

# Balancing act

*A couple with contrasting design tastes struggled to find a solution until they brought in expert help*

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## KITCHEN

'We wanted dark navy cupboards because we get so much light in here,' says Emma. Clerkenwell Super Matt kitchen in Navy, Howdens. Porsa white porcelain pendants, Lights & Lamps. *Still Life Bottle* print by Maxime Rokus, Desenio



## HOME TRUTHS

### THE PROPERTY

Duplex in a converted warehouse building

**ROOMS** Kitchen, dining room, sitting room, three bedrooms, two bathrooms

### LOCATION

North London

### DINING ROOM

'The lavender blue chandelier is my favourite piece - I love the contrast with the black details and wood,' says Emma. Bubble Cloudlet chandelier, Dowsing & Reynolds, is similar. Zaragoza extending dining table, John Lewis. Cesca-inspired dining chairs, Where Saints Go



### KITCHEN

'I love that the separate rooms still flow,' says Emma. Still Life Jug print by Maxime Rokus, Desenio. Masters bar stools, Kartell at John Lewis



### SITTING ROOM

'I chose the monochrome portraits so they wouldn't compete with the boldly coloured rug,' says Emma. Art by Mark Rios, known as Mr Dripping. Geometric rug, Floor... Story. Jasper chaise sofa, Love Your Home



When Emma Gardette and her husband Romain bought their first home together, they soon discovered they had differing interior design tastes. 'I had clear ideas about bright colours, geometric patterns, mid-century and lots of accessories,' says Emma, a doctor. 'Romain couldn't see my vision; he prefers industrial materials, neutrals and everything to be tidy.'

Emma and Romain had rented in this part of north London for several years and kept their property search tight so they could continue living in the handy location for work, public transport and amenities.

'Romain liked the industrial feel of this duplex in a converted warehouse and we both loved the windows, which flooded rooms with light,' Emma recalls. 'It's a unique layout for a flat as the three living spaces are open to one another, but separate, and bedrooms and bathrooms are upstairs.'

The duplex had the dated air of the 90s and was in desperate need of a refresh. To begin with, Emma threw herself into designing both bathrooms and worked on the kitchen with Howdens. But juggling work and family life with children, Elisa, now five, and Victoria, 18 months, became increasingly fraught.

'I hadn't done anything like this before and after late nights choosing tiles and other pieces, I realised I'd taken on too much,' she says. The couple still had the dining room and sitting room to plan and went looking for a designer. However, Emma was wary they might not understand what she and Romain wanted to achieve. 'It was a relief to find

### OFFICE AREA

'I love the folding door design that closes off the mess,' says Emma. Greenwich chair, Daals, has the same look





**MAIN BEDROOM**  
Geometrics in the cushions and art draw on Emma's love of mid-century style. Donna Wilson's Balance Shapes cushion, West Elm, is similar. Contrast Rocks print, H&M Home



**NURSERY**  
'Our architect had recommended this off-white paint as it works well in bright spaces,' says Emma. Walls in Pampas, Coat. Stokke MuTable and chairs, John Lewis



Pauline Gidoïn at MM Studio as we immediately clicked – possibly as we're all French! I also liked that she isn't an Instagram designer but a trained architect.'

Emma felt strongly about having a colourful rug in the sitting room and talked fondly about the mid-century influence in her grandparents' house. Romain described being comfortable in a minimalist environment and a preference for industrial materials, greens and blues. 'Looking at products in isolation doesn't always make sense so I used 3D designs and mood boards to show how I could balance their contrasting styles,' Pauline explains. 'Warm white walls, sleek bespoke joinery and colourful furnishings became the solution.'

The couple also discussed a home office and shelving in the sitting room alcoves. Pauline steered them towards an entire wall of joinery. 'The mix of wood and painted doors is an amazing piece of design that modernises the room,' says Emma. Pauline produced furniture layouts, especially important in the narrow dining room where the table needed to seat six and extend to eight. She also found a way to hide hallway clutter visible through a floor-to-ceiling internal window. 'Panelling replaces the lower glass panes and we painted the frame black so it looks industrial,' says Emma.

Emma sourced a builder whose team spent several months refurbishing the duplex, including bringing Pauline's bespoke joinery design to life. 'The outcome is exactly what I hoped for in our first home,' says Emma. 'Romain and I are both very happy – Pauline made it very easy for us.'

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**'A KEY TURNING POINT WAS WHEN OUR ARCHITECT SHOWED ROMAIN HOW WE COULD BRING IN COLOUR AND WARMTH WITHOUT LOSING HIS LOVE OF CLEAN MINIMALISM'**



**EN SUITE**  
Fresh green tiles add depth to the walls, while the vertical pattern draws the eye up to create volume. Oska Jungle green matt tiles, Mandarin Stone, are similar. Arezzo rustic oak wall-hung vanity, Victorian Plumbing