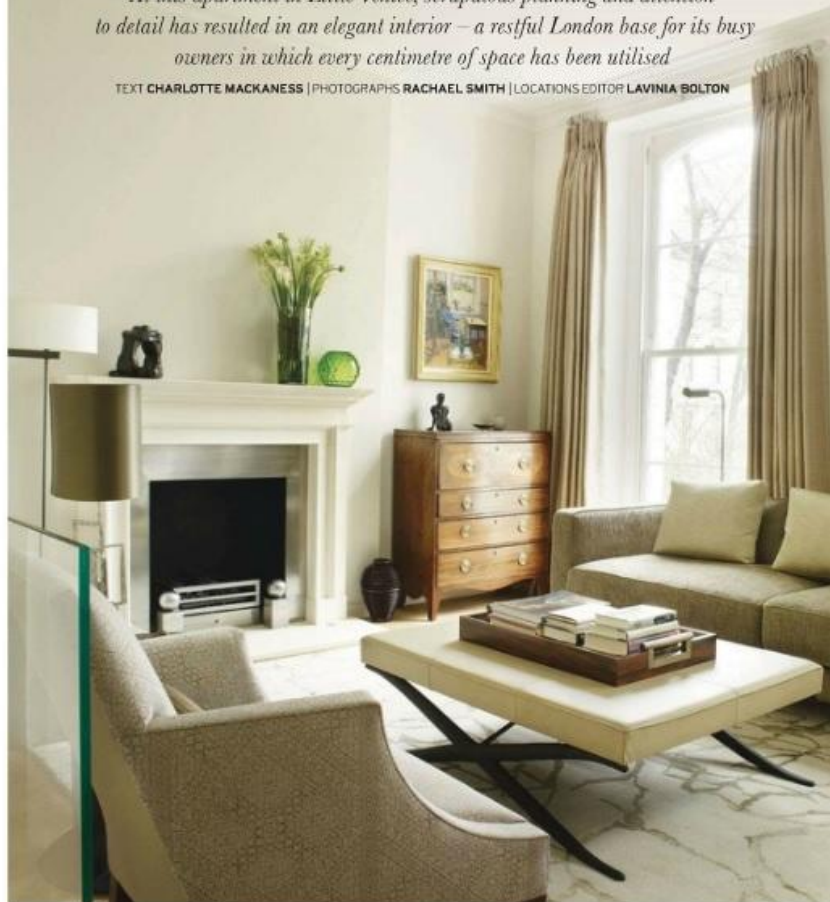


ACCORDING TO PLAN

At this apartment in Little Venice, scrupulous planning and attention to detail has resulted in an elegant interior – a restful London base for its busy owners in which every centimetre of space has been utilised

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BOTH PAGES In the drawing room, the leather-covered, X-frame coffee table by Ashley Hicks and chenille-covered Michael Reeves sofa (opposite) add to the modern, sophisticated look. The cabinets (this picture) were specially designed to frame the Tim Woolcock painting, which adds a splash of colour to the neutral decoration.



THIS PICTURE A Michael Reeves side table stands in front of one of the full-height windows in the drawing room. The mahogany Hepplewhite chair came with the owners from their previous home. OPPOSITE On the ground floor, the front door opens on to a corridor lined with cupboards (top left). Cantilevered resin stairs (top right) lead down to the kitchen (centre), which has an oak table from The Dining Chair Company and Bulthaup units (bottom right). French windows open on to the garden (bottom left)



In many houses, the organic evolution of the design and decoration is the key to their appeal. Not this cleverly conceived apartment in Little Venice. Here, meticulous planning has transformed a poky three-bedroom property into an inviting home for its hard-working owners. The careful consideration of every socket, shelf and light source, and some extremely smart storage space, has given this compact residence elegance, roominess and enviable practicality.

'This apartment represented a real change of lifestyle,' says interior designer Juliette Byrne. 'Our clients had lived in their last home, which had a much more traditional look, for many years but were forward-thinking in deciding early on what they'd like to take with them. This was invaluable as it allowed us to design around key pieces. The aim with this home was to create a fresher and more modern look, while still incorporating favourite belongings.'

This new aesthetic also required a radical reconfiguration and a new footprint. Architecture, design and build firm Newman Ziegler advised on its potential even before the apartment was purchased, and then set about transforming a collection of cramped rooms into a flowing, well-proportioned space.

Where previously three bedrooms had been squeezed into the ground floor there is now just one spare room, a bathroom and a generous drawing room. 'One of the starting points was a desire to create a stunning staircase,' explains Thomas Ziegler. 'We relocated the existing one and replaced it with a cantilevered staircase and striking glass balustrade that runs from the drawing room down to the kitchen.'

Downstairs, the kitchen leads on to the main bedroom and en-suite bathroom. 'The lower ground floor was very much about establishing balance between public and private areas,' explains Mark Newman. 'A full-height pivoting door between the kitchen and the rest of the space helps achieve this and gives flexibility.'

No space has been wasted in this apartment, and the corridor that heads past the bedroom to the study has a charming dressing area packed with storage space, including capacious wardrobes. The study is in the vaults under the pavement, a space that the owners bought from the council. 'It was a mass of utility company fuel boxes,' recalls Mark.

The project was also about fusing new and old, which is apparent at the outset. A striking white-lacquered Marset pendant light hangs in the entrance, and a Hepplewhite chair in the drawing room is in direct line of sight, as is a full-height window overlooking the garden.

'Bringing the outside in was important as the owners take real pleasure in their garden. The olive tracery pattern on the drawing-room rug has echoes of the view from the window,' says





Juliette Byrne. Another of the couple's passions is art; Juliette's team photographed, measured and catalogued their collection so that rooms could be arranged around it, as in the drawing room, where cabinets either side of a large canvas were fitted round it.

The vivid colours of the numerous pieces by artist Tim Wookcock directed the apartment's restrained palette of off-whites, greys and tans. Dulux 'Roasted Bracken' has been used for the walls throughout, while a vanilla-washed oak floor was laid in most rooms, adding to the sense of flow and calm simplicity. An absence of clutter also plays a vital role.

'Both clients have high-pressure jobs so we were keen to create a tranquil oasis for them, but it had to be practical,' says Juliette. 'This apartment has all the gubbits of most houses, but it's neatly tucked away. We made sure that the infrastructure didn't intrude, hence the staircase and most of the shelves are "floating". This, combined with underfloor heating and placing the boiler under the outside stairs, maximises living space.'

Light-reflecting lacquered cabinets and shelving are found throughout. This is balanced in the super-modern Bulthaup kitchen by a walnut-topped breakfast bar, sumptuous leather chairs and an oak table. 'The kitchen was particularly important as the owner adores her garden and cooking,' says Juliette. Full-length glass doors bring the garden into the kitchen, while every gadget a cook could dream of is concealed in hidden wall storage.

Ingenious visual trickery has been deployed in this apartment, not least by Sally Storey from John Cullen Lighting, who was brought in by Juliette early on in the project. 'So often people consider these things after the carpentry has been done but we were able to plan in advance, which was a joy,' she enthuses. Lighting hidden areas has paid dividends, particularly in the small bathrooms. 'Using mirrors and illuminating floating shelves and the dead space under the vanity units creates depth: the bathrooms appear bigger.'

'From my perspective, the success of the project was summed up when the clients told me it is no longer a hardship when they are unable to leave for their house in the country on a Friday evening,' Juliette says. 'And when they do get away, they say it is a pleasure to return at the end of the weekend.' A house that banishes that 'Sunday-night feeling' is a rare thing indeed □

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OPPOSITE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The kitchen can be shut off from the rest of the lower ground floor by a pivoting door. The corridor leading from the kitchen, past the main bedroom to the study has become a dressing area, with wardrobes and a banquette. The main bedroom overlooks the area and the study windows. Visual trickery such as mirror glass and floating

shelves makes the bathrooms appear bigger than they are. The dressing table by Becher Joinery is in satin lacquer, with shagreen drawers and petrified-wood handles from Chloe Alberry. The dark red sofa in the study is from The Canran Shop. THIS PICTURE A cottonmix walkover, 'Odessa 60-330' by Stereo, adds texture to the back wall in the main bedroom