

Livingetc

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Modern homes packed with glamour and style



SPA-CHIC BATHROOMS
THE INSPIRATION
THE PLANNING
THE DETAILS

PLUS INDUSTRIAL STYLE KITCHENS

DECORATING WITH WHITE

Simple, sophisticated and super smart

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TREND ALERT! NEW SEASON PAINT SHADES

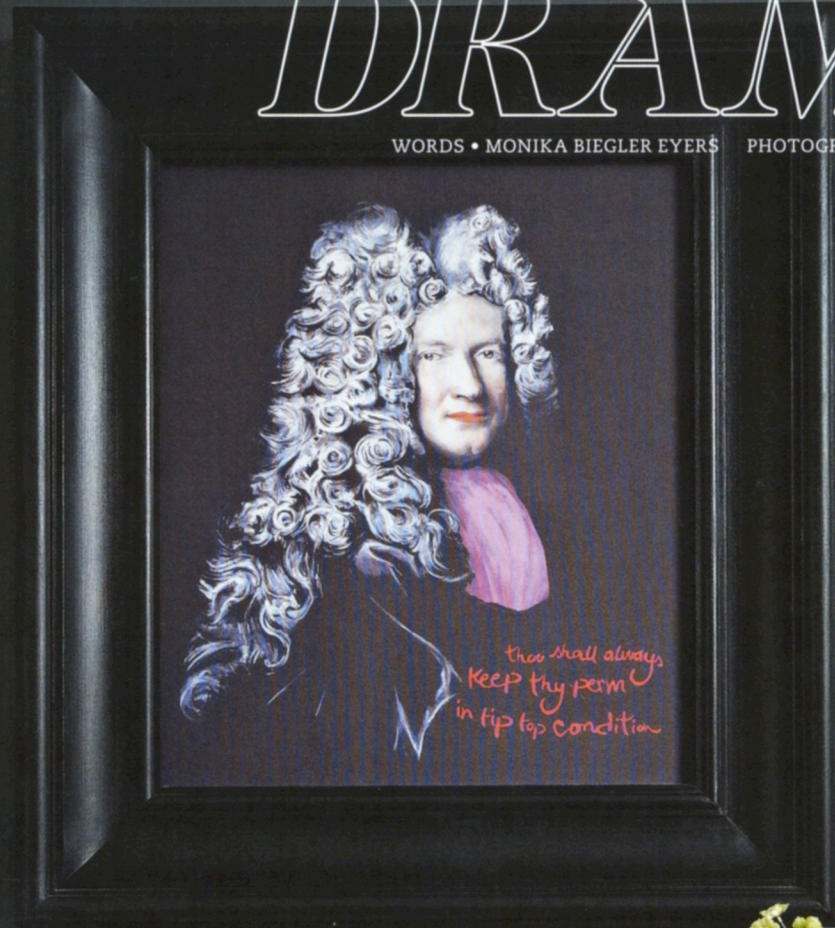
Colour

HIGH-SPEED

Oriona and Colin bought a blank canvas of a house then added colour, texture and drama, all in the blink of an eye

DRAMA

WORDS • MONIKA BIEGLER EYERS PHOTOGRAPHY • PAUL MASSEY



HOME PROFILE

The owners Oriona Robb, an image consultant and freelance make-up artist, husband Colin, who works in the City, and children Sofia, 10, and Chloe, four.

The property A five-storey Victorian town house in north London. The lower-ground floor has a kitchen-diner and utility room. The ground floor has a living room and WC. There's a master suite on the first floor, plus three bedrooms, two bathrooms and a studio on the top floors.

LIVING ROOM

Oriona was feeling adventurous when it came to painting the feature wall and tried several shades of grey. 'I was worried it might make the room feel small, but I wanted something with a bit of zing to contrast with the walnut floorboards,' she says.

GET THE LOOK

The paint is Farrow & Ball's Down Pipe. The Ossie The Owl vase is from Graham & Green; the white Utopia vase is by Jonathan Adler. The rhinoceroses and Thy Perm painting by Russ Lewis are from Atelier Abigail Ahern.





LIVING ROOM

Wanting to add to the drama of the grey wall, Oriana hung trompe l'oeil wallpaper for a cool library mood. 'It was my first experience with wallpaper and I was a bit afraid to go for it,' she explains, 'but it's brought a bit of texture and pattern to the room, and I love it.'

GET THE LOOK

The Genuine Fake Bookshelf wallpaper is by Deborah Bowness. The sofa is by B&B Italia and the felt Block cushion is by Anne Kyyrö Quinn. Oriana picked up the chandelier at Heal's, and the mirror at Atelier Abigail Ahern. Buy Kartell's red Victoria Ghost chair at Made In Design. The coffee table is from Dwell.

HOME TRUTHS

Oriona, you're a fashion gal, where do you like to shop? I always get excited by a big package arriving from mywardrobe.com, and Parisian car-boot sales are brilliant for unusual homeware.

What's your essential wardrobe item? I love a quality black jacket, because it never goes out of style.

Who is your style icon? I really admire how Vivienne Westwood broke all the rules.

How do you relax? For a physical and mental workout, I sweat it out at Bikram yoga.

If you could build a house anywhere, where would it be? A safari lodge in Kenya so we could be surrounded by nature.

Do you have a secret skill? I can make a five-course dinner without looking at a cookery book.

What's your favourite food? Fresh Polish bread with ham and cheese – it's something I grew up with.

What's on your bedside table? Books and magazines. Recently I've been indulging in Kate Summerscale's *Mrs Robinson's Disgrace: The Private Diary Of A Victorian Lady*.



KITCHEN

Thanks to clever design – underfloor heating, doors onto the garden, a computer station – the kitchen is the undisputable heart of the house. 'It's quite lived in,' says Oriona, 'more so than even the living room. Everyone tends to just come downstairs as soon as they arrive.'

GET THE LOOK

The appliances are by Miele. Boffi makes a stainless-steel island like this one. Cox & Cox sells fringed Fouta hand towels. Try Alessi for a similar stainless-steel fruit bowl. For handleless kitchen cabinet doors, visit Doorbox. Ceramica & Stone stocks limestone flooring. For a chair in this style, see the black Directors bar stool at Argos.



'I'm a bit of a rebel against "pretty", but I like an elegant twist with strong silhouettes.'

AS

an image consultant, it's Oriona Robb's job to bring out the best in her clients, to push them a little out of their comfort zone and give them the courage to be daring and different. 'When it came to decorating this house, it seemed natural to turn to what I know and use the same approach,' says Oriona, who hadn't previously tackled a house revamp.

It makes perfect sense. A little like her clients, the property had great bones but was set in its ways, and was ripe for a rethink. 'We fell for the house because it was unusually wide,' says Oriona. 'Most of the ones around here are Georgian and quite narrow.' It was also a brilliant blank canvas with all the hard work done, which was ideal, as Oriona was expecting Chloe, now four, at the time. 'The house had been thoughtfully reconfigured, so all we had to do, basically, was move in,' she says. But although it was beautifully finished – in wall-to-wall white – it wasn't what the couple had envisaged as their family home. 'It was perfectly nice, it just didn't have our personality stamped on it,' says Oriona. 'I wanted to give it an edge, inject some drama and texture.'

She began by collecting samples to create a mood board. 'It's what I do when I'm working on new make-up ideas for photo shoots,' she says, 'and I found it very useful when I was juggling paint and furnishing colours. It's a good way of experimenting before you commit paint to walls.'

However, when it came to the living room, she broke her own rule. 'I was torn between so many shades of dark grey, the only way was to test them out on the walls before deciding. Colin was a bit surprised when he came home from work, but he could see the logic of what I did,' says Oriona. Colin has become accustomed to his wife's impulsive nature, which is just as well, as she's prone to making sudden changes. 'I did the rooms one by one, but very quickly,' she says. 'In the space of a week, I'd have walls painted, pictures hung and furniture and accessories in place.'

When it comes to furniture, Oriona employs what she calls her 'wardrobe approach'. That means investing in timeless classics for the important staple items and adding colour and personality with more affordable accessories – just as she does with her clothes. 'I like to experiment with colour in different rooms,' she says, 'ringing the changes according to mood or season.' She has a whole collection of cushions, rugs and vases that pop up all over the house. 'I think my all-time favourite items are vases,' she says, 'and the flowers that go in them, of course.' She seeks them out wherever she goes. 'Columbia Road flower market in Shoreditch is a great source for inexpensive ceramics, but I have been known to drag a huge urn home from a holiday in Dubai,' she laughs.

Now the house is finished – for the time being – to reflect its owners' style, but it's primarily a non-precious place for family and friends. 'I can't be doing with people having to take off

their shoes,' says Oriona, 'and I want the children and their friends to have free rein in every room.' This particularly applies in the kitchen, which leads onto the garden. 'It's the place where everyone congregates when they come home,' she says. The heated limestone-tiled floor is easy to mop clean and it's the play area of choice all year round. 'I included a big cupboard in here just for toys so everything can be swept away in a minute,' says Oriona. When the days get warmer, family time is spent both inside and out. 'We love having friends round for a glass of wine in the garden while the children and their friends run in and out,' she says. Sounds perfect to us.



↑ **DINING AREA**

Days begin and end with large family meals in the kitchen-diner. 'We eat dinner together as a family every night, along with big breakfasts here at the weekend,' says Oriana.

GET THE LOOK

The Lens dining table and Papilio chairs are from B&B Italia. The wave-front sideboard and vase are from The Conran Shop. Oriana bought the artwork in Thailand, but try 55Max for graphic prints.

MASTER BEDROOM ↓ →

Wanting something dark and dramatic for the bedroom, Oriana bought the black chandelier at auction. 'I was worried about starting with the walls, so this was my first move into something a bit mysterious,' she recalls. Emboldened, she then painted the chimney breast moody grey.

GET THE LOOK

The paint is Farrow & Ball's Down Pipe. Patricia Urquiola's Tufty bed is from B&B Italia. Try Rainbow for a chandelier. The Bumble Bee artwork is from Graz Darken's Slices London series. For bordered pillowcases, see The White Company's Montebello. For a similar duvet cover, try Ralph Lauren Home at Selfridges.



↖ ↑ **LIVING ROOM**

'I'm experimenting with lamps in the living room to add a bit of scale, playing with different sizes,' says Oriana of her assorted lights. She uses lighting to set moods, and her strict rule is that every one should have a dimmer switch.

GET THE LOOK

Buy Foscarini's Twiggy floor lamp at Nest. The ostrich side table and bulldog lamp are from Atelier Abigail Ahern. For a sofa like this, see the Nova collection at BoConcept, which comes in a range of fabrics and configurations.

↖ ↓ **MASTER BATHROOM**

Oriana has given the shower room and basin a rustic edge with stone sliver tiles. 'I love the random surface and the way it catches the light,' she says.

GET THE LOOK

For stone tiles like these, check out the Splitface collection at Mandarin Stone. See the Karl basin at Bathstore for a square basin, and find the Axor Starck tap at CP Hart.



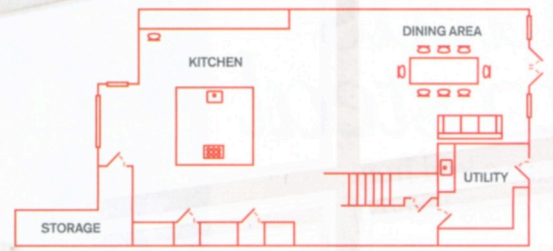
MASTER BATHROOM

The bathroom, with its fabulous rain shower and generous bathtub, reminds Oriona of a tranquil spa. 'It's clean and spacious, decluttered and simple, and I like that,' she says. The blinds are motorised for mood change at the flick of a switch.

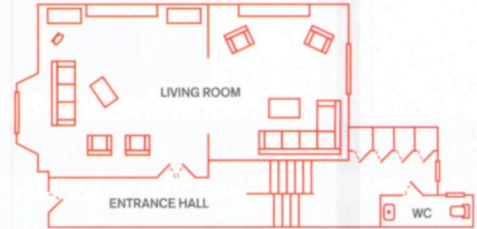
GET THE LOOK

Buy a bathtub like this from The Water Monopoly. For similar jugs, try Heal's. The floor tiles are travertine, available from Floors Of Stone. Find electric blinds at Premier Blinds & Awnings.

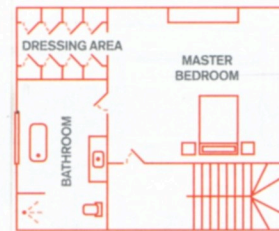
THE BLUEPRINT



LOWER-GROUND FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR