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Villa with creative appeal

Although close to Kingsland's action, this light, airy home is a quiet oasis, says **Penny Lewis**

36 FIRST AVE, KINGSLAND

Mahsa Willis and Tony Bradbourne have marked a few milestones in their sunny, elevated Kingsland villa. Although both of them hail from the North Island, they spent several years living overseas (meeting in London and then moving to Amsterdam) before returning to Auckland and flatting in Sandringham and Freemans Bay.

Nine years ago they bought their villa in First Ave, with only a week to spare before they flew to a family wedding in Morocco.

In the years since, creative director Tony and film and TV producer Mahsa have evolved from living here as a couple to becoming parents of Lola, 6, and Nico, 4. In the same year Lola was born the couple set up Special, a creative advertising and design agency, which is now based in Freemans Bay's Drake St.

When they bought in Kingsland, the couple were "looking for a house and area that seemed interesting". After living in Europe, they liked the fact they could walk around the corner to cafes, restaurants and bars. Kingsland also had a creative appeal and felt a bit more relaxed than its more established neighbour, Ponsonby. Mahsa walked into 36 First Ave and it just felt right.

In the years since they haven't made major changes to the house — just repainted the interior with Aalto paints soon after moving in and replacing Spanish-hued floor tiles. The major transformation Mahsa and a friend undertook was to level and landscape the garden. They planted a number of palms and succulents around the perimeter to add structure and privacy.

A cantilevered cedar seat made by Cameron Grey adds a further sculptural element to the garden, which functions as an outdoor room but also provides a verdant vista from the house.

French doors from the open-plan kitchen/living/dining area open to the garden, as do doors from the master bedroom, off which is a walk-through wardrobe and a wet room-style en suite.

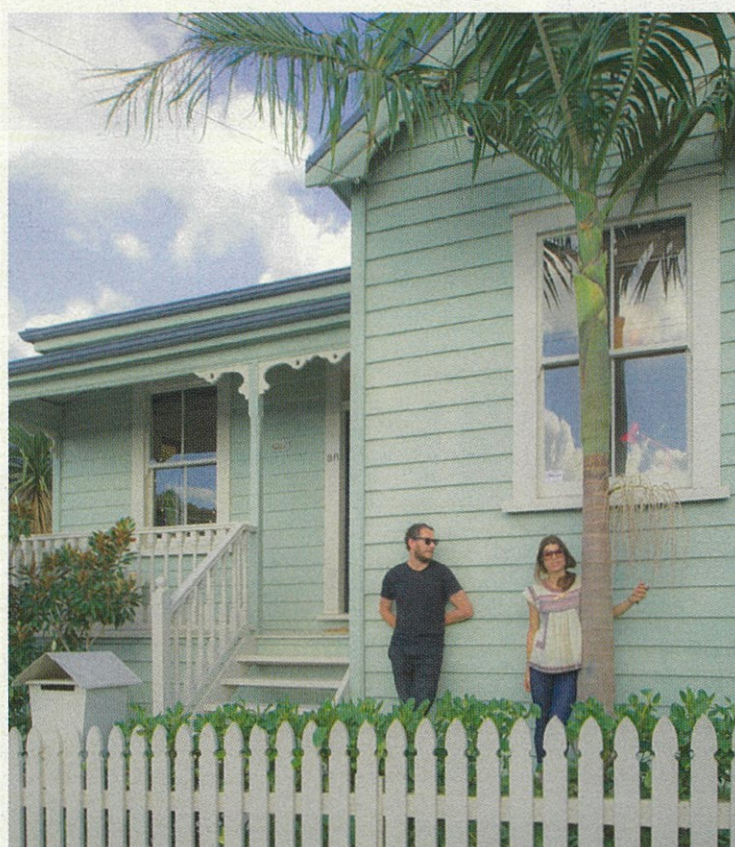
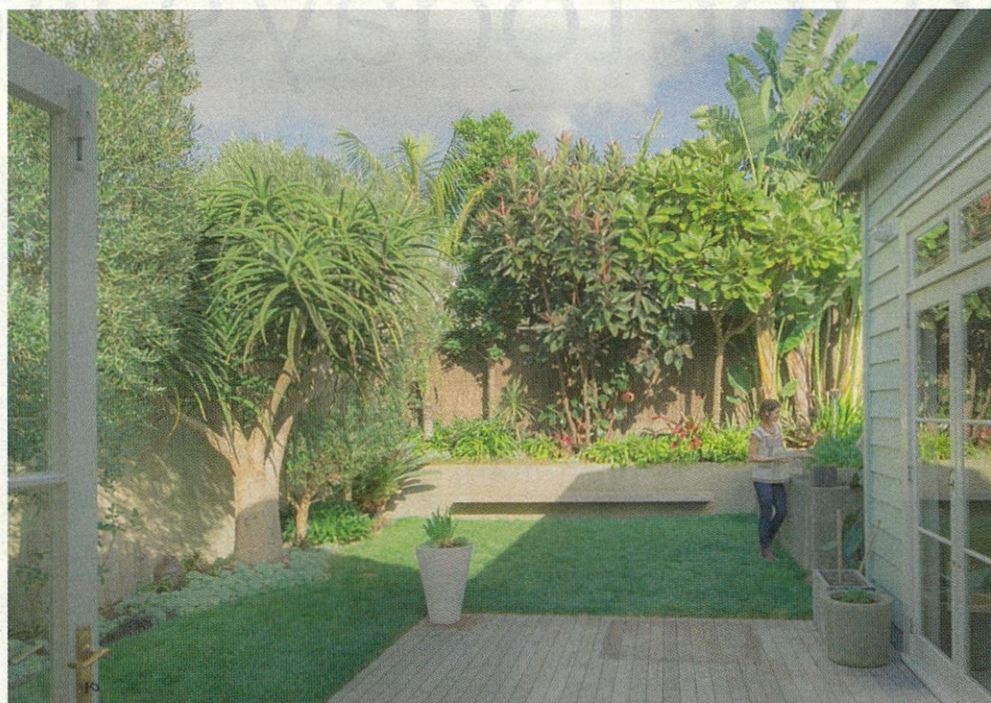
A trio of doors along one flank of the living area lead to Lola and Nico's bedrooms, and the family bathroom in between them. The kitchen's concrete floor has under-floor heating. Isy, the wire-hair fox terrier cross, likes sleeping in the warmth. And it's not just Isy — Nico's been known to doze on the kitchen floor, too.

The villa's light and airy main living space, with its high stud, is a perfect backdrop for the couple's mid-century furniture, which Mahsa and Tony have collected over the years. Photographic prints by Derek Henderson adorn the walls, alongside a contemporary 12-seater trestle dining table.

Despite First Ave being just around the corner from Kingsland's attractions, Mahsa said they didn't hear any noise when the Rugby World Cup was in full swing. "The main street was like a carnival — a really special, exciting, charged atmosphere — but here at home you wouldn't have known it was on," she recalls.

More recently, Tony has taken Lola and Nico to rugby games at Eden Park. Kingsland is also close to many other attractions, with the family able to hop in the car and get on the motorway at Western Springs, arriving at Takapuna Beach in 10 minutes. "Kingsland's brilliant train station is a one-minute walk away," Tony says.

Tony says they would likely have lived in First Ave for another 10 years, had they not fallen for a mid-century home that will be their project for several years to come.



* But off-street parking for 3 cars

Size: Land 335sq m, house 117sq m.

Price indication: Similar properties in the area have been selling upwards of \$900,000. Auction May 19 (unless sold prior).

Inspect: Sat/Sun 1-1.30pm.

Web: customresidential.co.nz/OR5199

Schools: Newton Central School, Kowhai Intermediate, Auckland Girls' Grammar, Mt Albert Grammar and Western Springs College.

Contact: Robyn Ellson and John Wills, Custom Residential, ph 021 800 891 (Robyn) or 021 333 053 (John).

Features: Elevated villa in one of Kingsland's best streets, with views to city. Master bedroom has walk-through wardrobe and en suite, plus French doors to landscaped garden.

PHOTOS/TED BAGHURST