

Fresh and bright restart

'At 60 years old, this was my biggest challenge'

A new start drove **Victoria Butler** to gut a dated bungalow and expand her DIY skills to create a home that felt exactly right for her

Victoria Butler has been a great believer in making a house feel like home in every property she's lived in. So, when she downsized to a chalet bungalow, she took on the project with gusto. 'I've always got stuff done, whether it's putting together an IKEA flatpack or hanging pictures,' she says. 'I've been sewing since I was 13 and, more recently, I've been asking for power tools for presents. This time I was looking for a project – although the bungalow was my most ambitious challenge yet.' Victoria stayed in Brighton but went looking for a property close to where her eldest, Harriet, lived with her son-in-law, Luke, and grandson, aged two. Her younger daughter, Millie, still lives at home with her.

After rejecting properties that were already done up, Victoria became drawn to a dated chalet bungalow, a couple of streets away from Harriet and Luke. The four-bed had a large garden, a modest kitchen extension and small loft conversion with two bedrooms. The owner had lived there for 50 years, and little



▲ For a modern twist on the 1930s exterior, Victoria replaced her front door with a black design and fitted a contemporary light



'I've loved the whole renovation process from designing my kitchen to making cushions and upholstering chairs'

RINSE AND REPEAT

Create continuity and interest with a tile you love that can be used in different layouts around the house. Victoria's horizontal kitchen splashback repeats in the bathroom but in a vertical arrangement with narrower grout lines

KITCHEN

'The oak shelf was important to the look I wanted,' says Victoria. 'My builder son-in-law sourced one, although Howdens were happy to put a visual on the design so I could see if it worked. The brackets are hidden, which was a bit of a challenge to fit'

OUR MUST HAVES Chelford White Shaker-style kitchen (including handles, sink and appliances), £8,500, Howdens. Dome table lamp in Brass, £60, John Lewis & Partners. For similar, try Pharaoh slimline D handles, 160mm, £5.20 each, Express Kitchen Fittings



COME ON IN...

I AM Victoria Butler @mybrightonhome, 60, an administrator at a sixth-form college.

MY HOME IS a three-bedroom 1930s semi-detached bungalow in Brighton, East Sussex. I moved here in February 2022.

MY BEST BARGAIN I came across a large urn in South Downs Nurseries for only £50, which was the ideal size and colour for next to my fireplace.

MY SHOPPING TIP I google exactly what I'm looking for and find dupe deals that look just as good.

MY BIGGEST MISTAKE Hiring a floor sander to strip the floorboards. There was a layer of black stuff that just wouldn't lift and in the end I had to pay a professional with a powerful industrial machine.

MY DECORATING ADVICE Greenery adds softness and layered colour to my neutral scheme. Create height and depth with a mix of large floorstanding faux trees and tabletop plants from the high street.



'I really enjoyed the kitchen design experience with Howdens,' says Victoria. 'I'd already measured up and drawn a rough layout so I loved seeing the room come alive in 3D in the shop. The results look exactly like the picture'

had been done in that time. 'The bungalow had swirly brown carpets, Formica cupboards, a chunky Yorkstone feature fireplace and a very brown kitchen,' Victoria recalls. 'It was perfect for stripping back and starting again to make the property my own.'

SUPPORTIVE NETWORK

At first, Victoria toyed with the idea of extending the kitchen across the back but, mindful of her budget, she decided against the idea. 'Also, the back faces south-west and gets very hot so an extension with roof lights and big sliding doors would have been unbearable,' she says. 'I didn't do anything structural, although I set my sights on turning the small upstairs room into my bathroom so it could be on the same floor as my bedroom.'

Although Victoria relished getting stuck in, she needed help. Fortunately, her friend, Ian, was willing to lend a hand as was Luke, a builder, and Millie's boyfriend, Josh, a plumbing and heating engineer. Between

► 'I wanted pure white cupboards with no visible line breaks in the Shaker detail, which I found at Howdens,' says Victoria. 'The worktop had to be completely white too'

DINING ROOM

'The strangely-angled wall in the extended part of the kitchen bothered me, so I embraced it with wall panelling,' says Victoria

OUR MUST HAVES
Cheshire Mouldings MDF wall panelling kit, £18.97, B&Q. Panelling painted in Leyland's Trade vinyl matt in a colour-match to Farrow & Ball's Roasted Macadamia, £23.99 for 2.5L, Decorating Centre Online. For similar, try Windsor spindle back wooden chairs in Natural, £199 for 2, La Redoute



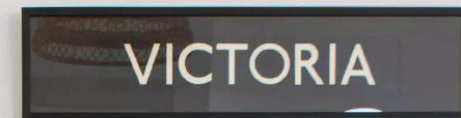
'The monochrome bus blind was a gift,' says Victoria. 'I love how the black pops against the white walls'

OUR MUST HAVES
For similar, try bus blinds, from £65, The Letter Arty. For similar, try Laura Ashley Lynden scatterback small sofa in Natural, £1,200, DFS

'I'm still a neutrals person – I dress like my home. I wanted a new start and warmer feel. I moved onto beige tones and natural wood textures, with gold and green as accents'

STYLE STAGE

Easy to change up, a side table is perfect for showing off your unique style. Victoria's considered display adds personality to this corner



them they rallied around, bringing in family to help and friends who were tradespeople. 'I was very lucky as I didn't have any contacts,' says Victoria. 'They were all great at consulting me and were hard workers. I couldn't have achieved what I have without them.'

Within an hour of moving in, the carpets were stripped out and most of Victoria's furniture was temporarily stored in the garage. She began the extensive task of stripping off layers of wallpaper and removing polystyrene ceiling tiles with Ian. In the months that followed, Josh upgraded the pipework for the radiators, refitted the shower room and created her new upstairs

LIVING ROOM

'I upcycled the coffee table I already had, taking off the metal wheels and putting on legs and sanding the orange wood back to a raw, neutral finish,' says Victoria

OUR MUST HAVES

For similar, try Brina acacia wood coffee table, £119.95, Sklum. Chair upholstered in Warwick Plush velvet fabric in Vine, £20.80 per sq m, Jane Clayton. For similar, try Highams linen frill cushion covers in White, £8 for 2, Online Home Shop

▶ The circular alcove window is part of the bungalow's original architecture and is complemented by the oversized globe vase and curved ammonite shell decoration. 'I'm hoping to change the frosted glass at some point,' says Victoria

'I find it helpful when people on Instagram detail the brand and paint colour they've used in their post'



LOOK UP!

Going for a dark colour on the ceiling adds depth and works well when walls are a pale tone and there's plenty of natural light. 'Thread a repeat of the paint colour in accessories, like Victoria's done here with greenery'



▶ 'I treasure my green velvet armchair, which my mum and dad gave me 35 years ago for my first flat,' says Victoria. 'I decided to have a go at upholstering it myself with fabric bought online. The colour became the inspiration for the room – and my home'

HALLWAY

'I'm quite an impulsive person so once I got the idea to paint the ceiling there was no stopping me,' says Victoria. 'I dashed off to B&Q late one evening and bought this shade of green because it was 20% off – I'd finished decorating two hours later'

OUR MUST HAVES Lussan double top ash console table, £150, La Redoute. For similar, try brushed metal-effect round wall mirror, 80cm, £45, Dunelm. For similar, try novelty birdhouse ornament in Black, £24.99, Huva Home. For similar, try Light & Living Cumani large table lamp base, £66.40, Naken Interiors



'I bought the console because I like the simplicity of mid-century furniture and the style goes with my dining table,' says Victoria. 'It's also the perfect width for the hallway without getting in the way'



MAIN BEDROOM

'I improved the room with wall panelling, new wardrobe doors, and by upcycling the IKEA bedside tables,' says Victoria. 'I made the striped frill cushion after seeing the style all over the high street'

OUR MUST HAVES For similar, try Jesper oak spindle double bed, £459.99, Happy Beds. Linen-blend curtains, £39.99 for 2, H&M Home. For similar, try frilled stripe cushion cover in Light Blue, £12; for similar, try Teddy Bear throw in Cream, from £10, both Dunelm

'I'm in a new phase of life now and I'm exploring new ideas – perhaps a job in this industry could be my calling!'

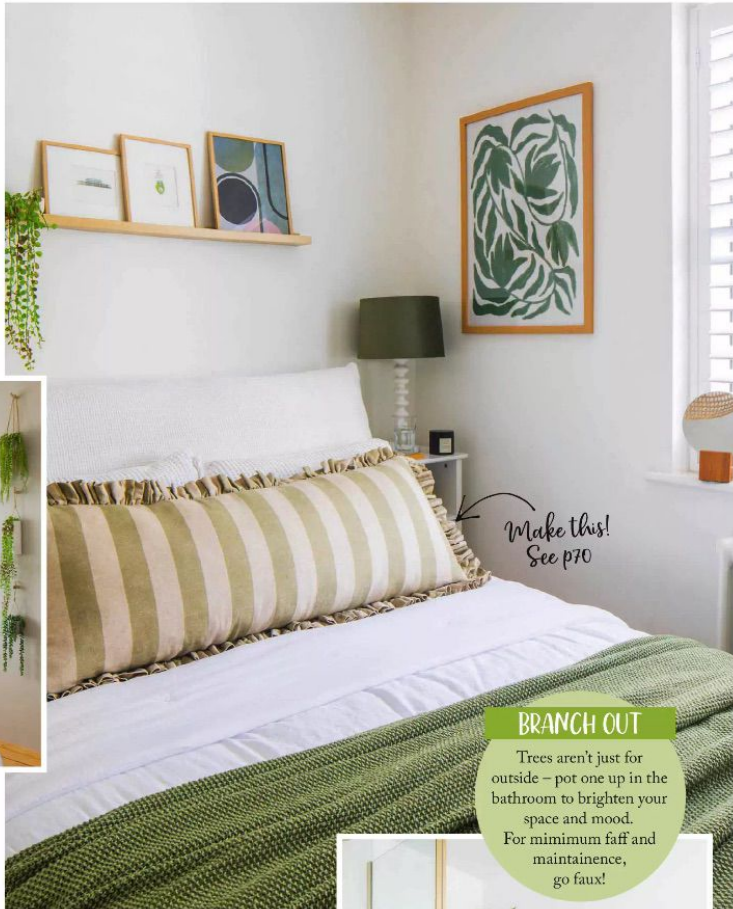
'The off-the-shelf linen curtains were an affordable buy from H&M,' says Victoria



MILLIE'S BEDROOM

'An Instagrammer was selling big striped cushions like this, and I decided to make one myself,' says Victoria. 'The Tivoli stripe fabric is from a shop on Portobello Road in London, which is amazing. I took a swatch of the paint sample to find the right colour match'

OUR MUST HAVES For similar, try Pride & Joy Linford frill Sage cushion, £14; Bobby Paint Your Own table lamp base, £30, both Dunelm. Green Botanical on Linen print, from £10.95, Desenio. For similar, try Indira bedspread in Grey-green, £19, IKEA. Wardrobes painted in estate eggshell in Drop Cloth, £78 for 2.5L, Farrow & Ball. For similar, try Scandi artificial trailing plant, £18, Next



▲ 'The wardrobes were brown Formica but still in fairly good condition so I didn't see the point of ripping them out,' says Victoria. 'My builder son-in-law made new MDF doors and I fitted the moulding and painted them with my friend, Ian'

bathroom. The electrics were upgraded throughout, including new sockets, light fittings and switches. 'Luke hacked off the Yorkstone around the fireplace and someone from Facebook Marketplace came and took the larger pieces,' adds Victoria. 'Along the way, we discovered the chimney had damp problems so I had it taken out.'

FRESH START

With the big projects taken care of, Victoria started to think about the new look she wanted to give her home. Having always liked a monochrome scheme, she was in the mood for change. 'I'm still a neutrals person – I dress like my home – but I was tired of black,' Victoria explains. 'I wanted a new start and warmer feel. I moved onto beige

BATHROOM

'I was desperate to have a tree in my bathroom and put this one in before the floor had even been laid to get a feel for what it would look like,' says Victoria. 'I like the texture of greenery and how it brings the outside in'

OUR MUST HAVES So'home 180cm real touch artificial ficus tree, £99.99, La Redoute. For similar, try Toreno Brushed Brass 800mm x 800mm shower enclosure, £379.95, Victorian Plumbing. Walls painted in Dulux walls & ceilings matt emulsion in Pure Brilliant White £27 for 10L, B&Q



BRANCH OUT

Trees aren't just for outside – pot one up in the bathroom to brighten your space and mood. For minimum faff and maintenance, go faux!

Make this!
See p70

► Victoria styles empty surfaces with a mix of different heights, textures and colours to bring maximum interest

GUEST BEDROOM

'This room was originally an office with two armchairs from Swoon, which I re-covered in the same velvet as the green armchair but in an off-white colour,' says Victoria. 'I added the panelling and made the pair of button cushions'

OUR MUST HAVES Panelling painted in matt emulsion in Driftwood, £48 for 2.5L, Neptune. For similar, try Karla armchair in Alabaster Linen, £1,049, Swoon. So'home 155cm real touch artificial mini ficus tree, £57.85, La Redoute. Jaipur throw in Jade, £128, Christy. For similar, try Habitat seersucker gingham woven bedding set in Green, from £22, Argos



'It was perfect for stripping back and starting again to make the property my own'

tones and natural wood textures, with gold and green as accents.'

Victoria chose a pure white kitchen and mostly painted the bungalow in a standard Dulux, liking an uncomplicated bright white. 'I find it helpful when people on Instagram detail the brand and paint colour they've used in their post,' says Victoria. 'That's how I chose Neptune's Driftwood, and Farrow & Ball's Roasted Macadamia and Drop Cloth.'

Victoria upholstered her old armchair in green velvet by carefully unstitching the old fabric and taking note of how it had been stapled on. 'I make cushions and because I had an electric staple gun, I thought I'd give it a go,' says Victoria. 'If I could have my time again, I would have been an upholsterer and carpenter as it's the way my mind works and what I enjoy doing.'

Symmetry, straight lines and order are key to Victoria's interiors, noted in the kitchen layout, rugs and wall panelling, all softened with feathery touches of greenery. 'I feel very connected to my home, it's my favourite house of all,' says Victoria. 'I've loved the whole renovation process from designing my kitchen to making cushions and upholstering chairs. I'm in a new phase of life now and I'm exploring new ideas – perhaps a job in this industry could be my calling!'

ALL THE FEELS

Cosy up a space in a flash with a mix of textures. Wood panelling, velvet bedding and an oversized plant brings instant warmth to Victoria's guest room

