



PROPERTY UPDATES
Above and right feature new wooden windows made by a local carpenter and fitted with glazing from Slimlite



'Our contemporary home started out as a group of bedsits'

Dan and Nathalie Petrone have transformed a large townhouse with a warren of cramped rooms into a light and spacious property that's full of stylish modern touches

WORDS LOTTIE POTTER PHOTOGRAPHS COLIN POOLE



LIVING SPACE
Left A contemporary fire from Victoria Stone and a sofa from B&B Italia make this a cosy space. The rug and coffee table are both from Selfridges

FACT FILE

THE OWNERS

Nathalie Petrone, who is an HR manager at a media company, lives here with her husband Dan, a manager in the tobacco industry

THE PROPERTY

A five-bedroom, detached Edwardian house

THE LOCATION

Tunbridge Wells, Kent

WHAT THEY SPENT

The couple bought the property for £690,000 in 2009 and have spent around £224,000 on renovation work. The house has recently been valued at around £1.5million



DINING ROOM

With its period details and original fireplace, this elegant space retains its Edwardian feel. The walls are painted in Dulux Night Jewels 3 and 5, while the curtains were made by C&H Fabrics. The modern table and chairs are from de Bijenkorf in Amsterdam – try Nest for similar. Christopher Wray sells similar chandeliers

Faced with a rambling collection of musty old bedsit rooms, Nathalie and Dan Petrone had to really use their imagination to recognise the potential the property offered. Fortunately, they both have a creative eye, plus the good sense to know that hiring the right project team would help them realise that potential.

'Before we bought this house in 2009, we were working and living in Amsterdam and also owned a flat in north London,' says Dan. 'Buying the house was all about

trying to establish a family home and putting down roots in the UK. Tunbridge Wells seemed like a nice place to live, and this was the right property, the right size and in the right area of a large town.'

Dan had first spotted the property online, so the couple arranged to view it during one of their regular trips back to the UK. The fact that it was carved up into bedsits and had barely been touched since 1979 appealed to the couple. 'We wanted to take on a big project and get it exactly as

we wanted it, knowing that it would be our "forever home",' continues Dan. 'We weren't interested in making a profit because we plan to stay here for some time to come. As long as we didn't over-invest and therefore lose money on the renovation work, we were okay with it.'

To help them with their project, the Petrones hired architect Steve Margate of Atelier – SM Architects. 'We walked round the house with him and showed him our scrapbook of design ideas,' Dan recalls. 'It's

KITCHEN-DINER

Finished in American black walnut, the bespoke kitchen units and breakfast bar have been teamed with composite stone worktops, all from Made in Wood. The breakfast bar seats are based on Eero Saarinen's iconic 1950s Tulip chair and were sourced from Vertigo Interiors



DESIGN TIP

If you choose timber for the flooring and kitchen cabinets, view samples of the materials together to ensure they are complementary – look for a good contrast in colour, grain and patina

KITCHEN UNITS

Left To maximise the feeling of space, the couple opted not to fit wall cabinets. The parquet-style wood flooring was sourced by the builder – find similar at The Natural Wood Floor Company. The pendant lights are from Illuminations

DESIGN DETAILS

Right The couple chose a range of Gaggenau appliances, such as this sleek, built-in oven. The colourful pendant lights are from Illuminations and were installed at various heights to create a focal point above the dining area



OPEN-PLAN LAYOUT

The living room was once a separate room, but the Petrones have removed the wall either side of the chimneybreast to create a direct link with the kitchen-diner. The hanging photo frames between these rooms came from Amsterdam, but you can find a similar design on Amazon



definitely a good tip to put together an ideas book before you start an extensive project like this. We went through loads of homes magazines, cut out pictures that appealed to us and stuck them in the book. It was incredibly useful for communicating ideas to Steve. After several discussions, we distilled our wishlist down to three main objectives: open-plan spaces, lots of light and a contemporary style.

The ground floor of the house was a warren of little rooms on different levels, while on the first floor there were around eight rooms of various sizes. In the loft, a two-bedroom bedsit included a kitchen, bathroom and hallway. 'The entire house felt very small and closed in,' Nathalie recalls. 'By opening it up, we would lose a few rooms but gain plenty of space and light. Although we wanted our home to have a modern feel, it was also important to us to retain some of the property's Edwardian character.'

As the house hadn't had much work done in more than 30 years, there was no central heating and only single glazing. All the kitchen floorboards were warped and showing signs of cupping – a problem created by dampness, where the underside of each floorboard has absorbed too much moisture, expanding and raising the boards

at their edges. This was due to a wet cellar below the kitchen that regularly filled up with water after heavy rain.

Having obtained planning permission without any problems, the first job on the couple's list was to tackle the structural work head-on. 'The builders tanked the cellar, knocked out all the unwanted walls, put in temporary props to hold up the ceilings, took off the roof and removed all the windows,' says Dan. 'Then they took out all the floorboards, too. We were left with only the joists and brickwork – it was a hollow shell, basically.'

'We had a bit of a nightmare early on, because the first building company left the house open to the elements,' continues Nathalie. 'We were still living in Amsterdam at the time, so we weren't on site to keep an eye on things. We decided to hire a new builder, Oliver John, and employed a project manager, Sarah Greenwood of Walrond Fuller Chartered Surveyors, to oversee everything in our absence and get the project finished before our planned return in April 2010.'

With Sarah at the helm, the project moved on apace. 'Sarah was amazing – construction is such a male-dominated industry but she was brilliant at managing the builders,' says Nathalie. On their return to the UK, the couple took the decision to move into a rented property nearby for six months so that the house could be completely finished before they moved in.

All the ground-level floors were replaced

with new oak parquet – inspired by the flooring in the Petrones' Amsterdam apartment. The windows were replaced with

hardwood frames and high-spec double-glazing. 'We took a while to deliberate over it, because they were very expensive,' says Nathalie, 'but as Dan said, windows are the eyes of a house, so we agreed to go ahead and buy them.'

The other structural work included remodelling the awkward front of the property to give it a more balanced appearance. 'It was two storeys on the right side of the house, but only one storey on the left,' explains Dan. 'It used to look as though it had one eye open and one eye closed.' On the right of the property, the

We didn't want kitchen units above the worktops as it might have felt cramped



DESIGN TIP
A bed with legs will make a small bedroom appear larger, as long as the space beneath is free from clutter – the more uninterrupted floor area you can see, the larger the room will seem.

GUEST BEDROOM

Left The bedroom ceiling on the first floor had to be lowered to accommodate extra steel supports and the drainpipe gradient for the bath in the master suite directly above. A soothing green colour scheme of walls painted in Dulux Highland Falls 3 provides the perfect foil for bronze and red silk cushions. The varnished oak bed and lamps are from Amsterdam; try And So To Bed for a similar bed. The bedside tables are from C&H Fabrics, as are the curtains. The carpet is from Fashion Carpets

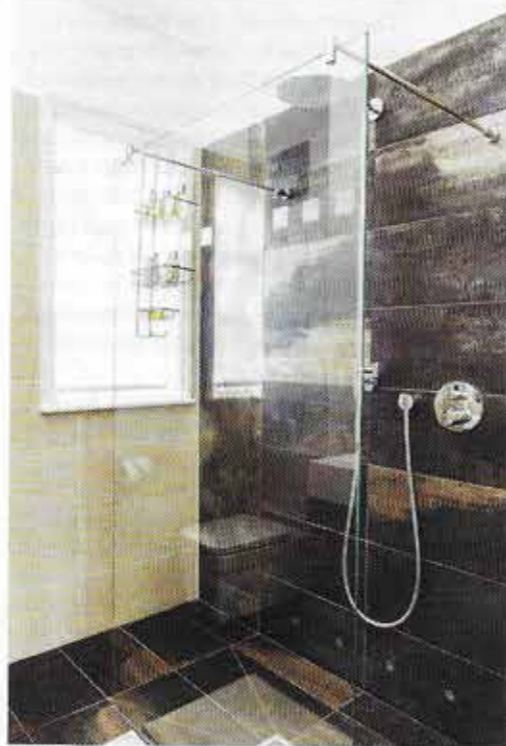
PLAYROOM

Right This room was created by extending the front of the property, removing a sloping roof above the kitchen to make the front of the house more symmetrical. Modular cubes from The Great Little Trading Company provide open-fronted storage. The wall stickers are from Aspace, and the blinds and curtains are from C&H Fabrics



SHOWER ROOM

Below The stylish space makes a feature of Corten metallic porcelain tiles in the shower area. Ripples sourced all the fixtures and fittings, including the frameless Manufaktur Studio shower screen and an Aqua-Dec wet floor shower tray



HALLWAY

Above An Edwardian staircase has been restored by Oliver John and painted white to continue the light and airy feel

of the house. Added interest has been created with a bold barcode-style Audrey carpet, in Midnight, from Crucial Trading

ground-floor garage became a new study, while on the left, a sloping roof was removed and the wall built up to create a first-floor playroom.

'Afterwards, the front of the house where we had extended looked a total mess, especially where the bricks had been punched through to add downpipes,' says Nathalie. 'We contacted a company called Make-up for Masonry to clean the brickwork and hand-tint the bricks so that they would match the old ones. It's all chemical-free and the match is perfect.'

One of the main rooms that needed restructuring was the new kitchen-diner – originally three rooms but now knocked through to create a large open-plan space. 'We didn't want units above the worktops as we felt that would give a cramped effect,' says Dan. 'Nathalie and I debated the layout for ages until we came across Martin Bepoy of bespoke kitchen designers Made in Wood. We liked his hands-on approach and the fact we could show him a unit from any kitchen and he'd offer to make it bespoke.'

The couple kitted out their new kitchen with sleek appliances, including an electric

fan oven, two induction hobs, an extractor fan and dishwasher drawers. 'The new dishwasher drawers are a godsend, as you can fill one drawer and set it to wash independently from the other,' says Dan. 'It means you can use the unit for storage, too.'

Perhaps the most extensive structural work involved remodelling the roof space to create a new open-plan master bedroom suite. Instead of the original poky loft rooms and dormer windows, the couple wanted a large gable window with a Juliet balcony, an open-plan bedroom and two huge new skylights above a freestanding bath. A walk-in dressing room at one end and a double shower and WC at the other were also factored into the new design.

Inspired by the freestanding baths in boutique hotels they'd stayed in, the couple looked to Louise Home of Ripples for ideas. 'Designing an open-plan suite like this was quite a challenge,' says Nathalie. 'When

you're confined by walls it's obvious where to place furniture against them. When you haven't any walls, you have to work out where to put things as you go along. For example, keeping a half-height wall was our project manager Sarah's idea, as it gave us somewhere to position the bed.'

Similarly, Louise thought it would be best for the bedroom parquet flooring to meet the bath area tiles in a diagonal line

rather than straight across, as this would help to fuse the areas, rather than visually cut the room in two.

The freestanding, mineral-cast bath was so heavy that it had to be winched into position, and the loft floor was strengthened with steel joists to support it. This impacted on the height of a bedroom below, as its high Edwardian ceiling had to be lowered to accommodate the drainage gradient for the bath pipework above.

At one end of the suite a double shower room is tucked away behind a modesty wall ▶

Although we wanted a modern feel, it was important to retain the Edwardian character

THE PLANS

GROUND FLOOR BEFORE



GROUND FLOOR AFTER



FIRST FLOOR BEFORE



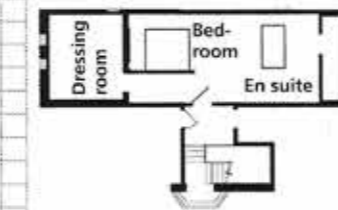
FIRST FLOOR AFTER



SECOND FLOOR BEFORE



SECOND FLOOR AFTER



Originally split into bedsits over three floors, the layout has become more cohesive. To achieve this, the house was first completely stripped out, with all windows and floorboards removed. Three rooms were knocked

into one large kitchen-diner, the loft space was turned into an open-plan master suite with dressing room, and the garage has become a home office. To create the playroom, a roof was removed and a wall built up

THE COSTS

Windows	£60,000
Kitchen	£45,000
Extension work to front of house	£40,000
Bathroom sanitaryware	£27,000
Cellar tanking	£15,000
Electrics	£15,000
Decorating	£12,000
Dressing room	£7,000
Parquet flooring and tiles	£3,000
TOTAL	£224,000

CONTACTS

Architect Steve Margate, Atelier - SM Architects, 020 8596 5052, Architect-essex.com
 Project manager Sarah Greenwood, Walrond Fuller Chartered Surveyors, 01892 709600, www.walrondfuller.co.uk
 Construction Oliver John Contracts & Maintenance, 01435 869020, Oliverjohn.net
 Window and double door glazing Slimlite
 Kitchen Made in Wood
 Appliances Fisher & Paykel, Gaggenau
 Bathroom Ripples
 Shutters Shutter Frontier
 Dressing room Manhattan Closets

DESIGN TIP

Tucking the foot of a bath into the eaves is a great way to make maximum space in a loft bathroom, and a well positioned rooflight can provide extra headroom where needed



MASTER SUITE

Keeping part of the old hallway wall at half-height has provided a place to position the bed from Warren Evans. The new double doors were made by a local carpenter, with glazing from Slimlite, and feature shutters from Shutter Frontier. The walk-in dressing room was created by Manhattan Closets



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