

## DINING AREA

'We wanted an honesty in materials and chose marble, oak and concrete,' says Gemma. Eero Saarinen Tulip Calacatta marble oval dining table is similar, £8,904. Heal's 1960s chairs, £500 for six. Vinterior. Brass Row pendant, £1,215. Atelier Auvet at Pamono. Brutalist vintage stools, £300 for two, Vinterior

## DESIGN FOR LIFE

*By using authentic materials such as wood, marble and brass, designers Gemma Ruse and Xavier Sheriff have created a timeless home*

FEATURE JANE CRITTENDEN | PHOTOGRAPHY ADAM SCOTT



## HOME TRUTHS

## THE PROPERTY

A Victorian terrace

LOCATION East London

ROOMS Sitting room, snug, kitchen-diner, cloakroom, basement annex, four bedrooms (two en suite), bathroom

PURCHASED 2017

## PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'We lived in a two-bedroom flat in Hackney,' says Gemma.

**DINING AREA**  
The ripple of colour in the oak cupboard doors runs through to the storage seating in the dining area.

**KITCHEN**  
'The beauty in our kitchen comes from the simplicity of the textured oak veneer doors,' says Gemma. Oak cupboards, from £15,000, Oblique Furniture. Chipmaster handles, £27 each, Swarf



StudioXAG founders, Gemma Ruse and her husband Xavier Sheriff, like to create wow moments in their work, designing and fabricating retail installations. And when it came to their own home they took the same approach.

'We wanted to evoke the same emotion but in a quieter way, using honest materials and design details,' says Gemma.

The couple initially discounted this Victorian terrace due to its poor state. But after viewing similar houses in the area that had been done up, they began to see potential in the generously proportioned rooms.

'We picked up tips and tricks along the way,' says Gemma. 'Like opening up the ceiling of our bathroom to the roof, and how we could modernise the winter balcony on the raised rear reception room, which now overlooks our Japanese courtyard.'

The Tsubo-Niwu courtyard is located in the former side return and a design feature introduced by architects Frazer & Findlay. The concept reflects the relationship between the old house and the new architecture – an L-shaped rear and side extension. 'I was really taken by the idea of working in the kitchen and being framed by greenery from the courtyard on one side and garden on the other, with a breeze filtering through the space,' says Gemma.

Gemma and Xavier moved out while the year-long building project got underway to extend and lower the kitchen floor, create a master en suite dressing room from two small bedrooms and alter

#### SITTING ROOM

Bare plastered walls next to the stripped back cornicing bring a faded grandeur to the space.

Sleek sofa, £2,395, Designers Guild. Louka Barber style wool rug, £270, La Redoute. Throw, £187, Slowdown Studio

#### SNUG

The picture window connects the raised snug with the Japanese courtyard.

Marmoleum Fresco Real Black flooring, £22,794 m, UK Contract Flooring. Roly-Poly armchair in Fawn, £570, Faye Toogood at Clippings





the configuration of the poorly converted loft. Meanwhile, Gemma put together a mood board, favouring clean lines and authentic materials of wood, marble and brass.

A trio of designers influenced Gemma's ideas. 'I love Kelly Wearstler's artistic take on glamour, the way Dimore Studio mixes materials, and the luxury in the craftsmanship details of work by Chan + Eays,' she explains. This designer inspired the bare plastered walls throughout the property, which Gemma had intended only for their bedroom, to unite with the en suite's tadelakt-lined walls. 'Choosing to keep all the walls in the house bare of decoration happened by accident,' she says. 'I grew to love the warmth and calmness in the pale pink plaster tones and decided to leave them as they were.'

Elsewhere, Gemma and Xavier reinstated Victorian fireplaces and retained all the cornices and coving. Lighting and furniture are a combination of vintage and new designer pieces – Vitreor bar stools, an Atelier Arseti pendant and armchairs by Faye Toogood. Fraher & Findlay designed seating to mould seamlessly into the marble kitchen surfaces, and the couple designed the dining table themselves.

Not long moved in, along with their baby son Raffi, Gemma and Xavier are now deciding where to hang artwork. 'I love the textures and imperfections in the plastered walls, which give our home a slightly battered, lived-in feel,' says Gemma. 'But it means we have to be 100% sure where we hang art as we can't fill in the holes if we change our mind!'

#### MASTER BEDROOM

'We went for a contemporary take on art deco in our bedroom lighting,' says Gemma.

Formakans pendant, £153, Jaime Hayon for &Tradition at Nordic Nest, Louka Berber style wool rug, £270, La Redoute

#### MASTER EN SUITE

'I played with the pattern of the plain floor tiles to achieve this unique look,' says Gemma.

Honed basalt oval stone basin, £239, Marble Mosaics, Alana mirror, £129, Made Lips by Caroline Tomlinson, £85, Print Club London



**FAVOURITE ROOM**  
*'I love the high ceiling in the indulgent bathroom'*

#### BATHROOM

'I love the green with the white marble, brass and touches of black,' says Gemma.

Walls in Ho Ho Green Intelligent matt emulsion, £51.50 for 2.5ltr, Little Greene, Astonian Batheau bath, £2,145, Aston Matthews Paris marble mosaic tiles, £80sq m, Ca' Pietra

#### RAFFI'S ROOM

A 'starry sky' look is created with an indigo ceiling and glow-in-the-dark stickers. Ceiling in Lazuli elite emulsion, £48 for 2.5ltr, Zoffany at Designerpaint, Ocul wool rug, £399, La Redoute