

# Renovation game

*Once ten bedsits, Fran and Jamie Smith's abode is now a handsome family home that they reimagined with a little help from YouTube*

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## HOME TRUTHS

### THE PROPERTY

Detached Victorian property

**LOCATION** Surrey

**ROOMS** Sitting room, family room, dining room, kitchen, six bedrooms (one en suite), dressing room, two bathrooms

**PURCHASED** 2015

### PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'We were renting a three-bed terrace in London,' says Fran.



**KITCHEN**  
Fran has introduced pieces with a period feel, such as the lights. Georgian Ermine kitchen in Sea Foam matt and Morning Mist matt, £620 for a 600mm base unit, Wren Kitchens. Iroko worktop, from £195, Solid Wood Kitchen Cabinets. Hammered pendants in copper are similar, £35.50 each, Lighting Direct

### FAMILY ROOM

Blue tones tie in with the kitchen and dining space. Bagsie sofa in Greeny Blue Clever Velvet, £2,445, Loaf. Geri rug, £298, Anthropologie. Cushions, from £19.99, TK Maxx. Hummingbirds Close-Up print, £81, The Dybahl Co. Murray wall mirror, £129.99, My Furniture





When Fran Smith and her husband Jamie came across an impressive Victorian property for sale, they immediately had a vision of its potential. 'I'm Peruvian but grew up in the US where houses aren't characterful so I was keen to be sympathetic to the architecture,' says Fran. 'Original front rooms would be dark and a little bit grander than the modern open-planned living at the back, where calm greys give all the attention to the garden.'

The couple had been renting in London when they decided to move nearer the school of Jamie's sons, Adam, now 22, and Samuel, 20. The property went to sealed bids and they missed out at first, but then got a call to say the sale was back on. 'We jumped at the chance to buy as this is such a handsome period property,' says Fran. 'When we first pulled up outside, we knew we were looking at our dream home.'

The 'dream home' didn't come without its obstacles, however, having

been a council-owned building divided into 10 bedsits with communal kitchens and bathrooms. The couple took on the renovation challenge themselves, learning new skills on YouTube. Builders were brought in for the rear extension, orangery and knocking through a row of bathrooms into a master en-suite dressing room. They finished around the time the couple's son, Oliver, now three, was born.

#### A LOVE FOR VINTAGE

The house is also the first home Fran's decorated. 'I wanted rooms to feel lived in and loved with comfy furniture and a little bit of everything – colour, neutrals and patterns,' she says. 'Although blue has become a common thread.' The couple began buying vintage and antique furniture while they were still living in London. 'I love that we're giving furniture another life, and buying old pieces fits with the character of the house, which itself has had a varied life,' says Fran.

Many of Fran and Jamie's treasured finds are from browsing online: the fuchsia pink sofa, a vintage magazine rack, to name a few, as well as various art. Though the picture in the couple's en suite holds sentimental value. 'It's by Peruvian artist, Fito Espinosa, and I've always loved it as it used to be in my parents' bathroom,' Fran explains.

#### GREAT IMPACT

As the house slowly came together, the couple became bolder in their decorating choices, adding punch to the beige hallway with a lively patterned wallpaper, and going for florals on the walls and ceiling in the guest bedroom.

There's still work to do, but Fran says they're now living in a house that feels like a proper home. 'I love the warmth of the sitting room and the peace in the orangery, where we dine,' she says. 'It's been hard work but we feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to live here.' 25

#### SHOPPING TIP 'You have to buy vintage when you see it – you might never find the same thing again'



#### DINING ROOM

'We bought lounge chairs so our guests feel comfortable at the table,' says Fran. Kariss Smoke Grey upholstered chairs, £99 each, My Furniture. Brooklyn glass cone pendants, are similar, £69 each, Indusville



#### MASTER BEDROOM

'We wanted a relaxed, beachy feel here,' says Fran.

Pencil pleat curtains in Lily, £75, Loom & Last. Walls in Skylight estate emulsion, £47.95 for 2.5ltr, Farrow & Ball. Lydford table lamps large, £99 each, Next



#### DRESSING ROOM

Sliding doors in the bedroom lead into this smart space. Try storage baskets, from £14 each, The Basket Company



#### MASTER EN SUITE

'I adore monochrome, it's timeless,' says Fran.

Chess tiles in matt black and white are similar, £8.63m, Tiles Direct. Bransdale Rivet cast-iron bateau bath, £1,750, Country Cast Baths on eBay