

Victorian Values

Having spent seven years working as an engineer at Ford Motor Company, BIID member Nicola Holden knows a thing or two about space planning and working to budgets!

Now running her own business, Nicola Holden Designs, Nicola found that the transition from engineer to interior designer was a logical step, and provides the perfect career combination of artist and engineer. As Nicola says, "interior design is not just about creating a fabulous design concept – it requires the use of technical problem solving skills to create a space that is not only balanced and beautiful, but also functional."

Nicola shares with us how she transformed this bijou Kensington apartment on a very tight budget.



The bright abstract painting punches through the neutral colours



This small apartment, in the basement of a Victorian terraced house and backing onto the District Line tracks in West London, was dark and soulless, and needed a complete transformation. The client, a busy City professional, wanted her apartment to be an oasis of calm when she had time to spend in it. The brief was to create a tranquil, feminine living/dining space and bedroom with a sumptuous, neutral palette. Bringing more light into the apartment was a key factor. Despite already having a mini walk-in wardrobe, ample additional storage space was required. The client also requested noise reduction measures at the back of the apartment. All of the work had to be carried out in a three week window whilst the client was away on business. ▼



Bespoke cabinetry melts into the scheme



The maître d' statue adds a quirky touch to the space

▲ Nicola chose a relaxing taupe palette, keeping the rooms bright and airy in summer but at the same time warm and comforting in winter. This harmonious and peaceful colour scheme brings a deep sense of calm to the space – instilling quietness and making it the oasis from a stressful and frenetic life that the client was looking for. Nicola chose a selection of Clarissa Hulse organic patterns in the soft furnishings and wallpaper to instil the calming effect of nature. Subtle combinations of colour and texture, with accents of silver and glass detailing work well with this colour scheme, as does the existing dark wood floor which the client did not want to replace.

What the apartment did have in the living room was high ceilings and a large bay window which the client had covered for privacy. The dusty sheers were replaced with Brume window film, providing privacy whilst letting in as much light as possible. Although there was no budget for a chandelier, Nicola was able to reposition the existing downlights, moving them to the perimeter of the room to draw the eye out and visually open up the space, making it appear larger and lighter. ▼



Nicola Holden

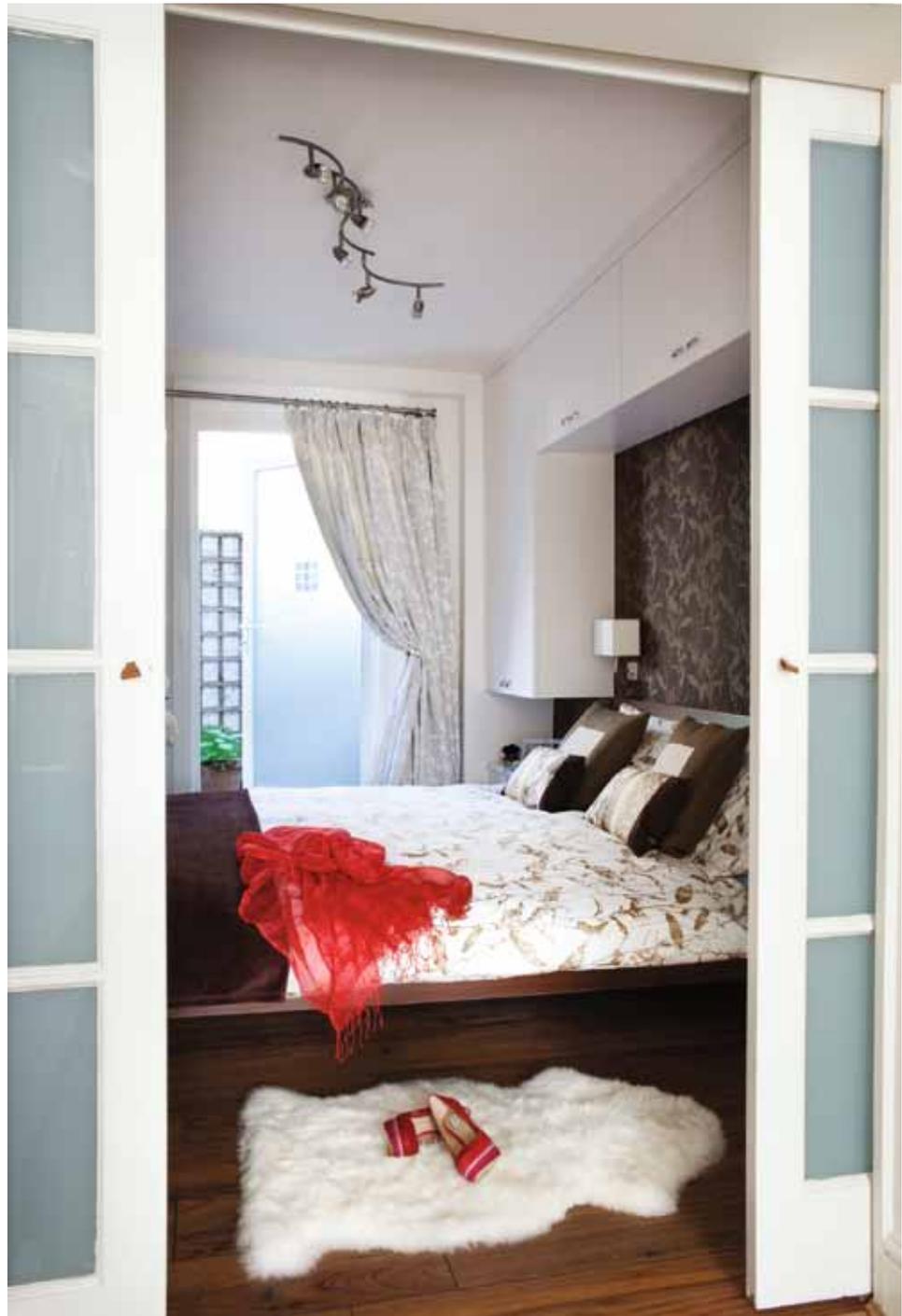
▲ The client's dark and dated furniture was replaced with light, contemporary pieces. The large modular Mood 220 sofa allows the client to relax comfortably in front of the TV after a long day, but can also be rearranged to cater for occasional entertaining. Bespoke cabinets either side of the fireplace were commissioned to provide storage, with display space for object d'art on the shelves. These are painted the same colour as the walls to effortlessly blend in and maximise the space.

A bold injection of colour in the abstract painting above the sofa punches through the neutral colours, lifting the mood of the apartment without compromising on the atmosphere of relaxation.

The client did not need a large dining space, so Nicola created a café-styled feature with a bar table and a pair of chic leather bar stools. The Tom's Drag maître d' statue adds a vibrant, fun and quirky touch to the space.

As the bedroom opens directly off the living room with sliding double doors, it was important to achieve continuity and a sense of flow between these two rooms to give the appearance of the overall space being larger. This was executed through the repeated use of colours and materials, with rich chocolate browns adding depth and warmth to the bedroom.

With doors on three sides of this compact bedroom, there was only one position for the bed – in front of a chimney breast. Unfortunately removing the chimney breast to create more space was not a viable option due to leasehold restrictions. So, to create the storage space that the client desperately needed, Nicola designed built-in wardrobes and bedside units around the ▼



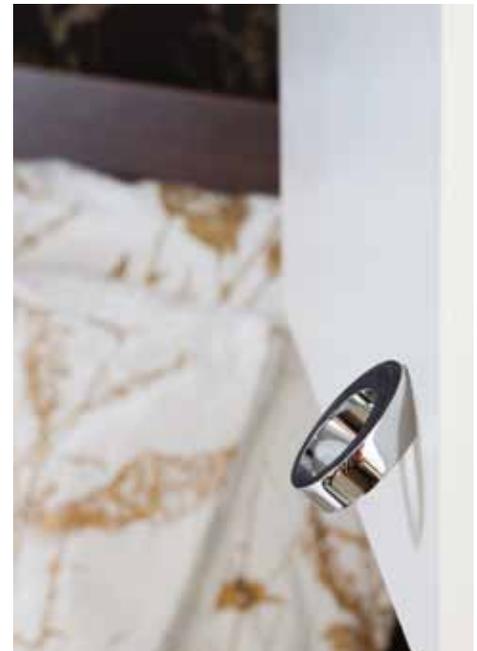
The colour scheme flows into the adjacent bedroom



Rich wallpaper creates a boutique hotel style in the bedroom

▲ bed that extend back into the recesses either side of the chimney breast. This allows them to be deeper than they appear. The false wall above the bedside units enables these units to sit alongside the bed instead of behind the bed. This clever use of space provides ample storage space, much to the delight of the client! Although the cabinetry is fuss-free, Nicola selected elegant chrome hardware to ensure the detailing was contemporary yet feminine.

To add a sense of luxury to this room, a boutique hotel-style feature wall has been created behind the bed, using a rich chocolate and gold Clarissa Hulse wallpaper and wall mounted reading lights. The layering of texture and tone with silk and linen cushions on the bed add a sumptuous feel to this room, creating a nourishing and restful but equally sensual space. ▼



Elegant chrome hardware is contemporary yet feminine



Built-in storage utilises every inch of space

▲ The bedroom opens onto a small decked area, behind which runs the District line. The noise from the trains used to disturb the client's sleep, and so Nicola recommended that the door be replaced with an acoustically glazed door to cut out as much noise as possible. The installation of this door was quite an undertaking as acoustic glazing is incredibly heavy, and it was not possible to bring in any mechanised lifting equipment due to the aspect of the site.

The client had also complained that her

central heating was not working properly, and further investigation revealed that the entire system needed replacing to rectify previous poor workmanship and the use of incorrect pipes. Although the client could not be persuaded to install underfloor heating, Nicola took this opportunity to install new, smaller and more efficient radiators in the two rooms, and to hide all of the unsightly pipes. This additional work was still required to be carried out within the three week window, so detailed project co-ordination was necessary to achieve this.

The client returned from her business trip to find her compact apartment totally transformed. From dark and soulless, the rooms now reflect the clients' chic style. They are light and airy with a sense of space that did not exist before, with an added sumptuous richness through the layering of texture, tone and pattern. With the heating system working, and almost no noise disturbance from the passing trains, the client finally has her sanctuary. And the best bit – she even commented on having almost too much storage!