



Exceeding expectations

Interior designer Amy Land challenges her own assumptions and comes out ahead.

If the pandemic propagated a reassessment of your career goals, you're certainly not alone. Even if your job security at the time wasn't at risk of evaporating, most of us experienced at least some ripples in our work lives throughout the waves of mandated restrictions. It makes sense that an event unlike anything we had experienced in our lifetimes gave us a new reason to confront our work/life balance, job satisfaction and career trajectories in ways we might not have had to before. After all, there's nothing like having your professional life turned on its head to make you second guess the path you picked.

Despite having an architect for a father and an interior designer for a mother, Amy Land never expected to follow in their footsteps. "It actually took me a little while to come around to joining the same industry as my parents," she admits. "I came out of my first Bachelor of Arts degree without much direction and started working part time for Maggie Bryson, who is a high-end residential interior designer. That job made me realise that it was something I wanted to pursue, so I went back to uni at 25 to get a degree in Interior Design."

Amy was five years into her new career at Chow:Hill by the time Covid-19 came around. She had been busy building a solid foundation of experience

in commercial architecture and design. While she wasn't worried she had taken a wrong turn, she did wonder if the path she'd chosen led her to miss out on a different experience: taking an OE. Although it's not conventional in all parts of the world, it seems almost like a rite of passage for young New Zealanders and Australians to take a year off to tramp and travel.

"The one downside to going back to university later in life is that I sacrificed what I believed to be my 'prime OE years,'" says Amy. "Unfortunately, when I finally started seriously looking into taking a year abroad, it coincided with the arrival of Covid-19."

Though there's a part of her that still hankers for travel – which she'll no doubt get to do in the future – Amy has learned that life doesn't need to follow a set order. Even if things didn't happen the way she originally expected, staying the course turned out to be a very positive thing. "When



above: Amy specified Resene ClinicalCote, a low sheen and low odour washable finish, tinted to Resene Half Cararra for the general walls in the Starship Children's Hospital's Day Stay Unit Level 2. The feature walls are painted in Resene Dauntless. The space also includes custom artwork by Flox, which was commissioned by the Starship Foundation. Design by Chow:Hill, www.chowhill.co.nz. Build by Argon Construction, www.argon.co.nz. Painting by TW Property Services, www.twpainting.co.nz. Image by Incredible Images, www.incredible.co.nz.

Resene
Half Cararra

Resene
Dauntless



above: The Starship Children's Hospital Emergency Modernisation features walls, ceiling and trims painted in Resene SpaceCote Low Sheen tinted to Resene Half Cararra while a recessed feature wall in Resene SpaceCote Low Sheen tinted to Resene St Kilda in the quiet space ties into other details and finishes within Amy's design. Design by Chow:Hill. Build by Focus Construction, www.focus.co.nz. Image by Incredible Images.



above right: Bulkhead and toe-kick accents painted in Resene Koru emphasise the soothing green accent colours in the Adult Rehabilitation Integrated Stroke Unit at Auckland General Hospital. Other bulkheads, walls and ceiling painted in Resene ClinicalCote tinted to Resene Half Rice Cake. Design by Chow:Hill. Build by Focus Construction. Image by Sam Hartnett, www.samhartnett.com.

Resene Half Rice Cake Resene Koru Resene St Kilda



the borders closed, it made me really knuckle down and commit to growing my career and being more present in my life in Auckland." That, in turn, meant Amy was able to take on some really meaningful projects she might not otherwise have been able to work on.

With those extra years and experience under her belt, Amy rose to the rank of Senior Interior Designer at Chow:Hill and she says the supportive culture and approachable senior leadership team there have really helped her thrive. "Given how small the interiors team is in relation to the architecture team, I was able to take on a lot more responsibility and creative control from very early on, and I have had the opportunity to work with a wide range of talented people on all kinds of different projects. I'm lucky to have a great mentor in Raj, who is a principal at Chow:Hill. He supports my career growth and gives guidance and encouragement when I ask for it. I think it's so important to be able to have frank and open

conversations with colleagues and leaders, and I get that with Raj. I also think of one of my old colleagues, Katie, as a mentor. She was never afraid to take up space as a woman in this male-dominated industry – and it was empowering to see."

When Amy looks back on the projects she's been able to accomplish in her interior design career so far, there have been some clear standouts. "One highlight has been completing my first project that I felt was completely mine: a little café called Planet Espresso. I had gracious clients who made the experience a pleasant one, and the outcome was really positive."

But her most fulfilling project so far has been Auckland's Starship Children's Hospital. "Any work I do at Starship is special because my dad, Geoff Land, designed it and my mum, Lesley, did the interior design 30 years ago when they worked at Stephenson & Turner, so it's a full circle thing for my family," says Amy.

“A number of my projects have focused on healthcare and aged-care design. I never expected to gain specialised skills in this area, but I view it as a bonus. The challenge with healthcare is prioritising the functionality of the space for both staff and patients as well as making it look good. There is a responsibility on us as designers to contribute positively towards the physical and mental health of the end users through the built environment. A good example is designing for dementia; if done well, the project’s architecture and interior design can help people with the disease to live their best lives by expanding their world rather than making it smaller. It’s also not surprising to me that biophilia has gained momentum in the industry.”

The level of attentiveness Amy has developed in meeting user needs for healthcare projects has impacted her approach to colour selection across other typologies, too. “My philosophy for using colour is always project specific, but it’s important to have a good brief and as much context as possible. From there, you can interrogate how the space is going to be used and by whom. In commercial interior design projects – particularly healthcare and

aged care – there are usually a lot of stakeholders. Sometimes there can be three different types of clients to manage, from the local health board or developer to the operator/staff and the end user (which is the resident or patient). It helps if there is a narrative to the project or at least one key element around which to anchor the material palette, whether it is a piece of artwork, a brand logo, the surrounding natural environment or any other existing buildings or precedents that may inform the new design. I will always have a base Resene white and then use a hierarchy of three to five accent colours, depending on the scale of the project. I tend to go for brighter, bolder colours for public spaces, which can also double effectively as a tool for wayfinding,” she says.

“My go-to whites are Resene Black White and Resene Half Rice Cake. I love anything green and blue, but in a dream scheme, I would step outside my comfort zone and play around with reds and blues. I keep seeing that colour combination in use overseas. I love the idea of library shelving painted blue – something like Resene Wishlist – with deep pinky red accents like Resene Pohutukawa. I’ve also started seeing a lot more cream tones

pushing out the incumbent cool whites, so I would add Resene Villa White for the walls or something with a bit more warmth to pull the red and blue tones together. To finish it off I’d include gold or brass tones to add a bit of sophistication and balance the playfulness of the blue. I really admire it when people aren’t afraid to be bold with colour and just own it.”

While being able to specify paints and wood stains suitable for sensitive healthcare spaces is one reason that keeps Amy coming back to Resene, it’s not the only one. “I really like that Resene is New Zealand owned and operated, and I feel really well looked after by my Resene representative. I always get answers and drawdowns super quick, and I also love the Resene whites and neutrals range.”

Like most other designers, Amy’s post-pandemic life has been especially busy lately. If she was given a few more hours in the day, she says she would try and get out of town more and spend more time on her favourite hobbies. “I love spending time at my family home on Waiheke Island, going for walks around the headlands and reading on the deck in the sun. I would also like to spend more time painting as I find it a really good creative outlet and calms the noise in my brain.”

Taking a pause now and again to think back to the beginning of her career and recognising her achievements is always time well spent, and Amy says she no longer puts as much pressure on herself as she did back then. “If I could go back in time, the main advice I would give myself is to not be so hard on myself. It’s okay not to know everything and that you will always be learning something new no matter how experienced you become.” **BW**

To see more of Amy’s projects with Chow:Hill, visit www.chowhill.co.nz.

left: Fun, bright colours, including Resene SpaceCote Low Sheen tinted to Resene Hopskotch, Resene Seeker and Resene Fire Bush, bring character to Amy’s design for the Starship Paediatric Intensive Care Unit corridor. Other general walls are painted in Resene ClinicalCote tinted to Resene Half Rice Cake. Design by Chow:Hill. Build by Built Environs, www.builtenvirons.com.au. Painting by Pro Build Contracting Limited, www.probuildcontracting.co.nz. Image by Finesse Photography, www.finessephotography.co.nz.

- Resene Black White
- Resene Villa White
- Resene Wishlist
- Resene Hopskotch
- Resene Fire Bush
- Resene Pohutukawa

