

# WHITE MAGIC

Auckland designer Andrew Loader has created the perfect monochromatic backdrop for his eye-catching accessories

WORDS SARAH LANG / PHOTOGRAPHS JANE USSHER



**THIS PAGE** Many of the beautiful pieces in the main entertaining room of Andrew Loader's Remuera villa came from Thailand, including Andrew's beloved Yamaha baby grand: "I got it shipped all the way from Chiang Mai in north Thailand down to Bangkok in little pieces, then about eight little Thai men had to carry it up four flights of stairs"; the chandelier lamp to the left is made from threads of tulle.

**OPPOSITE** Because the morning sun hits the front verandah first thing, this is where Andrew sips his morning coffee and reads the paper; the stained-glass window is a reproduction installed by the previous owners to complement the Victorian style.



“HONESTLY, I DON’T have anything against colour.” So says interior designer Andrew Loader as we recline on his white chaise longue, surrounded by art, photos and furniture that are almost entirely black or white – or both. Even French bulldog Franklin comes in monochrome. “That’s a total accident, really! I actually love colour, but I don’t use a lot of it because colours mixed up together can look overwhelming.”

To Andrew, 44, less is more. Hence the colour scheme of his Remuera home, which doubles as HQ for his interior-design business named – no surprises here – Monochrome Inc.

Don’t assume he deals only in black and white though. “That’s only one version of monochrome. Monochromatic design also applies to any scheme that’s based on various tones of any colour.



“The secret is choosing only one colour as an accent to a black and white theme. It could be anything. Yellow looks amazing. Shades of pink are beautiful too: perhaps a purpley pink or turquoise. And I love red.”

That’s very much in evidence in his living room, where splashes of scarlet (a pair of paintings, a vase and flowers) garnish a white wall. In the bedroom, a red cushion and a torso painted in Maori-inspired dot patterns spice up the black and white stripes.

“In most schemes, I like to work with a limited palette, based on one background colour. It’s then about the pieces you put on or against the wall. You add details to a plain canvas to create a complete picture.”

As a result, despite its many eye-catching pieces, his compact, boxy villa doesn’t look cluttered or too busy. “There’s a lot going on in this house; there’s certainly nothing minimal about it. But, because the walls are so plain, the details jump out.”

They certainly do, from the moment you walk inside. “The hallway’s meant to look like an art gallery,” says Andrew. Many of the artworks are by Andrew’s partner, Michael Galvin (the banker, not the actor). Many are textured, tactile, inviting touch.

From the hallway, we enter the living room with its air of elegant formality. The eye travels from pieces of black and white silk mounted in old French frames to a Yamaha baby grand. >

**THIS PAGE** The family room is used for everyday living; Andrew often sets his laptop up at the little chrome-legged table: “I like to have a globe near where I’m working – it reminds me of my travels and those to come.”

**OPPOSITE** (from top) Andrew with black and white photos of friends, family, Franklin the dog and famous people. “I like a kitchen to look like it’s not a real kitchen,” says Andrew, so mess is tucked away; he enjoys sitting on a barstool with a drink while Michael, a trained chef, cooks in the evening.



*"It's about the pieces you put on or against the wall. You add details to a plain canvas to create a complete picture"*

**THIS PAGE** (clockwise from top left) Franklin looks down from the wall next to a photo of Andrew as a child. Andrew buys and arranges fresh flowers for the whole house weekly: "It will be no surprise that my favourite colour of flower is white. I particularly like hydrangeas, tulips and arum lilies." There's a story behind the striped silk mounted in old French frames, says Andrew; it came from the original factory set up by Jim Thompson, who put Thai silk on the map before mysteriously disappearing in 1967.

"To me the piano is the centrepiece of this whole room," says Andrew, who designs around focal points. "Everything in the room from the art to the lacquer evolved from the piano."

Come evening, friends, acquaintances and clients gather here for dinner and drinks, often with a hired pianist playing. In the soft light of many candles and chandelier lamps, the room changes personality from a formal gentleman's lair into a seductive, inviting space.

"Sometimes, even when no one's visiting, I'll come in here and have a drink and just soak it up," says Andrew.

But it's in the sunny family room, part of a larger space that includes the kitchen, that he and Michael spend most time. In summer, they often sit out on the deck or play with Franklin on the little lawn.

Andrew works either from a tiny table in this room or from a small downstairs office. He

doesn't mind the inevitable blurring of boundaries between work and home – after all, his home is his work.

"I don't have any problem with that cut-off. I thought I would, and a lot of people said I would, but I really don't. When it's your own business you can't just drop everything at 5pm anyway."

Redecorated by Andrew earlier this year, the circa 1890 villa is a showpiece for his business. "It made sense to put work and home together. Clients can get a look at how their home might look and feel." And that look and feel is classic, elegant, with a sense of the dramatic and a touch of glamour.

Like his house, Andrew is immaculately presented. His pointed shoes are buffed and shiny, his striped shirt pristine. Dapper dress was de rigueur for Andrew during 23 years as a country-hopping marketing executive for high-end hotels, including two years in Thailand. >

**My favourite kitchen appliance is:** A Gaggia coffee machine.

**The best money we ever spent was:** Purchasing our baby grand piano.

**The best time of the week for me is:** Any day that ends with a sense of achievement.

**My favourite part of the house is:** The entrance – it has been designed as a gallery for several pieces of our art collection.

**At the moment I am enjoying drinking:** A vodka martini with a lime twist.

**My best moments in the kitchen are:** When I'm not cooking.

**My best moments in the garden are:** Surveying the result when the work is done.

**In five years I'd like to be:** Still designing beautiful homes.

**A quote I often use is:** Simplicity is all.

**I love this part of New Zealand because:** Few international cities can boast such natural beauty that is so easily accessible.

**My favourite household chore is:** I try, but I greatly dislike all household chores!

*Andrew Loader*



**THIS PAGE** (clockwise from left) Michael painted many of the artworks in the hallway, including one made from Thai coins, plastered over and covered in candle wax; the large red vase on the plinth came from Shanghai. The couple's bedroom is small and strikingly simple: "To me all a bedroom needs to be is a sleeping space. It doesn't need to be anything else," says Andrew. Called *Wahine Toa*, this red torso by artist Sophia Elise features a Maori koru pattern rendered in dots.



**THIS PAGE** The monochromatic style reigns outside too; the curtains were made for the couple's Bangkok apartment to help shelter the roof terrace from tropical rains: "They look beautiful when they sway with the breeze, especially with the row of 'Iceberg' roses in front," says Andrew.

**OPPOSITE** (from left) Franklin is wearing a red leather collar from Animates with a black and white polka dot bandana from Pets in the City, where he is a regular visitor to the day spa. In Thailand, an elephant is a good luck charm that welcomes guests into the house.

During his leisure hours, he enjoyed helping friends decorate their homes and eventually he decided to make his passion his job. In December 2009 he returned home from Thailand to start Monochrome Inc.

Influenced both by classic French design and his time in the hotel business, his vision is to bring the elegance of hotels into private homes. And no, that doesn't mean transplanting soulless lobbies. "It's the quality of materials, and how you present and put pieces together."

Even when clients aren't expected, Andrew likes everything to be immaculate. "I do like being surrounded by beautiful things. And beautiful things should be properly cared for, presented in their best light. Everything here is useful or beautiful. If they're both of those things, all the better."

With so much white, you'd imagine the dirt would show. Indeed, I spy a few marks – from

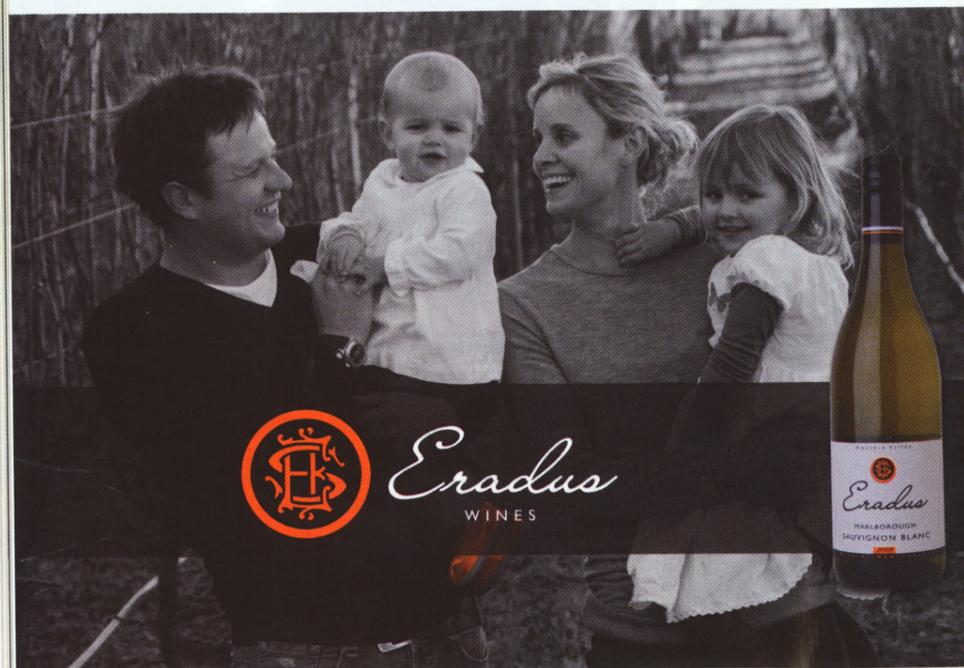
the dark dye of new jeans, Andrew suspects – on the chaise longue. But he's unperturbed. "Yes, the house can easily get grubby. But that doesn't mean it's impractical. The covers are removable and you just send them off to the drycleaners."

Andrew insists that his design philosophy is not only about beauty, but practicality too.

"I really grill clients on how they live, what they like to do, what the room is meant to do. I haven't met a client yet who didn't have comfort and practicality high on the list.

"You've got to be comfortable. You don't want to walk into a room and say, 'Oh, I can't mess it up'. You want to walk in and say, 'Oh, this is lovely, I really want to be here'. And that's how I feel when I come home."

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