

Modern masterpiece

Clean lines and an understated style define the restful atmosphere of this impressive Regency property

Report: Alison Nicholls Photography: Ray Main



Moving house is always a time of upheaval but fortunately for Alison Hill and her husband John, they didn't have far to go – they moved just eight doors down on the same street to become the proud owners of this imposing Georgian property in historic Greenwich. However, the couple lived in the house for almost a year before making any changes.

"Living somewhere for a while you get to know how you live and behave so you can design your space accordingly," explains Alison. With five floors to consider they decided to start from the top and work their way down. "The kitchen was the last thing to be completed," she

continues. "Once the top floor was done we at least had somewhere to retreat to, so it didn't matter what was going on below."

The ensuite bathroom that adjoins the master bedroom had been a selling point for the couple. "We wanted a really greedy bathroom. One of the things we particularly liked about this house was the ensuite as it was a room in its own right rather than just a slice of a room," Alison recalls. Opting for charcoal-coloured walls and a rich, herringbone-patterned wenge floor rather than cold tiling, the room takes on a soothing, subdued atmosphere perfect for relaxation. "Surfaces in bathrooms can be very unfriendly so our goal was to have a space that looked more like a room ▶

than a bathroom," adds Alison, a feeling that is further enhanced by retaining original features such as the fabulous marble fireplace.

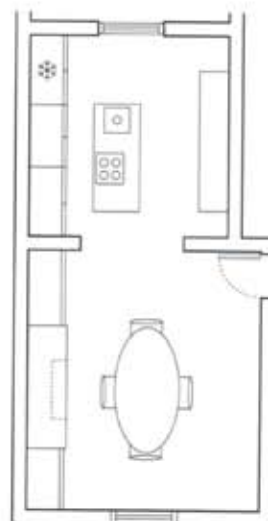
Panels of mellow Karakee limestone clad the walls of the simple glass shower enclosure while the shower tray and wall mounted basin are made of the same natural material. In the centre of the space, facing the magnificent sash window sits a reconditioned antique roll-top bath – this, combined with the contemporary elements, creates a harmonious union of traditional and modern.

As a listed building the couple had to be careful about any structural changes. One necessity, however, was a steel frame that was inserted into the wall to support the weight of the limestone double basin. Removing the plasterboard to accommodate this framework also allowed them to conceal the WC cistern and to utilise the depth of the wall itself for the mirror bathroom cabinet. For this piece, the couple enlisted the help of furniture designer and maker Tim Newbold of Domus Furniture who is responsible for all the bespoke cabinetry

throughout the property. Here, Tim has cleverly sunk the cabinet into the wall so that outwardly it appears to be fairly shallow but internally has a lot more depth.

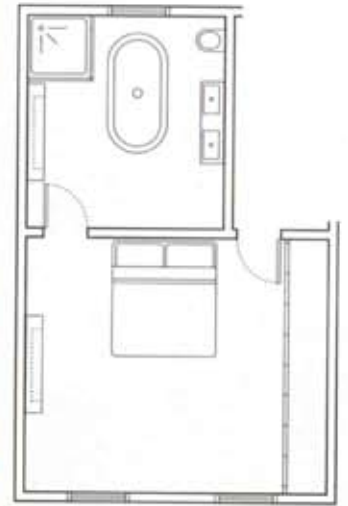
Tim's craftsmanship can also be seen in the master bedroom where the palette of muted colours and understated style continue. A run of fitted wardrobes provides ample hanging space and storage to keep the bedroom clear and uncluttered, while the flat design makes them appear almost as a wall of colour in cool gun-metal grey. The stairs to the upper floors jut into the bedroom wall and presented a challenge for Tim as he had to tailor the wardrobes to fit the unusual shape. "Tim is great at taking the problems of an old building and modernising it without destroying it," Alison adds. In addition, he also built the contemporary wenge headboard for the bed that features illuminated floating glass shelves on either side, crisp white linen and a soft cream carpet that keep the scheme clean and simple.

Downstairs on the ground floor, the kitchen-dining area stretches from the front to the back of the building. "We are very lucky with the shell of the house; it's got ▶



Right: The kitchen leads through to the dining area in this open-plan space where a classic Eero Saarinen tulip table picks up the marble theme. **Below:** Wall-mounted units sit on either side of the fireplace. Each cupboard is custom made for a specific purpose: the left-hand unit is built to hold coats and shoes and has special facilities for handheld devices such as mobile phones that can be charged via power points concealed inside; the right-hand unit features a door that folds back to reveal a flat-screen TV. **Opposite page, top left:** Alison enjoys cooking and entertaining so two integrated ovens occupy the space in the concealed chimneybreast where a range cooker had previously been. The addition of full-height units provide plenty of storage. **Top middle:** At the end of the island the generous sink features a tap that swivels 360 degrees so it can be used from either side or even from behind if necessary. **Top right:** The couple had seen this gorgeous Nero Marquina black marble with its strong white vein a few years previously used as a shop counter and were determined to source it for the worktops. **Bottom:** Subtle lighting reflects off the polished surface of the green glass splashback bringing a shot of bright colour to the muted scheme.





Above: Custom-built wardrobes provide all the storage needed for this simple bedroom with internal hanging rails, drawers and shelving. **Right:** The flat, handleless design means the doors close to form a seamless wall of colour. **Bottom right:** Tim had to make the wardrobes fit with the architecture as the staircase to the upper floors cuts into the bedroom wall. He also made the dark wenge headboard with floating glass shelves.



huge ceilings and is quite dramatic so the bones of the room determined the style of the kitchen," continues Alison. Once again Tim's talents were employed for the kitchen cabinetry – the stunning design takes on a fresh approach by bucking the trend for the standard kitchen configuration of rows of top and base units.

On the left, a wall of full-height cupboards incorporates the ovens and storage space along with the fridge-freezer and laundry facilities all neatly concealed behind lacquered handleless doors. These had to be fitted across the existing chimneybreast that had previously housed a range cooker. "It looks like a straightforward run of cupboards," says Tim, "but it was actually very difficult to achieve what we did over the chimneybreast in order to wrestle in all the elements required. The art is making it look simple."

Sleek black Nero Marquina marble with a striking white vein has been used to form the tops and ends of the island and floating unit on the opposite wall, which is juxtaposed with glossy dark oak on the doors and drawer fronts. The chic wall-mounted module has a worktop and deep drawers below that can easily store large pans with slim cupboards above for glasses. It functions just as a regular kitchen unit yet has the elegant look of a beautiful piece of furniture.

Hidden lighting illuminates the vivid green glass splashback bringing a burst of colour to contrast with the dark tones. As with the bathroom, extra support had to be built into the wall to bear the weight of the incredibly heavy marble. Meanwhile, the central island features a flat induction hob that blends almost invisibly into the black marble surface with a capacious sink at one end. The room was too narrow for an average sized island so this one was built to a slimmer specification, but the benefit of this is that the hob and sink can be accessed from either side.

"A lot of people think that the kitchen isn't used much because it looks so tidy but actually I like to cook a lot and it's incredibly practical," explains Alison. "The sink, for example, is massive and when we have guests for dinner we just pile the dishes in there and they're out of sight because it's so deep." In the dining area Tim has built custom-made cupboards on either side of the fireplace that hides away coats, shoes, mobile phones and gadgets, while the other conceals the TV behind a sliding hinged door.

Throughout this fabulous home, the creative simplicity of the design allows the character of the original architecture to speak for itself by complementing its clean lines and working with its natural shape. This is truly a modern masterpiece.

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Top left: Alison and John wanted their bathroom to feel like a room. By avoiding hard tiled surfaces and using warm wooden flooring and dark painted walls they have created a comfortable and relaxing atmosphere. **Above:** A roll-top bath takes centre stage and, along with the original marble fireplace, brings traditional elements to the space that counteracts the contemporary shower space

SourceBook

DESIGNER

Kitchen Tim Newbold at Domus Furniture (0800 093 1043 or www.domusfurniture.co.uk)

KITCHEN

Cabinetry Tim Newbold at Domus, as before
Worktops Nero Marquina marble. The stone can be sourced at Stoneville (020 8560 1000 or www.stoneville.co.uk)

Ovens, hob and dishwasher Miele (01235 554455 or www.miele.co.uk)

Refrigeration and laundry appliances John Lewis (0845 604 9049 or www.johnlewis.com)

Sink Franke (0161 436 6280 or www.franke.co.uk)

Taps MGS Progetti (+39 0323865218 or www.mgsprogetti.com) (020 8450 9100 or www.blanco.co.uk)

Doors Fine Line Aluminium (01934 42992 or www.finelinealuminium.co.uk)

Flooring Smoked oiled black oak from Solid Floor (020 7221 9166 or www.solidfloor.co.uk)

Dining table and chairs from Twentytwentyone (020 7837 1900 or www.twentytwentyone.com)

BEDROOM

Joinery and headboard Tim Newbold at Domus Furniture, as before

Bed Greer Beds (020 7237 1062 or www.greerbeds.co.uk)

Blinds Fabric by Allegra Hicks (020 7730 3275 or www.allegrahicks.com)

Bed linen Suprima cotton, Debenhams (0844 561 6161 or www.debenhams.com)

BATHROOM

Bath and taps Antique bath and brassware reconditioned by Thomas Crapper & Co (01789 450522 or www.thomas-crapper.com)

Basin, shower tray and shower walls

Karakee limestone from Marbles Ltd (020 8460 6900 or www.marblesltd.com)

Taps and shower controls Mem, Dornbracht (024 7671 7129 or www.dornbracht.com)

Shower enclosure Glass Trends (020 7223 4017 or www.glasstrends.co.uk)

WC Flamina (www.ceramicaflaminia.it) at Original Bathrooms (020 8940 7554 or www.original-bathrooms.co.uk)

Paint Off Black from Farrow & Ball (01202 876141 or www.farrow-ball.com)

Flooring Wenge herringbone from Solid Floor (020 7221 9166 or www.solidfloor.co.uk)

Blinds Fabric by Romo (01623 756699 or www.romofabrics.com)

Bathroom cabinets Tim Newbold at Domus Furniture, as before

COSTS

A similar kitchen would cost approximately £35,000, a similar bedroom would cost £10,000, and a similar bathroom would cost around £18,000