



Kitchen

Moved into the larger part of the extended open-plan space, the kitchen was designed and made by Bellevue Bespoke and painted in Farrow & Ball's Inchyra Blue to stunning effect. It now provides the flexible, inclusive setting the family were missing, with the only structural alteration being replacing a window with a single door out to the garden

'Strong colour has added personality'

Relocating the kitchen instigated a whole-house décor refresh in Lara Cross and Dan Sanders' south London home

Words JANE CRITTENDEN *Styling* MARISHA TAYLOR *Photography* JAMES FRENCH



Step inside...

Meet the owners

Interiors stylist Lara Cross (@heavenhouse) lives here with husband Dan Sanders, a lawyer, and Lara's children Yasmin, 18, Charlie, 15 and Mia, 13

House details

A seven-bedroom Victorian terrace in Balham, south London

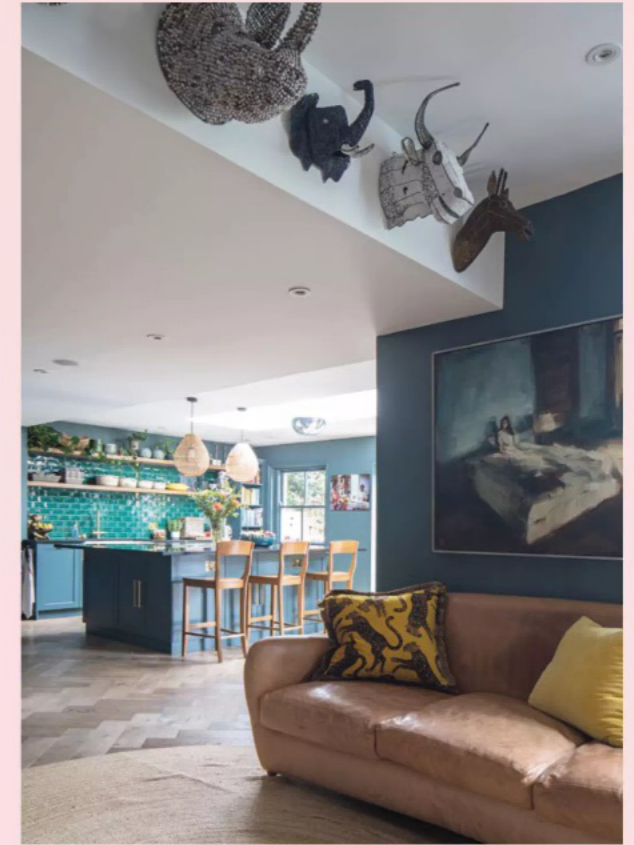
When they bought it

2010



Design details

Provence Valette tiles by Fired Earth cover the back wall, with oak shelves breaking up the expanse and providing useful storage. 'Covid delayed delivery, but they were worth waiting for,' says Lara. For similar oak bar stools, try the Oxley from Eclipse Furniture; for similar pendant lights, try the Maja from Nordic Nest



↑ Snug

The tan leather of Dan's Matthew Hilton sofa is offset by the teal walls, where a painting given as a wedding gift and African animal heads hang above. 'All my pieces have a connection and special meaning,' says Lara

Like many homeowners over the last 18 months, the driving force behind Lara Cross and Dan Sanders' house refurb was prompted by staying home during lockdown. 'We became much more aware of how little of downstairs we actually used, even though it's a big space,' explains Lara. 'The living room felt too formal and the kids had grown out of the playroom.'

The area that bothered Lara the most, however – and had done for years – was the back of the house. The previous owners had extended, creating a bright, multipurpose living space but had placed a small, poorly designed kitchen to the side. 'Myself, Dan and my three teenagers used to huddle around the breakfast bar and not really use the rest of the room, which was absurd,' recalls Lara. 'The kitchen was just too small for a house of this size.'

Having bought the property in 2010 with her previous husband, Lara had redecorated and reinstated the period features, but over the years →



Lara

“**Farrow & Ball’s Inchyra Blue is so beautiful and versatile that it was too good to use in only one room**”

toyed with moving the kitchen into the central, bigger part of the extended open-plan room, and already had some ideas. ‘The changes became a family project,’ she explains. ‘Together we marked out the new layout, moving the sofa and dining table so we could have a big central island. We all wanted an engaging and inclusive environment to cook, eat and socialise.’

The old kitchen area was then turned into a snug – with a bar. ‘We took the Aga out of the chimney breast but we didn’t need another fireplace,’ recalls Lara. ‘It was actually a picture on Pinterest that inspired me to install the bar, and it’s perfect – we can have pre-dinner drinks and go straight into the new dining room.’

In here, Lara has decorated in pale pink to complement the period features and her three favourite oil paintings. Elsewhere downstairs, the décor deepens to a rich →

Home bar

‘Putting a bar in the snug gives this side of the room purpose, and somewhere for me to store my glassware,’ says Lara, who found the vintage bar cabinet, similar to one her grandparents had, on Gumtree. The ottoman is from Helen Mullany Interiors and the rattan ceiling light is from the *Good Homes Approved* Collectiviste



WINTER HOMES UPDATED TERRACE

shade of teal. 'I've always loved that teal is neither blue nor green, and liked the idea of using a bold block of colour,' she says. 'The shade has become a neutral of sorts in our home because I've decorated three rooms the same, changing it up with different-coloured furnishings and art.'

'The scheme is a bold departure from Lara's previous preferred palette of light neutrals, which evolved after she decorated the living room before the kitchen project began. Growing up on a farmstead in South Africa, Lara's mum had always used colour. 'There's so much natural light over there and colour works, but I was a bit nervous that going too dark might suck out the light here,' she says. But Farrow & Ball's Inchyra Blue proved the opposite. I turn a light on, hang a picture and the tone changes – it's so beautiful and versatile that it was too good to use in only one room.' →



← Chic storage

A tall Balinese cabinet that Lara uses to store her table linen has been updated with Little Greene's Turquoise Blue paint. The collection of green pottery on top is from In Bloom and In Habit on Etsy

→ Dining room

Light Peachblossom by Little Greene has been used to emphasise the original corning and white marble fireplace. 'The African coconut bead pendant light, Nguni cow hide rug and Ardmore Monkey Paradise tablecloth add a colonial feel to the room,' says Lara



Living room

Decorating in warm teal, creams and pale grey has transformed this previously more formal space into a cosy TV room. 'I'd seen James Nunn's octopus lino print years before, and knew it would look bright and fun in here,' says Lara. The turquoise lampshades made from an Indian sari are by Hill & May. For a similar sofa, try Loaf



Cloakroom →

Lara's builders suggested upcycling her daughter's old dressing table into a pretty vanity for the whimsical downstairs loo. Painted in Farrow and Ball's Crimson Red, the piece now features a 'mermaid' splashback using Fired Earth's Metallic Vitreum Aurum Fan tiles, and Artemis wallpaper in Blush by House of Hackney completes the look



The big idea

Want to turn a dressing table or cabinet into a bespoke bathroom vanity unit like Lara's? It's important to ensure it's a suitable height, then depending on the style of furniture, your builder can then install a countertop or undermount basin



Although Lara had teal in mind for the kitchen too, other factors were also at play. Friends had clubbed together to buy her and Dan a painting as a wedding present, which Lara wanted on prominent display. Fired Earth's Provence green glazed tiles had also caught her eye in a magazine – and she then saw them again in an Instagrammer's kitchen. 'The tiles kept drawing me in – they remind me of cafés and restaurants on French holidays,' she says. 'It was the combination of the

tiles, the teal and our painting that saw the colour scheme emerge in this room, with touches of mustards and golds.'

The project began in July 2020, but wasn't too much of an upheaval as the family were able to use their old kitchen until the new one was fitted. As well as building the bespoke kitchen, their builders Multiserve – also Lara's friends from South Africa – made suggestions about how better to use the space, advising switching the island to run vertically down the room, →

Hallway

The stunning original stained glass and Minton tiles are the star of the show in the entrance of Lara and Dan's double-fronted London home



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← Landing

Featuring simple Cox & Cox lighting, antique rattan furniture and a decorative wall display of South African baskets, this calming corner is the perfect space for a moment of relaxation

widening the doorway between the snug and dining room to draw in light from the front, and creating an entrance to the utility from the kitchen instead of the hallway.

'Multiserve were also really good at suggesting ways we could repurpose our existing furniture instead of getting rid of it,' says Lara. 'The painted dresser now looks part of the kitchen and I love the dressing table that they made into the cloakroom vanity.'

Initially, Lara only had plans to revamp the ground floor, but as work came to a close, the contrast with upstairs became apparent. 'I'd walk up the stairs and catch sight of the bathroom looking a little sad and our bedroom wallpaper looked dated,' she says. 'So we decided to redecorate everywhere and completely change our en suite.'

Again, the builders advised how they could maximise the small space: a freestanding bath is now next to the shower and a luxe double vanity fills the alcove where it had been before. →



Lara

“ Our builders suggested some great ways to repurpose our existing furniture and maximise space ”



Style steal

For properties located in a built-up area, café-style shutters provide privacy while letting light in above. Great for bay windows, they also work well in period houses with decorative windows that you might not want to cover up

'Nothing feels squeezed in,' says Lara. 'The en suite is gorgeous, like a hotel bathroom, which I'm convinced is because we didn't travel last year!'

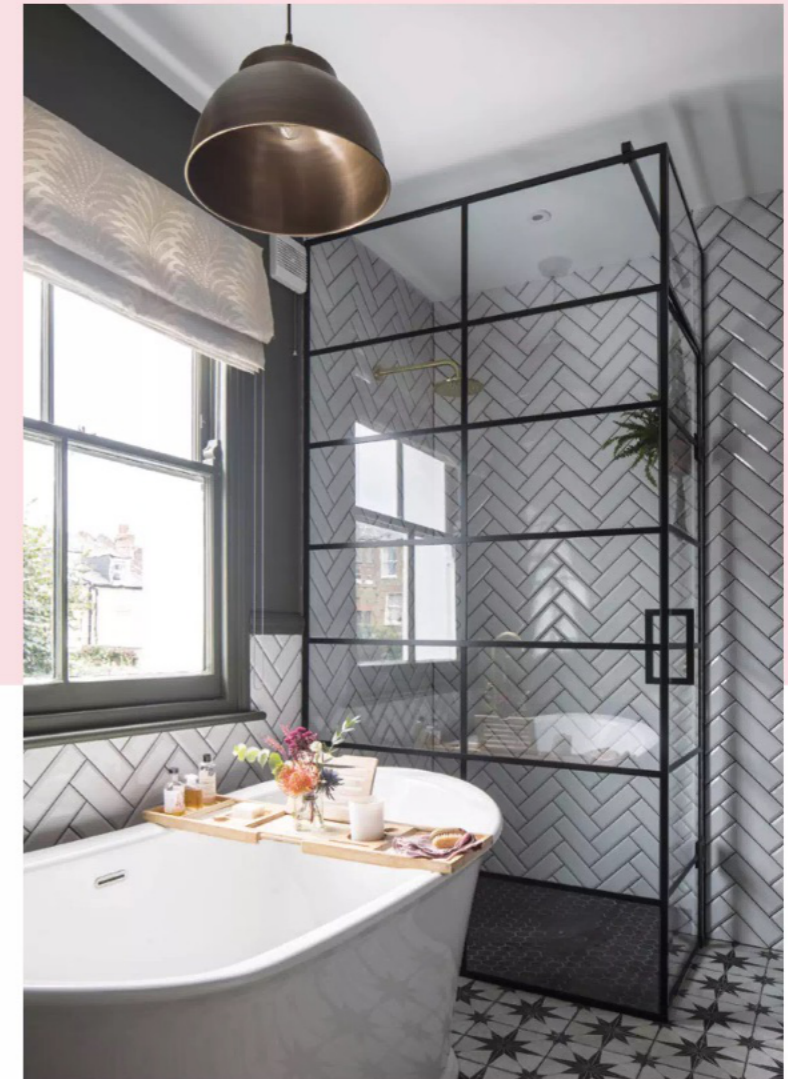
Lara still loves her native African furnishings made from raw organic materials, such as the coconut bead lampshade, animal heads and cow hide rug. 'I usually bring a whole suitcase home full of things I've bought in South Africa made by amazing artisans,' she says. 'But with lockdown restrictions I've had to be more resourceful and find African homewares from places like Etsy instead.'

Lara and Dan's home was finished in ten months, and now restrictions have lifted, the house is often used for location shoots or rented out on Airbnb. 'I love knowing people enjoy our home as much as we do,' says Lara. 'When we did the big reveal to friends after lockdown, no one could believe we hadn't done any structural work. It's like we live in a different house – we're all so much happier here now.'



Main bedroom

'This room challenged me the most as the mocha velvet headboard looked too dark, and I wanted to lighten the space,' says Lara. 'But the Lewis & Wood Beech wallpaper is beautifully tranquil.' Ikat cushion covers from My Little Wish and scalloped bedlinen by Sophie Conran add delicate detail to this restful space



↑ En suite

Herringbone wall tiles and a bespoke shower screen up to the ceiling trick the eye into thinking this room is bigger than it is, and positioning the bath from Victoriaplum.com close to the shower doesn't compromise its use in the compact space. All the tiles are from Tiles Direct, with the pendant lighting from Industville