

THE CURIOSITIES

How a *highly creative* couple made
a *silk purse* from an old *piggery*

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THIS PAGE In Mandie Taylor and Dan McGovern's Pahoa home, the main living area, which was once a piggery, has been christened the grand hall; the builders were keen to disguise the concrete sty dividers with ply (one is visible behind the pot plant on the left), but Mandie wanted to preserve the building's character and insisted they stay; the lights came from Freedom and reminded Mandie of the lights in her childhood home; the artwork is by Tyrone Layne.

OPPOSITE Guests have either a love or a hate relationship with eye-catching "Uncle Albert", a 25-year-old boar from the Kaimai Ranges; the cloche holds bird feathers.



THIS PAGE The Japanese wedding cabinet was, appropriately, a wedding gift from the couple's families; the artwork to its left was given to Mandie by an appreciative Unitec student after she gave him exhibition space in her former cafe; the curved chair to the right was a roadside find that has been re-covered; furs are draped everywhere: "There's even one for the cat, so she can have her own fur baby," Mandie says.

OPPOSITE (clockwise from top left) The decanters were found during a Hospice shop fossick: "If Hospice shopping were an Olympic sport, Mandie would be a gold medallist," says Dan. Dolls' heads and body parts are a design staple. The artwork near the entrance was a gift from Mandie's late dad; the couple's son Jake, a builder by trade, helped create the doors from a picture provided by Mandie. The guinea fowl used to roam outside: "But they were a bit raucous and gave the chickens a bit of grief, so it was either eat them or get them stuffed," Dan says.



ALARGE, STUFFED BOAR'S HEAD on a cakestand has pride of place on the dining table in Mandie Taylor and Dan McGovern's home. Having "Uncle Albert" in their home and in such a place of prominence is fitting, says Mandie, given their abode is a former piggery.

The story begins nearly 40 years ago, when Mandie's parents bought a block of land, complete with a piggery, 20km north of Tauranga. The land was converted into a kiwifruit orchard, and the piggery faced conversion number one: the roof was raised and a few lean-tos were added to stabilise it so it could be used as an implement shed. >



THIS PAGE Mandie and Dan are both foodies and the dining area, where this issue's cover was shot, is a favourite part of their home; keeping them company are Peppe Le Poo, a wheaten terrier, and Bear Dog, a cross-breed.

OPPOSITE (clockwise from top left) The new bathroom features a laundry tub that was found on the property; the cabinet is mahogany and was a second-hand shop find. The doll in the bathroom came from a friend's vintage shop. Mandie wanted a timeless look in the kitchen and informal dining area; eucalyptus gum milled from the orchard was used for the kitchen joinery.



Meanwhile, Mandie and Dan were settled in Auckland. Dan, who was lecturing at Unitec, held Men Can Cook classes in his spare time and Mandie ran a cafe named Long Black and owned a catering business, Queen of Tarts.

Things were ticking along happily enough in their respective kitchens, until a friend's terminal cancer prognosis was the catalyst for a sea-change. They knew they wanted to leave Auckland, but mulled over a variety of options, such as indulging Dan's long-time truffle-growing fantasy or buying a restaurant in Rarotonga. Mandie's mother, fearful of losing her daughter to the tropics, suggested they come home and take over the Pahoia orchard.

The idea of converting the former piggery into a home made sense to nobody, other than Mandie and Dan. It seemed even

more nonsensical that they would need to construct a new shed to house the implements coming out of the dilapidated building.

But Mandie and Dan have vision by the bucketload, an appreciation of the charm of a history-laden building, and a quirky approach to life. They concede, however, that the former piggery was hardly pretty. Mention the 35 mummified rats in the ceiling and people get the picture, says Mandie with a laugh.

The intrepid house renovators slept in the piggery's old office on weekends as they commuted from Auckland to tackle the transformation. As things progressed, they moved into one of the lean-tos that had once garaged the Massey Ferguson tractor. Fortunately, they found a creative local tradesman to share their vision and get stage one of the renovation trucking along. >

"HAVE AND DO WHAT YOU LOVE – IT'S YOU THAT HAS TO LIVE WITH IT"

THIS PAGE The guest bedroom was once the tractor shed; Mandie collects and displays vintage lingerie and clothes.

OPPOSITE (clockwise from top left) One of Mandie's mum's dolls in the guest room; Dan thinks the en suite and scullery are possibly the only doll-free rooms. Dan made sure the recess above the bath was tall enough for a wine bottle; Mandie had a hankering for a tiled ceiling, but settled for pressed tin on the advice of her friend, interior designer Marilyn Cleland. Dan and friends on the floating stairs leading down to the master bedroom; the window was originally one of the piggery's exterior windows.





Although they would eventually add an additional 125sqm, stage one involved doing up the old building.

"We kept the whole original 130sqm footprint including the concrete slab base and the board-and-batten exterior," says Dan. "We bought second-hand wooden joinery to add to the stuff already here, some of it found in the rubble. We also poured concrete over the dirt floor of the tractor shed lean-to, and we relined the building with beech plywood oiled with linseed. Ceiling trusses had to be scribed in as none were straight."

For two years, the couple lived with a kitchen, shower and toilet hailing from the 1970s piggery days. The toilet's handbasin was super-small, says Mandie. Now, she has a large old concrete laundry tub as the new bathroom's basin.

An outdoor fire area with pizza oven was created early in the piece because the kitchen was tiny and lacked an oven, and the sociable duo needed an entertainment area.

Stage two of the renovation meant calling in the builders, removing the old kitchen and bathroom and pushing the building out to add a master bedroom, swanky en suite, office, kitchen and dining area, family bathroom, laundry/boot room and outdoor bathroom. Timber from the land was used as beams and in the kitchen's striking joinery, and is inlaid among the new concrete.

Wherever possible, building materials were reused. The old roofing iron has been used on the new implement shed. An abandoned triangular window is now at the gable end of the home's "grand hall" – where the pigs once lived. Concrete posts from those pig-pen days remain, as Dan and Mandie relish touches that remind them of the building's origins.

The property includes other sheds: two inhabited by two of their three sons, Jake, 29, and Tom, 27. The old kitchen was transported to Jake's shed and Tom scored the toilet door for his music studio. Should son Max, 24, ever return, the former piggery now includes two spare bedrooms. >





THIS PAGE (clockwise from top left) Mandie and Peppe Le Poo in the master bedroom; the doors ensure the room captures the morning sun and open out to the spa; a lap pool will one day be located nearby. The deck off the kitchen/dining area is the latest project to be completed. The chair in the master bedroom was a vintage shop find and the dresser a gift from Dan's mum.

OPPOSITE Mandie and Dan's home – the old piggery with extensions: "You just can't build what we've got. It is full of memories, and is just magic," Dan says.



Q & A

THE HOUSE IS GREAT FOR ENTERTAINING: We can have large dinner parties around the 14-seat table with bifolding doors opening to the pizza oven and outdoor fire area – or a more intimate family dinner around the kitchen table overlooking the orchard. (*Mandie*)

BEST DECORATING TIP: Have and do what you love; it's you that has to live with it. (*Mandie*)

FAVOURITE OUTDOOR SPOT: We have an area overlooking the valley we call "the cocktail lounge" where we sit and watch the sun go down on balmy evenings, complete with fur babies, and enjoy a bit of quiet time before dinner with a tasty beverage or two. (*Dan*)

THIS WEEKEND: I'll be busy helping get everything ready for the Bay of Plenty Garden and Art Festival on November 17-20. I'm on the board and there's lots to do! (*Mandie*)

IT'S A LUXURY: Not compromising on anything, owing to the fact that we're here for a very long time. We always thought about what was best for the long-term vision and spent accordingly. Blew the budget out the window, but now it's all finished it doesn't matter. (*Dan*)

Mandie Taylor and Dan McGovern



There's also another riverside house, soon to be a bed and breakfast, where wooden French doors and floor joists have been repurposed. This suits Mandie's vision, as she's keen for the B&B to reuse as much as possible from the piggery.

Dan credits Mandie with adding much of "the magic", as he calls it, to their new home. A cello case and the furs draped over chair backs, couches and dressing tables are the results of regular op-shop fossicking. The numerous doll body parts, plus the taxidermy guinea fowl, all have their genesis closer to home: Mandie's mother Pattie was a porcelain-doll maker, and the guinea fowl residing on a window ledge used to roam outside.

There's more fun ahead. A lap pool is planned, and a studio for Mandie and Pattie, who are launching a foliage-growing business. Jake's large shed will one day become a wedding venue.

The gardens are currently getting attention. Dan's built a dovecote and raised vegetable beds have been established – with a dual purpose. When Mandie and Dan say this is their forever property they mean it: they plan to rest eternally in those flourishing beds. n

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