

Colour through the eyes of an artist

Portrait photographer Rachael McKenna finds inspiration in classic, muted shades.

When did you first discover an interest in photography?

At eight. My grandparents were keen amateur photographers, so I grew up surrounded by inspiring black and white portraits taken during their travels to Africa and Japan. I used to sit and watch transfixed as my grandfather developed beautiful images in their darkroom and wanted to do it myself.

Which colours are you naturally drawn to?

I love a natural palette. I find soft, ethereal, dusky tones more pleasing to the eye and less overpowering to the subjects. I also love working with tone-on-tone, including the black-on-black technique I am often asked to recreate for my pet portrait commissions. My images are emotive and strive to capture the soul of my subjects. If I do use a colour, it is always a soft muted tone.

How do the colours in your home impact your everyday life?

Some people find white walls boring, but I treat my home like an art gallery. I have many art pieces and photographs on my walls, and Resene White Linen complements what's happening within the image. I have an extensive collection of photography books and my partner Andy has many cookbooks, so we have lots of built-in bookshelves that sit within the walls of our home, which are also white but in a semi-gloss instead of the low-sheen finish used on the walls.

A deep charcoal colour like Resene Baltic Sea on the walls is also a great colour for displaying art and photography, as it provides a strong background for the colours on display to be the hero.

How has your approach to colour changed over the years?

I have always been more fond of muted tones in my photographic work, my home and even in the clothes I wear, although I'm getting a bit braver as I get older.

My mum loved yellow, but it wasn't a colour she could wear as it didn't suit her complexion, so she painted the dining room in our family home yellow. It was such a fun vibrant room. I think I might take a leaf out of her book when we renovate and go bold in one of the rooms too — probably not quite as bright as Mum's Resene Bright Spark yellow but something that will put a smile on my face.

What artistic projects do you have in the pipeline?

I always have ideas swishing in my head; I have published 19 books over the years, so I have to publish No.20 at some stage. I have a few ideas on what I would like to publish. They are all completely new projects that will take a few years to develop the images for, so it's a work in progress.

I have recently launched an online store, Henry and George, which is the only place you can purchase original prints of the photographs I have published over the years, plus we have a few tee-shirts and other products in the pipeline, so I am constantly working on new images and design ideas to add to the collections. The website is a fun project that keeps me busy between photographic commissions.

How have you utilised colour to lift your outdoor living space this summer?

When Andy purchased a Komodo barbecue with the plan to build a barbecue station, we knew we would stain the wood with Resene Waterborne Woodsman Pitch Black — we've used it before and love it. We like pops of colour, and the barbecue stands out perfectly against the dark wood stain and the roof in Resene Forest Green. I stained the wooden floors of my old house in Ponsonby with Resene Colorwood Pitch Black wood stain before they were polyurethaned and they looked amazing. We also chose to use a dark stain so that it is quite simple against the garden setting, keeping it quite natural.



LEFT: Rachael with her pets Flash and Baxter. She's wearing a tee-shirt she designed and sells online at henryandgeorge.com

BELOW: The home Rachael shares with Andy and their dogs. The walls are in low-sheen Resene White Linen; the bookshelves are in the same colour in a semi-gloss finish and the ceiling is Resene Pearl Lusta.

BOTTOM: The roof of Rachael and Andy's new barbecue station is Resene Forest Green; the structure is Resene Waterborne Woodsman Pitch Black stain, and the kwila benchtops are protected with Resene Furniture and Decking Oil.



Resene Pearl Lusta

Resene White Linen



Resene Forest Green

Resene Pitch Black

Resene Furniture and Decking Oil