

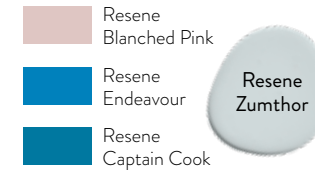


Piece of mind

Becca Lewis's spritely, modular thesis concept reimagines Porirua as a creative playground.

While it's tempting to think of play as something frivolous and unproductive, that couldn't be further from the truth. No matter whether you consider yourself young or old, play provides all kinds of benefits: from expanding our emotional responsiveness, to helping us regulate stress, to providing inspiration in the creative process.

It was play that inspired the thesis project Becca Lewis created for her Masters of Architecture (Prof) at Victoria University of



left: Becca's thesis reimagines an industrial Porirua streetscape, transforming it with a composition of imaginative shapes and 25 different cheerful Resene colours.

Wellington, where she drew on memories of toys that could be assembled and taken apart to evolve or change shape.

"I've wanted to design architecture for as long as I can remember but I'm not really sure why. I really like big pieces of art, and I think architecture is the biggest piece of art there is, so that's probably what drew me to it. But from an early age, I also thought that the world resembled a puzzle. I was naturally drawn to jigsaws and the Rubik's Cube, then later to cities; and the city is arguably the greatest puzzle of them all," says Becca.

Through a series of compositions with virtually limitless permutations, her thesis merges her deep love of art and architecture with fun use of colour to transform the city of Porirua – a setting which carries a significant personal connection.

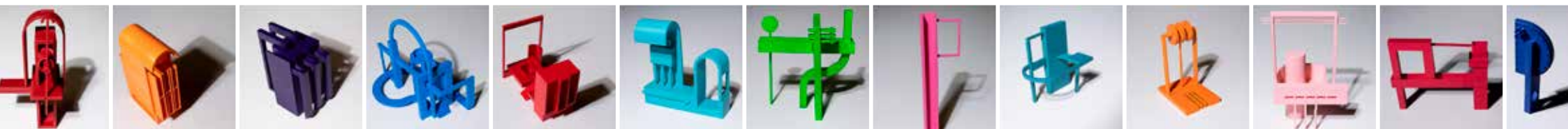
"My family moved around a lot when I was growing up, but we lived in Porirua while I was twelve to sixteen years old. This wasn't the initial reason for choosing Porirua, but my memories of living there gave me inspiration and a solid source of reflection throughout the project," she explains. "The thesis reconceives the city as a playful assembly of cultural wealth and promotes it as a mecca of creativity, one that puts strong emphasis on creation over consumption. But it was also a personal search for my own creative voice.

"I started this project during the first lockdown when I was staying at my mum's house. Returning to my family home brought

my child-like tendencies to the forefront of my daily life. Playing video games with my brother, doing puzzles and creating art during this time is perhaps where the playful element of my work was born, but I think it was always there. It was also my final year of university and I was given unlimited creative freedom – and access to the workshop – so it was in my nature to do something fun and enjoy my year."

In a time when so much design happens digitally, Becca created a range of physical explorations which led her to conceptual architectural compositions of the different modules. "Through this tangible making process, I was able to take an elemental approach to design that, when pieced together, became an almost Willy Wonka-esque creative factory that would inject vibrancy into what's currently a grey industrial area."

Becca sees the people of Porirua as their own pieces of the puzzle and believes the assemblage of all their unique experiences and perspectives makes the city stronger as a whole. "The wealth of culture in Porirua comes from its depth of diversity; in Māori, Pasifika, Pakeha and others coming together. While these specific cultures aren't emphasised in the design, importance lies within this diversity. Through my playful process, I hope to promote and encourage more creative production and self-expression in Porirua."



right: Becca says she was trying to find a balance between sophistication and channelling Willy Wonka's whimsy through her project. She gave a nod to the popular Roald Dahl character in this render, which shows the interior gallery looking towards the exterior performance space. The colour palette features Resene Style Pasifika Coconut Crab, Resene Canary, Resene Glamour Puss, Resene Viking and Resene Texas Rose.

Resene Style Pasifika Coconut Crab



Resene Glamour Puss Resene Viking

While she was only able to capture her singular view of how a creative space can promote diversity, Becca believes the project would be better served by a diverse range of people's views and designs in order for her thesis to reach its full potential. "It would have been a great collaborative project to do with a group of people exploring their individual creative voices within the context of Porirua as a creative city. Then, when those designs came together, it would become apparent how diversity can be an instigator of creativity and create complementary spaces that are unique to people's desires, emotions, cultures and backgrounds."

Her focus on diversity made Becca's colour selections an important element in giving the project the right energy. She ended up selecting 25 different Resene colours to get the look and feel she was after, which gave each of her components its own distinct hue. "My colour scheme needed to reflect my natural playful process and the fun, fictional nature of this work. It also needed to show a range of colours, tones, vibrancy and saturation in order to exhibit the importance of diversity. The hues had to be fun, playful and toy-like, yet also sophisticated.

"Going through that process taught me that I rely on colour immensely," Becca continues. "Many of the colour choices ended up being tied to the final composition and balance but it was important that they all had a level of saturation to give them a common trait. I

just kept trying colours until I found the ones that felt right; intuition is a great thing. And Resene's unique names never fail to amuse me."

When asked if the project helped her discover any new favourite Resene colours, Becca said she found Resene Blanched Pink and Resene Endeavour to be an appealing combination. "I'm into pale pink and bright blue at the moment, and they have just the right balance to offset one another. But as much as I love seeing colour in the world, I also recognise there is beauty and simplicity in black and white."

Since completing her schooling, Becca has already become immersed in her career. "I briefly worked on a concept for Kebbeldash Architects while finishing my thesis. Since Sam Kebbell was my thesis supervisor, it was a nice stepping stone into the profession."

Now, Becca works with John Mills Architects and hopes to be able to design art galleries and museums in the future. "Since I have such a strong passion for both art and architecture, being able to design the spaces which creatively marry the two are what I'm most interested in. They also tend to be big spaces, and given how I feel about big artwork, I find that really appealing." *BW*

Check out Becca's Instagram @b.l.a.a.a to see more of her personal and professional work.

blue sky



above: Becca sees a parallel between her childhood hobby of assembling jigsaw puzzles and her present career, where she 'assembles' architecture. Exterior courtyard and café area in Resene Seagull, Resene Happy, Resene Elvis, Resene Golden Tainoi, Resene Deep Blush, Resene De York, Resene Fugitive and Resene Knock Out.

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|--|-----------------------|--|-------------------|--|-------------------|
| | Resene Canary | | Resene Deep Blush | | Resene Elvis |
| | Resene Happy | | Resene Pursuit | | Resene Wistful |
| | Resene Golden Tainoi | | Resene Knock Out | | Resene Daisy Bush |
| | Resene Texas Rose | | Resene Fugitive | | Resene De York |
| | Resene Touche | | Resene Smashing | | Resene Howzat |
| | Resene Shirley Temple | | Resene Seagull | | Resene Left Field |
| | Resene Pink Lace | | Resene Toto | | Resene Goblin |

below: Becca created physical models of the 25 components that made up her design, with each painted in its own playful Resene hue: Resene Canary, Resene Captain Cook, Resene Daisy Bush, Resene De York, Resene Deep Blush, Resene Elvis, Resene Fugitive, Resene Glamour Puss, Resene Goblin, Resene Golden Tainoi, Resene Happy, Resene Howzat, Resene Knock Out, Resene Left Field, Resene Pink Lace, Resene Pursuit, Resene Seagull, Resene Shirley Temple, Resene Smashing, Resene Style Pasifika Coconut Crab, Resene Texas Rose, Resene Toto, Resene Touche, Resene Viking and Resene Wistful.

