

Room to take artistic licence

Jane Gray has progressed from artist to interior designer, which she says is a natural progression as the two-dimensional becomes three. The challenge to produce an artistic result is the same using materials that are infinite and ever changing, with a palette that is limitless. She shares her design inspiration with **Jill Wild**.

AFTER a lifetime as an artist, teaching, painting to commission and exhibiting nationwide and offshore Jane Gray changed direction and pursued her passion for interior design and graduated with a Diploma in Interior Design from Interior Design Institute last year, formalising the skills she has been using for years in the homes of friends, family and her own various homes.

Here Gray shares a few of her design gems.

Trademarks
□ I take the time to understand my client and their environment, to work out what they want and like. Often people don't actually know what they really like, so it is an interesting journey for some. I see it as my role to help them understand their preferences for style.

□ The use of the room and light is important. So, is a room for reading, conversing, eating, sleeping or everything? Once the use is quantified it's the physical side, measuring and working where things go.

□ Establishing styles to be used. Old works well with contemporary, but a room of old can be boring, lifeless, mundane and predictable. Similarly totally contemporary can be equally boring. Mid-century is always worthy of consideration, that Scandinavian mid-century style has plenty of proportion, it works well with antique or modern.

□ I love to use a bit of luxury or glamour with fabrics or floor coverings; the range is so exciting, from hand-painted to fine wool, I prefer tactile more than shiny or mirrored.

□ After a lifetime in the world of art and design I have a range of contacts that craft bespoke and quality items, I always tell clients "before you look overseas see what New Zealand artisans can produce", and they are often surprised.

Trade secrets
□ The splashback. I started by painting a splashback for my home and, like any good thing, guests saw it and asked for one for their home. If you have a customised splashback, painted to your specific colours, you always change it later to match any change to the decor.

□ For a small apartment in Parnell space was needed for the children that visit but are not permanent fixtures. The children need a space where they feel comfortable and relaxed so I used a rug on the floor to pick up any spills, a "no regrets" rug. I also added a low set of drawers for storing toys so they knew where they were. At the end of each visit there was an expectation they would tidy their things away before they



Bright idea: Lightboxes have been a hit with clients. Gray says they fit into any decor.

left, into their storage cabinet.

□ A coffee table with a glass top to make it unique to the room, era or occasion. Under the glass I've used old charts, old music sheets of importance to the client, old maps or even child's artwork, able to be changed up.

□ Light boxes, they've been hugely successful. Made from acrylic sheet on a black acrylic plinth with LED strip lighting and a cord, hand painted, leaving them on all night they'll last for 15 years, they can be used in a lounge or hall for ambient lighting or even a child's room as a night light.

□ Sewing sheepskins together to create a rug or carpet. As they wear down the whole structure and texture changes, it's almost a record of history underfoot.

Pet hates
□ Heat pumps, don't have them. They are so ugly. But, if they are critically important think carefully about positioning and paint them so they become less obvious. But do think twice and laterally, there are so many beautiful options to heating today.

□ Lighting is often abysmal, particularly down lights that provide no ambience in a room at all; give me a lamp or light box any day, in preference to a row of downlights that replicate a runway.

□ Shag pile carpet, it's had a second rotation and was just as bad the second time round, it looks ugly just too quickly.

□ Don't buy cheap furniture but if you do already own some beautify it with a stylish throw or cushion or even paint.

□ Clutter, too much furniture in a room is a frequent mistake. If it's treasured and a family heirloom give it away to your children or grandchildren, make sure your room is proportionally furnished so there's a feeling of space.



Outdoor flow: An all-weather "outside room" in Havelock North, which Gray says proved to be a well utilised entertaining spot in winter and summer.



Splash out: Guests were keen to have a version of Gray's splashback, which she had customised by painting an original artwork on.



Make the switch: "Lighting is often abysmal, particularly downlights that provide no ambience in a room at all," Gray says, pointing to her own apartment as an example. "Give me a lamp or light box any day in preference to a row of downlights that look more akin to a runway."



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Going 3D: Artist Jane Gray formalised her work as an interior designer with a diploma last year. Photos: CAROLINE DUCOB



For the kids: A room for kids when they visit: "I used a rug on the floor to pick up any spills, a 'no regrets' rug."



Mix it up: "Mid-century is always worthy of consideration, that Scandinavian mid-century style has plenty of proportion, it works well with antique or modern."

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