



Moment of TRIUMPH

An extraordinary two-week timeframe was long enough to reinstate the elegance of this period apartment, thanks to the expertise of its interior designer owners, Brett and Anthony Calvert-Harrison

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ABOVE The well-proportioned two-bedroom apartment is set within a grand Victorian house that had once been owned by a prominent surgeon in the 1890s.

RIGHT The substantial fireplace's simple design complements the ornate ceiling. The couple already had the modern coffee table and updated the glass top to travertine.





Interior designers, Brett and Anthony Calvert-Harrison love nothing more than wandering around castles and stately homes, soaking up the history and admiring the interior architecture. When they made plans to move from a three-storey townhouse in East Sussex, a traditional property was always on the cards. 'We grew to dislike the narrow layout and dark rooms on floors we didn't use,' says Anthony, who specialises in architectural design. 'I calculated we only needed 900sqft to live comfortably, so it made sense to downsize to an apartment in a period property with bigger proportions and fewer rooms.'

Brett – whose expertise is in furniture and furnishings – and Anthony put together a precise brief for their new home. As well as lateral space and voluminous rooms that would create the illusion of space, a high priority was finding somewhere they could ambitiously renovate in just two weeks. 'We were taking time off work and wanted to move in and have everywhere feel lived in and like home straight away,' says Brett. 'Before we did any viewings, Anthony input floor plans into CAD (computer-aided design) ▶'

ABOVE The tucked-away kitchen is still within touching distance of the dining table where a cupboard, painted in Farrow & Ball's Saloon Drab, was designed to extend storage. The curtain in Mark Alexander's Tashkent in Putty was made by The Harper Collection.

RIGHT Painted wood panelling and Zen Natural gloss tiles from Mandarin Stone draw the eye up to enhance the height of the modest room. Barwick aged brass handles from Armac Martin give the white cupboards a luxurious feel.



ABOVE Inspired by the bamboo Chippendale chairs in Brighton's Royal Pavilion, Brett (seated) and Anthony sourced similar ones online and sprayed them burgundy. The Harper Collection made seat pads with Soane Britain's Scrolling Fern Frond in Moss.

software and then added the dimensions of key pieces of furniture to them, including beds, seating and a dining table. It was a really useful way to rule out which properties weren't right for us without wasting any time.'

After the couple had determined that this two-bedroom ground-floor ex-rental property had the right dimensions, they arranged a viewing. They had expected to see tired, empty rooms – however, a surprise lay in wait. 'We were instantly drawn to the feel of the voluminous hallway, then we became mesmerised by the sitting room's high ceiling and ornate plasterwork detail,' recalls Brett. 'It absolutely sold the apartment to us.'

The principal bedroom had similar sweeping proportions. 'It's rare to find a property still in this

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condition,' adds Anthony. 'We soon discovered the grand Victorian house had been divided into apartments in the 1960s and had once been owned by a prominent surgeon in the 1890s. Our two biggest rooms had likely been the original sitting room and dining room. We've recently applied to the local commemorative plaque panel for a blue plaque.'

With their offer accepted and a moving date agreed, the couple hit the ground running in preparation for their two-week renovation window. They planned new electrics, a reclaimed fireplace, designed bespoke joinery and furniture, and chose flooring and paint colours – as well as all the soft furnishings. The kitchen was the biggest challenge, with an island jutting into the sitting room from its adjoining, tucked-away space and the wall between them concealing services to the flats above. 'We considered knocking through, but it would have been very expensive and disruptive to do the work,' Anthony explains. 'Instead, we took away the island, put in an eight-seater dining table and introduced a curtain across the door. We like hosting, so now I'm glad the kitchen isn't open plan.'

Anthony added storage for kitchen items by designing a large, double-height cupboard in the sitting room. He also designed a cloakroom cupboard for the hallway and joinery for one of the fireplace alcoves. In the months leading up to completion, the couple took the bold step of having the joinery and furniture made, ready to be installed for their moving-in date.

When Brett and Anthony got the keys for their apartment, some months later, they joined forces with Brett's parents to strip everything out. 'Everyone said we were mad!' exclaims Brett. 'But Anthony and I are used to project managing in our jobs, so we treated this like a work project. It was organised chaos, and a little tense at times, especially when we had two building companies and two decorators working on the same day. That said, everyone put in the extra mile and did an incredible job, for which we're grateful.'

During this time, a specialist came in to restore the ornate plasterwork ceiling tiles in the sitting room ▶



The curvaceous headboard was designed by the couple with upholstery in Romo's Oakham fabric in Navy. 'Claret & Key's Celine wallpaper depicts bamboo leaves, which is fun and playful and hints at the bamboo chairs in the sitting room,' says Brett. The table lamp is from Lights and Lamps.



'The layered look, with velvety textures, structured linens and fabric details, was essential to making the couple's home feel lived in'

ABOVE LEFT Anthony designed the pretty stencil pattern in the bathroom. The Rosso di Scacchi tumbled marble flooring, Zellige tiles and Calacatta Nouveau marble are all from Mandarin Stone.

ABOVE RIGHT Emile vintage damask wallpaper from Claret & Key is teamed with wardrobe doors in The Pure Edit's Ochre Yellow Indira fabric.

The Aldwin chandelier is from Soho Home.

and spray them white again. A dark and dominating fireplace was replaced with a sympathetic design, while new alcove joinery meant removing a dado rail and reinstating it around the reclaimed fire surround. The careful changes revealed hidden treasures. 'While we were doing the work, a scrap of original wallpaper fell into my hand,' Brett recalls. 'We also found an ivory-and-bronze call bell encased in layers of paint, and an old fireplace tile. We had all these old artefacts framed and hung them in the hallway.'

The couple like a classic scheme but needed to balance Brett's love of layering and pattern with Anthony's preference for a pared-back look. Neutral walls provide a lasting foundation while fabrics with subtle motifs and emblems in greens, browns and threads of red run through rooms without detracting from the period details. Colours hint at the interiors



The couple already had the leafy print cushions made with Ashley Wilde's Celina Oregano fabric and looked for a wallpaper print to complement them and the curtains in Mark Alexander's Batik Oatmeal. 'We wanted the room to look soft and light and the eye to draw upwards,' Brett explains.