

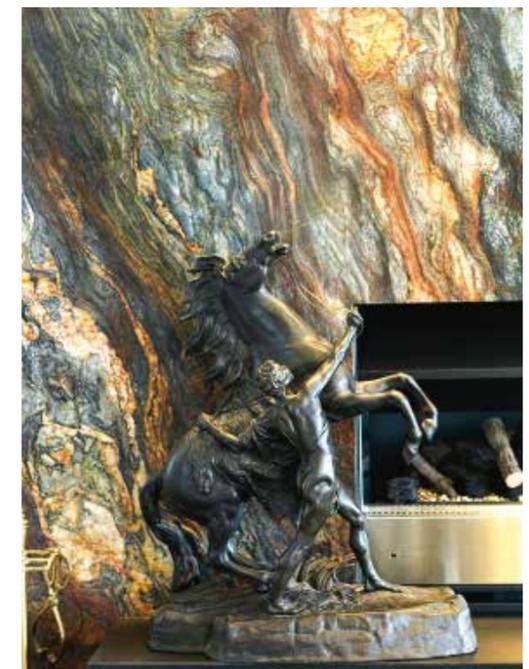
THIS PAGE Dave and Michelle Blanchard's Auckland home features a polished titanium granite kitchen benchtop; with a scullery hidden behind cupboard doors, Michelle admits she'd prefer the kitchen to be "purely for show".
OPPOSITE Dave and Michelle sit on a Tufty-Time sofa from Matisse.



Going for gold

The Real Housewives of Auckland star Michelle Blanchard and her husband Dave have *layered on the luxury* in their Auckland home

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IT WAS KNOWN as the “party house” in Coatesville circles even before soon-to-be *The Real Housewives of Auckland* (screening in August on Bravo) star Michelle Blanchard and her husband Dave moved in. Now, 12 months after completing an utterly luxurious multimillion dollar revamp, it will definitely be a label that’s hard to shake.

When you arrive at the Blanchards’ opulent 1100sqm home in the rural northern outskirts of Auckland, there’s one unmissable feature. Behind a window in their entrance glows a jewel-coloured collection of exotic liquor bottles in a backlit cabinet (see page 64).

“This was all about setting the scene,” says Dave. “When you come into a house you decide, are we going to have a good time here or is it going to be really boring?”

From the marble bar to the glitzy gold kitchen, every aspect of this home tells the same story: this is a good-time couple who live life exactly the way they want. Dave made his fortune in vitamins, but recently bowed out of the business, Good Health, started by his father John and later run by Dave and his brother Brian. “After 25 years of answering emails from China every day, it was time to let it go,” Dave says. “Mum passed away at 53. I’ve just turned 50; I just thought, ‘Let’s enjoy life.’” >

THESE PAGES (clockwise from above) The Marset Discoco pendant from ECC hangs above the formal living room; the feature fireplace wall is a fusion stone slab, with each panel of stone seamlessly connecting to the next; Dave had the builders construct the hanging day bed inspired by one he spotted in a five-star hotel on the Caribbean island of Anguilla. Mad chairs from Studio Italia sit in the foreground; the large wooden bookshelf, which can be split into four pieces, was bought from a Christchurch antiques dealer. A bronze sculpture from Art+Object. Dave sourced the two portrait paintings online five years ago, and the sideboard is from Cavit & Co.

THIS PAGE The Platner coffee table and armchairs are from Homage, the mirror is from Art+Object.
OPPOSITE (clockwise from top left) No stainless steel is allowed in the house, hence all the brass including the bench cladding designed by Trinity Interior Design. The glowing liquor cabinet containing an impressive collection of bottles. A DelightFULL Galliano steel pendant light from ECC hangs above the dining table. >



"MUM PASSED AWAY AT 53. I'VE JUST TURNED 50. I THOUGHT, 'LET'S ENJOY LIFE'"





THIS PAGE (clockwise from left) The lobby flooring is polished Jurassic travertine. Michelle sits on a Leonard sofa in Hunt velvet in Petrolio from ECC. Dave wanted a bar that glowed – his brief was fulfilled with illuminated onyx arco stone; the Ruché chair by Ligne Roset is from Domo; the gold-plated Minotti Benson coffee table is from ECC, underfoot is a broadloom plush pile rug from Artisan.

OPPOSITE (from top) The master bedroom features a custom-made bed (two double beds joined together) with made-to-measure bedspread and linen. The en suite features honed Emperador Dark marble slab from SCE and a SpazioCasa free-standing bath; Michelle ensured the en suite toilet was placed behind a separate glass screen.

Dave wasn't about to kick back and relax though. He's spent the past 12 months overseeing the lavish rebuild of the house where he and Michelle live with their children, Curtis, 14, and Christelle, 12. The family had wanted a change from their Tuscan-style home in Okura and found just what they were looking for in an original 80s home surrounded by 2.5ha of land.

Although Dave admired the home's bones, there is little left of the original structure. "We've spent well over \$7 million on it," he says. "Let's just put it this way: should've been demo'd," Michelle says.

Dave, the out-there, big-picture person in this partnership, drove the architectural side of the project, and Michelle focused on the detail of the interiors. They worked with the ease of a couple who have been together for years. >





THIS PAGE Michelle wanted Christelle's bedroom to be one that every girl dreams of; it includes a Volière Haute table lamp from ECC and the studded headboard was custom designed. **OPPOSITE** (clockwise from top left) Paintings from Bali hang throughout the house; the Roll and Hill Gridlock wall light is from ECC. Curtis' bedroom features Union Jack curtains from Dawson & Co and a Flos Gun lamp from ECC. Christelle enjoys reading on her hanging Bubble Chair from Homage; the lampshade is from ECC. Michelle's father has been visiting on a six-month UK tourist visa and loves the guest bathroom featuring Astro Sparta brass wall lights by ECC and Composto Anthracite porcelain tiles from European Ceramics.



"You're such a show-off," Michelle says, as Dave suddenly announces he needs to visit the bathroom and disappears through a concealed door, quickly popping back out again. She admits, though, that it was Dave's larger-than-life personality that attracted her attention when they met almost 20 years ago.

"Michelle picked me up in the Bay of Islands," Dave says.

"Absolute rubbish!" Michelle interjects.

Born and bred Londoner Michelle was on a family holiday in New Zealand when she couldn't help but notice Dave's booming voice while ferrying between Paihia and Russell.

Dave recalls: "Your mother wandered up the back and said, 'You boys sound like good sorts.' I said, 'You look like a good sort, but I wouldn't mind knowing your friend.' She said, 'She's not my friend, she's my daughter!'"

A long-distance romance followed, with Dave flying to London and a holiday in Bali. Michelle, a fashion merchandiser for Ralph Lauren and part-time model, returned to the Bay of Islands and Dave proposed to her just a year and a day after they met.

The couple has always wanted to renovate a house together, but never imagined a project this big. Architectural designer Grant Bindon of Bindon Design Group (bindondesigngroup.co.nz) tripled the size of the original home to 1100sqm, adding a storey for a master bedroom suite and living room, a west wing and a pool house.

Except for an eight-week family holiday to Europe, Dave was on site most days during construction, which finished last Christmas. "I've saved two Bentleys being on site, being here and making smart decisions, seeking alternative quotes and negotiating, and by quality control and adding value," he says.

When it came to the interiors, Michelle worked with Takapuna's Trinity Interior Design and now does some consulting work for them (trinityinteriordesign.co.nz). Her love of black and gold is evident. "It's opulent, it marries well together, it's warm, it's luxurious and it's easy. Most of my jewellery is black and gold."

The couple say it's the luxe detailing of the home that's helped create the international feel they desired. >



Q&A

THE FIRST THING I DO WHEN I GET HOME: Turn on the heating. Coming to New Zealand I would be cold outside and I would still be cold inside. They just don't quite get the heating right. I overkill on heating. *(Michelle)*

BEST THING ABOUT THE RENOVATION: Taking something very ordinary to exceptionally wow. *(Dave)*

BIGGEST RENOVATION REGRET: My walk-in wardrobe; it needed to be bigger. *(Michelle)*

FAVOURITE POWER TOOL: My new 300kph leaf blower. *(Dave)*

BEST MONEY WE EVER SPENT: The 60 inch TV in the master bedroom that just disappears each night, and the travertine floor in the entranceway – it looks like a river is running through it. *(Dave)*

IN THE NEXT FIVE OR TEN YEARS I'D LIKE TO: Do it again, bigger and better. *(Dave)*

Michelle and Dave Blanchard



THIS PAGE (from top) Dave suggested the two windows be cut into the concrete walls by the courtyard fire to let in a breeze on hot days. Christelle plays with the family dog Marley, a Hungarian vizsla.

OPPOSITE (from top) The Blanchards love entertaining around the pool, redesigned into a T shape; Morgan wicker dining chairs in Cocoa and the concrete table are from Design Warehouse. Dave and Michelle often enjoy a gin and tonic looking down at their house from their "his and hers" chairs in the redesigned back garden.

"We haven't held back. We could've put white tiles [in the entranceway] and it still would've been a cool space, but nope... forty grand's worth of travertine on the floor instead. We wanted wow in every room," says Dave.

The couple have each co-opted spaces that have become their personal zones. Michelle loves the pool room with its gym, sauna and steam room. "I thought, 'I have to have one for myself so I can relax completely starkers if I want to and not worry about anybody else.' It's perfect," she says.

The media room is enjoyed by Dave and Curtis. "He doesn't leave," says Dave. "He comes out in the morning and says, 'Dad, I slept in there all night.' It's quite cosy in there."

Despite the pride they feel in their glitzy alteration, the couple don't think they'll be here forever. "Absolutely not," Michelle says. "I want to try new things, experiment with new things. I don't say I'll be here for 10 to 20 years. I'd like to be, but I have a feeling in a couple of years' time we'll say, 'Right, let's go in another direction yet again.'" ■

