

# People

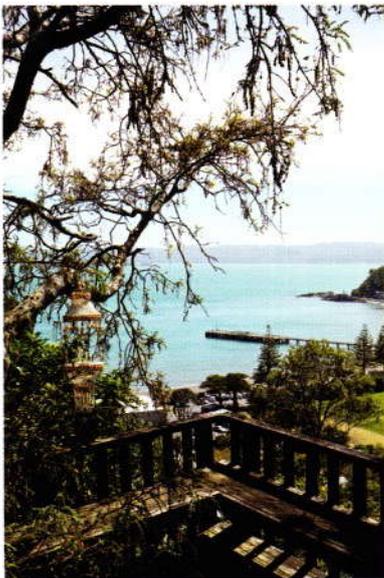


## Inside Story

Deborah Sweeney and Niels Meyer-Westfeld open their home and share some of their treasures

WORDS SHARON STEPHENSON / PHOTOGRAPHY RUSSELL KLEYM

THE STILL POINT IN SWEENEY'S TURNING WORLD IS HER HOME – A MID-CENTURY HIDEAWAY THAT CLINGS TO A VERTIGINOUS HILL IN EASTBOURNE'S NATIVE BUSH



**S**WEENEY IS USED to walking the tightrope between work and family. The Wellington clothing designer also juggles sons Lars (5) and Romeo (2) with the eponymous label she established in 2002.

"I'm very grateful to be able to work in a creative industry. It's a balancing act at times, but it's wonderful sharing the journey with my family and I can't imagine it any other way."

The still point in Sweeney's turning world is her home – a mid-century hideaway that clings to a vertiginous hill in Eastbourne's native bush and is accessible either via a glute-busting walk or a cable car.

Sweeney and her partner Niels Meyer-Westfeld bought the 55-year-old house in 2013, after they outgrew a previous one in nearby Point Howard.

the most likely location for someone who worked in New York for designer Jill Stuart, and in London for Topshop and H&M, but Sweeney's preference is to be near her Gracefield workroom.

This close proximity means they can both work on the label – Deborah is in charge of design and manufacturing; while Niels, with a background in graphic design and photography, manages the website and marketing collateral – as well as juggling childcare.

Having realigned the 290m<sup>2</sup> house to fit their pared-back lifestyle, the pair dipped into the white paint to create a backdrop for their collection of furniture and objet d'art, including Deborah's vintage finds from all over the world and Niels' drawings of native New Zealand birds, many of which were featured in his recently published book,

**Previous page.** Deborah Sweeney and Niels Meyer-Westfeld are partners in business and in life.

**Above.** The couple's home is surrounded by nature; some of which filters indoors in all manner of



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## Deborah Sweeney's Favourite Things

**1 Wall hanging**  
I love crafting and the opportunity to create something unique. I recently tried my hand at weaving and spent a lot of time collecting yarn from various charity stores.

**2 Albatross and Kingfisher**  
We have a lot of Niels' art hanging in our home but these are two of my favourites from *Land of Birds*. The kingfisher was the first piece he sold at his recent first-ever solo exhibition. The detail never ceases to astound me.

**3 1960s Poul Henningsen pendant light**  
I found this in Copenhagen at the back of an antique store, and managed to get it for a steal. On the international flight home, I fitted it into the overhead locker but on the hop to Wellington it had to travel in the loo!

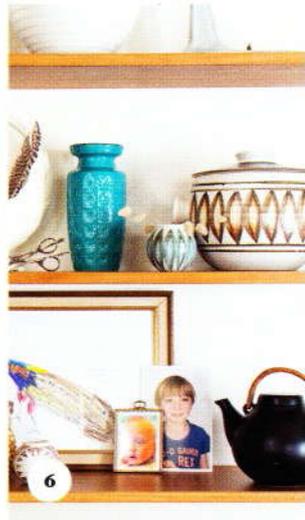
**4 G-Plan 'Tola and Black' Librenza**  
This piece was a house warming present from my parents. We found it at Mr Bigglesworthy in Auckland and I adore the little gold horseshoe handles. I'm a huge fan of mid-century design.

**5 Ceramic antelope**  
On a visit to Niels' family in Germany I found this antelope at a wonderful local flea market but regretfully didn't buy it. My mother-in-law later surprised me and bought it for me.

**6 Hanmer pottery**  
I started collecting Hanmer pottery a few years back. I'm originally from Christchurch and as a child in the 70s we used to visit Hanmer. Mum also had several pieces, so this pottery reminds me of my childhood. I love the earthy colours, the simple patterns and shapes.



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## Niels Meyer-Westfeld's Favourite Things

**1 Elgin Starburst clock**  
This was a Trade Me find and is the focal point of our living room. It was the first thing we bought for our new home. It also symbolised new beginnings with the arrival of our second son.

**2 Skull collection**  
This is one of the things I would rescue in a fire! All the natural artefacts I've collected over the years are a constant

**3 Kowhai tree**  
This stunning native plant was in full bloom when we first viewed the house. We'd had one in our previous home and it immediately gave me a connection to our new space.

**4 Silver candlesticks**  
These were given to me by my German grandmother; and being so far from home, they are a treasured connection to my



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