nz. Shift table lamp, \$289, cittadesign.com. Thomas Deco chest, \$3750, frenchcountrystore.co.nz. Delta Shelter 2 artwork by Philippa Blair, \$11,000, pggallery192.co.nz. Grid, Te Kupenga (Fishing Net) artwork by Martin Poppelwell, \$2250, melanierogergallery.com. Horizon cushion cover, \$70, cittadesign.com. Icelandic Long Wool sheepskin (pictured on chair), from \$420, biancalorenne.co.nz.

ASK THE HOMEOWNER:

Jenny Porter of My Little Party

Jen, your home is huge! Did its size intimidate you initially? Our first home was actually a former photography studio, and this one reminded me so much of that, but on a larger scale. It appealed to me as a blank canvas – we didn't really have to do much to it except decorate it to our taste.

It's been used as the set for lots of TV shoots and ads – what's been the most memorable? Within a month of moving in, we were inundated with requests to use the space, just through word of mouth. Footage of a bedroom-styling competition for *The Block NZ* was shot here, which was a bit of fun.

Where do you hunt for your furniture and homeware? I tend to slowly collect stuff over time,

because I have to really love something before I buy it. I often shop at Flotsam & Jetsam and French Country Collections, and I like to get fresh flowers from our neighbours, Farro. I also love art – another of my favourite artists is Saskia Leek. I'm not always very practical – I just like having nice things to look at! But nothing is too precious, because with kids and pets our home is very much lived in and to be enjoyed.

What advice would you give to others who are redecorating a generous space? I love having large spaces to decorate and I'll often move things round. Here, the high ceiling creates a beautiful gallery-like atmosphere, and without the usual dividing walls, I've created different zones according to how each space is used – for example, arranging chairs beside the fire and the dining table by the sliding doors so it feels as if we're eating outside.