



EXPERT RENTER

Saying goodbye to her art deco apartment in Sydney was tough, admits Mel Chesneau, the blogger behind armoirepegsandcasserole.com. But Mel's French husband Guillaume had been transferred to Auckland to head Nespresso, so the couple and their three young children crossed the Tasman and stylish Mel has become adept at turning rentals into homes:

What do you look for in a rental?

Location first. We like to be close to the action so we're in Ponsonby now. Then some character, whether it's some super-modern architectural feature or character charm.

What are key things you use to bring your own personality to a rental?

Our own lamps and light fittings have been really important. The red lightshade in our bedroom was bought for about \$5 in Bali and has been used to add a splash of colour to living rooms and bedrooms wherever we've been; a playful tubular light from Top3



by Design in Sydney is now a fun feature in the playroom.

How do you deal with ugly spots? Our current home has a massive recess above the fireplace in the living room for the TV. I always think TVs should be discreet, but here it's a major focal point. I'm planning to cover it with a lovely piece of fabric or a pull-down vintage map. Rugs are a great way to cover up and also pull a room together.

Do you have to worry about marking the walls? Washi tape is fantastic for putting up displays of photos – it doesn't leave any marks. There are classic tapes, but also some really outrageous ones that can look striking.

Watch out for Mel's trend-spotting ideas in upcoming issues of NZ House & Garden. At left is a current favourite from the online boutique on her website. The walnut bowl by Araya Jensen is not only useful, its dipped colour is playful, says Mel.

More rental ideas at nzhouseandgarden.co.nz



SMART DRYING

We're loving these cheeky tea towels from The Foxes Den. There's a whole range to choose from – hand-silkscreened using eco-friendly water-based inks and solvents. \$16.50 each from thefoxesden.co.nz.



HOT SEATS

It's worth visiting Clooney's new private dining room for the chairs alone. The Smoke chairs, by Dutch designer Maarten Baas for Moooi, are doused in petrol and set alight before their charred skeletons are treated and reupholstered in black leather. Every centimetre of the Auckland restaurant's Dom Perignon Room has been expertly conceived (yes, that is a dessertspoon you spy cradling the light bulb). Then, of course, there's the food: chat with executive chef Des Harris in the dining room's own kitchen or organise a private wine or whisky tasting with sommelier Gary Olasz. Luxury indeed; clooney.co.nz.

ALAS, POOR YORICK

Is it just us or is it time the skull trend was dead and buried? Have your say in the poll at nzhouseandgarden.co.nz.

