

PASSION PROJECTS

Whether you want to enliven a dull corner, take out the kitchen or go the whole hog with a floor-to-ceiling restoration of your home, these three playful makeovers show you're limited only by your imagination

TODHUNTER
EARLE

PERIOD DRAMA

In this ambitious project, two Victorian houses were combined to create a vibrant home full of life and colour

You actually can teach an old house new tricks, as this family home on New Kings

Road proves. Originally two Victorian terraced properties, the buildings have been knocked together to create long, lateral spaces and a beautiful flow of light. Modern touches were added to enhance its period beauty.

Icon Architects were brought on board for the immense two-year project, along with Emily Todhunter of Todhunter Earle. From the start the process was a 'Very happy, collaborative one,' Todhunter remembers. 'You can really tell that when you walk into the house, it has a very happy atmosphere'. Working with the owners; 'a very cool couple with young taste and an interest in contemporary art' the key principles of atmosphere, flow and practicality were combined with a brief to 'Retain the character of the old house and open it up and make it work for modern living'.

The result is a lively blend of understated elegance and old-school charm, but not without some tongue-in-cheek design fun. In the sitting room - originally two rooms knocked together - elegant Bray Design



Mirrors in the garden reflect light, creating quiet spaces with a sense of magic

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Todhunter Earle worked with Icon Architects on the light-filled sitting room; a stylish place to snooze; double doors lead out to the decorative garden



chairs are scattered with cushions in a zing of chartreuse and clementine, offset by contemporary fabrics in geometric monochrome.

A bespoke Rupert Bevan cabinet brings a hint of Art Deco into the mix. Contrasting colours, luxurious materials, and a mix of textures and materials with bright artworks are what makes it work here. An elongated, wide space unfurling seamlessly to the outdoor terrace, it's the perfect room for entertaining and family living.

But good things come in small packages, too. In the bijou anteroom off the hall, you can't miss the rock'n'roll portrait of Queen Elizabeth II. An homage to the owner's artistic tastes, it's beautifully enfolded by

mellow Tim Page Sphinx floor and Grigio wallpaper by Phillip Jeffries. Sebag Textiles curtains with a monkey pattern retain a sense of fun. 'It's smart, but it's not too grown up – it's got a whimsy, fun element to it,' says Todhunter. 'We chose things which we loved and knew would work in the colour palette but we were brave'.

A favourite element of hers is the long piece of panelling in Farrow & Ball's Down Pipe running up the stairs. 'Usually in London houses you walk into a very thin passageway of a hall. This feels different to a terraced house – much bigger and wider. The panelling goes from the bottom all the way to the top in a dark colour. It takes you away from having a dado rail,

which is old fashioned but practical'.

The renovation also boasts a sociable hangout area with a pool table and bar. A fresh, urban feel here is thanks to additions like Rockett St George Black Brick wallpaper. Opening up from the sitting room, the garden is perfect for long, leisurely summer evenings when London heats up and the scent of urban foliage fills the air. It was designed by Cameron Gardens, the company behind the opulent outdoors spaces at Annabel's and Chelsea Ivy Garden. You can see this signature in the vast outdoor mirrors, festooned in greenery, that refract light and draw you through an arch, creating an enchanting secret



garden effect. It's just the sort of place where you can imagine wiling away a Sunday evening, a glass of rosé in hand.

'It's a lovely balance between contemporary and traditional,' Todhunter concludes. 'If you can make your client and their children happy, you've achieved your goal.'

As a family home, this original, colourful Victorian conversion is a triumph. As a design achievement, it's a reminder of why the spaces we live our lives in are so important, bringing together unique art finds, shots of vibrant colour, and the energy and personality of a much-loved family dwelling.

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