

Sitting area

'This space was designed to extend into the garden, with a corner outlook over the terrace,' says Ben. 'The two tall windows give glimpses of the garden and mirror the shape of the woodburner.'

BUY THE KEY PIECES

Woodburner, £3,000, Aga Stoves. Rubens armchair, £399, Made.com. Jake corner sofa, from £2,550, Love Your Home. Orange drum shade, £45, Habitat

CEILING SPOT
Positioned to
throw light onto
favourite artwork



Tailor made

Ben and Gaby Hillman updated a standard Thirties semi with a wraparound extension, clever design ideas and smart tech to make every space support their lifestyle and suit their contemporary tastes

Welcome to my home



Ben Hillman (benhillman.co.uk) lives here with his wife, Gaby, and children, Hope, five and Honor, three. Ben is a presenter on *A Place in the Sun* and Gaby is a physiotherapist.

THE PROPERTY
A four-bedroom 1930s semi in Shoreham-by-Sea, Sussex.

THE VALUE Bought for £587,000 in July 2016; now worth £800,000.

“It’s great having smart-home functionality that’s so discreet, it doesn’t spoil the house’s character.”

Ben is often away, filming, so when he and Gaby decided to move, house-hunting took a certain amount of ingenuity. ‘I spotted this tired-looking Thirties house online when I was working in Costa Rica,’ says Ben. ‘Looking at the floorplans, I could see the family house I could create. There were enough bedrooms for all of us, so my focus was on re-modelling the ground floor with a wraparound extension that wouldn’t impact too much on the garden.’

When the family moved in July 2016, Ben had already drawn up a design. Alongside the existing front living room, there was to be a combined kitchen-diner and living area, with an adjacent playroom. ‘A simple opening to the playroom connects it to the living space but the chaos doesn’t spill over,’ says Ben.

‘Hope worked out she could talk to me via the porch security camera while I was away,’ says Ben. ‘This got me thinking that I could also project-manage remotely. It also prompted me to look into a smart heating and lighting plan. We have Philips Hue downlights set to mimic daylight in the darkest part of the living space and we can vary the colour temperature using an app. We also have Wundatherm overfloor heating boards beneath the tiles, controlled via Nest – it’s great as the smart thermostat remembers the settings for each zone.’

A team from Urban Builders started work in May 2018 and the family moved into Ben’s parents’ rental flat nearby while he went abroad for work again. He set up Nest cameras on site so he could chat to the team – ‘I’m not sure what they thought of my Big Brother approach!’ he says. In September, Ben was free to fit the kitchen and built-in storage, and by November, the house had been decorated. ‘The space works even better for us than I thought it would when I first saw the floorplans.’

Take a quick tour...



GROUND FLOOR

FIRST FLOOR

Divide and conquer

‘I like the way the glass doors separate the front living room, zoning the space, but still keep it connected to the larger area,’ says Ben. ‘I picked out black details in the chairs and door handles to provide a visual link with the door frames.’

BUY THE KEY PIECES
Ercol Teramo table, £1,050, Barker and Stonehouse. Dining chairs, £139 each, Cult Furniture



Love BEN'S STYLE?
Turn to page 53 to shop the look

“The tongue-and-groove doors were a nod to the age of the house and the green was inspired by the seafront railings in Brighton, where we used to live”

LED STRIP PENDANT
Barely there, with its minimalist linear look

Kitchen

The kitchen is in the middle of the new extension. ‘I planned the design with the help of DIY Kitchens, moving things around until they fitted,’ says Ben. ‘The tricky bit was the right-hand corner, as I had to fit a pull-out pantry and utility door.’

BUY THE KEY PIECES

Carcasses, £4,740, DIY Kitchens. Calacatta quartz worktops, £510sq m, Margasil





PAINTED CIRCLE
Creates the look of a contemporary ceiling rose

Playroom

'The play area to the side of the kitchen works so well. There's no door, so it remains connected to the larger space. The kids don't collide with us when we're busy and we don't feel as though we've shut them away. In the future, I could fit a door to make a den or office.'

BUY THE KEY PIECES Walls in Valspar's Ladylike, £38 for 5L, B&Q. The Cranor retro coffee table, £89, Wayfair, has a similar look

Main bedroom

'I changed the layout to maximise space in here,' says Ben. 'The bed is now on the opposite wall and I built wall-to-wall storage that also acts as a headboard. The inset shelf means we don't need bedside tables and the lighting is wired in.'

BUY THE KEY PIECES Daisy large lampshade in walnut, £110, Random Lights. Elevation throw, £35, John Lewis & Partners



Bathroom

'This room is on our "to-do" list and I plan to knock through to the separate shower room,' says Ben. 'I'd like a huge roof window in here, and lots of plants so it has the feel of a conservatory.'

BUY THE KEY PIECES Bijou square matt white mosaic tiles are similar, £31.71sq m, Walls and Floors

Living room

'I wanted a change of pace in here, to make it a place where Gaby and I can relax. It's south-facing, so the walls could take a dark colour. The painted ceiling rose and polished concrete shelf are a modern take on traditional living room features.'

BUY THE KEY PIECES Secto Design Octo pendant, Nurido. Tan leather sofas, £1,199 each, Barker and Stonehouse

“We’ve repeated certain design motifs, such as the painted ceiling roses in the bedroom and living room, and the tongue-and-groove doors in the kitchen and bedroom”



WALNUT ACCENT
Adds warmth to a cool grey and white room



PINK INTERIOR
Turns a fireplace into a fun feature



Hope's bedroom

'I wanted the girls' bedrooms to look fun, without being overly pink,' says Ben. 'Painting colourful graphic shapes on the walls is a really easy way to make a design impact with individual style.'

BUY THE KEY PIECES
Elona chest of drawers, £399, Made.com

Hope's bedroom

'It made sense to futureproof the room with a built-in wardrobe and cupboard in the alcoves,' says Ben. 'It will provide Hope with plenty of storage as she grows up.'

BUY THE KEY PIECES
Bespoke blind in Linara Vermillion fabric, £700, Madden Handmade. Moth lampshade, £60, Studio Snowpuppe. Tirup grey chair, £100, Ikea

WHAT I'VE LEARNED

“A bad experience with builders in my last project made me nervous about finding the right people. The trades I used this time obviously took pride in their work, as they'd post photos on Instagram. It's a good place to find a recommendation”

FEATURE: JANE CRITTENDEN PHOTOGRAPHS: JAMES FRENCH STYLING: MARISHA TAYLOR



Make it work for you

BEN'S STYLE: MODERN TAILORING

Clever design ideas, statement artwork and a playful use of colour create a welcoming space with a modern retro feel

IDEAL

MOODY ABSTRACT
Urban City Skyline canvas, £189, Furniture Village

DESIGNER STATEMENT
Secto Design Octo 4241 pendant lamp, £519, Nunido

RICH SHADE
Velvet cushion in Mustard, £45, Rose & Grey

MODERN CLASSIC
West Elm Axel three-seater sofa, £2,399, John Lewis & Partners

LUXE APPEAL
Fjord Baby Alpaca throw, £145, Loom & Last

BOLD ACCENT
Sarah lamp base, £275, Jemima shade, £175, both KD Loves

MINIMALIST STYLE
Rimo coffee table, £229, Swoon

GREAT DEAL

STORMY BLUES
Abstract Skies canvas, £109.99, Graham & Brown range, Very

SIMPLE SCANDI
Lemina wooden pendant light, £79, Beliani

WARM HUE
Large velour cushion in Yellow, £12, Matalan

RETRO COOL
French Connection Marl four-seater sofa, £1,799, DFS

COSY COMFORT
Marissa cotton blanket, £66, Maisons Du Monde

SLEEK LINES
Ripple glass table, £189, Danetti

CLOUR CRUSH
Keith lamp with Orange lampshade, £295, Laurie Lamps

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