



THE DESIGNER
Rosie Caley of designers and builders Oxford & London Building Company (olbc.co.uk)

The mission

With careers and a young family, the owners of this four-storey, five-bedroom villa needed a home that chimed with their busy lives. They commissioned Rosie to oversee every stage of the refurbishment, from reconfiguring the internal spaces and adding extensions to the ground and first floors to reinstating architectural details. Rosie drew on the expertise of designer Daniel Hopwood, who decorated some of the principal rooms, including the living room and master suite, helping her create interiors that complement the property's classical proportions while bringing the home bang up to date.

The tools A mix of contemporary pieces and antiques, textural fabrics and wallpapers, and sophisticated materials that range from riven slate to gilded glass.

The result A fresh new home that exudes understated elegance.



1 *Bathrooms can be decorative*

'A bathroom all to herself was one of the owner's must-haves, and she wanted it to be a feminine retreat,' says Rosie. 'The reclaimed bath is offset by panels of gilded glass, which make the small room seem spacious and bright. The remaining walls are hung with a bespoke paper created freehand using a vintage sewing machine, like appliqué. The final flourish is a fabulous Italian Murano glass chandelier, which brings a flash of colour to the space.'

ROOM
FOR drama

Designer Rosie Caley explains how she steered a characterful yet gloomy Regency villa into a light, luxurious home fit for the 21st century

WORDS: RACHEL LEEDHAM PHOTOS: RACHAEL SMITH

2 *Opt for traditional with a twist*

'Reinstating original features such as the living room's intricate plasterwork was key to restoring the building's architectural integrity,' says Rosie. 'But the owners also wanted to place a more contemporary stamp on the property. The fireplaces are a good example: they are a classic Bolection style, but pared back in detail and in a soft sandstone rather than marble, giving a contemporary feel. The stained-oak floor has wide boards, bringing it right up to date, while the chandeliers are a contemporary take on a traditional feature.'



3 *CHOOSE A MUTED PALETTE*

A number of different colours have been used throughout the house, but using the same tonal palette preserves a sense of unity,' Rosie explains. 'In the living room, the soft blue-green wallpaper complements the Regency architecture. Other key pieces, such as the sofas, armchairs and rug, are pale to retain the sense of space, but their contrasting textures keep the scheme interesting.'



Play with materials

'If you're using a neutral palette, mix textures to add interest,' advises Rosie. 'The master bathroom is a case in point. The walls are clad in light-reflecting back-painted glass, while the floor – which is heated – is smooth limestone. In contrast, the shower wall [left] is riven-slate mosaic and the elegant aubergine vanity unit [right] adds sophisticated colour.'

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Be creative with space

'You don't need the luxury of a spare room to create a dressing room – we partitioned off the original bedroom to make a walk-through wardrobe leading into the master bathroom,' Rosie explains. 'The two central panels are full-height doors so that, when shut, they give the effect of a beautiful panelled wall.'



USE STATEMENT LIGHTING

The owner had a collection of decorative pieces, one of which was this Murano glass chandelier,' says Rosie. 'It informed the layout of the Shaker-style kitchen, and we sited a large square island beneath. Set against a backdrop of muted grey-green cupboards and slate work surfaces, the chandelier adds glamour to the space. The modern pendants above the kitchen table work well with the Fifties dining table and red leather chairs - the mix of traditional and modern keeps the look relaxed. The lighting for the kitchen and dining area is on five separate circuits controlled by dimmers, allowing for infinite adjustments for any mood.'

7 Let there be light

'When the house was purchased, it had lost its way as a result of some major reconfiguring in the Sixties and Seventies,' says Rosie. 'The kitchen was long and dark, so transforming it into a light, bright space was imperative. We corrected the room's proportions with a new orangery-style extension and roof lantern. The traditional design marries well with the period of the property, while the panelled glazing and lantern allow daylight in, making this a bright, inviting space. Glazing also played an important role when it came to renovating the basement. The staircase features a full-height glass wall, which helps pull light into the space below. Its minimal design contrasts with the restored original staircase and highlights the distinction between the modern basement design and the Regency townhouse architecture.'



8 Get organised

'One of the owners regularly works from home, so a well-planned office was particularly important,' says Rosie. 'We were fortunate the bespoke joinery enabled us to make the most of every inch of space. We included lots of open shelving for box files and books, and created a second, smaller work area so the owners have a desk each. The cabinetry has been painted in a hue that works with the palette running through the rest of the house. The cupboards and drawers are finished with tactile leather handles and the fabric of the chair adds softness - a functional space needs a feel-good factor, too.'

MAKE A FOCAL POINT OF THE BED

'This wall was the logical place to position the bed, but the contemporary four-poster style the owners wanted would have looked awkward in front of the narrow chimney breast,' explains Rosie. 'The solution was to create joinery that spans the wall while revealing the original architecture behind. It incorporates reading lights and alcoves, and has been covered in wallpaper for texture - we used a dark, pattern in the alcoves for contrast and to complement the dark wood of the bed frame.'

