

WHEN LESS *is more*

Losing a little space to create a mezzanine and double-height window gave the dark ground floor of this terraced house a new lease of life

Words: **Jane Crittenden** Photography: **Jim Stephenson**



The FACTS

Who? Suyin Du Bois and Andre Lotz

What? The renovation of a three-storey 1970s terraced house, including a ground-floor extension

Where? South west London

Cost? Around £200,000

Time? A year

above Opening up the whole ground floor has created a seamless kitchen-diner, with nods to the 1970s architecture found in the original open-tread staircase, front door, and Mid-century splashback design. Insulation and underfloor heating beneath the **resin flooring**, from Chasing Spaces, addresses previous concerns of being cold. **Barstools** John Lewis & Partners

left Almost half of the couple's living space is open-plan. **Architecture** Nimtim Architects.

After deciding to sell their flat, Suyin Du Bois, a consultant for tech start ups, and her NHS programme manager husband, Andre Lotz, were delighted to find this 1970s terraced property close to the high street and the Thames. "We had no idea what to expect," Suyin recalls. "The ground floor was dark and disappointing but as I followed Andre upstairs, he turned around and smiled – I knew this house was going to be special." They were blown away by the elevated open-plan kitchen-living-diner with big windows and two generous double bedrooms and bathroom above. The house only ever had one owner and, as a result, had kept its original 1970s charm. "There were shag pile carpets and the original avocado bathroom," Andre recalls. "When we moved in, we first updated this and put in a shower as well as decorating the bedrooms." Here, the couple explain why they did a significant renovation a few years later...

Why did you decide to do the project?

"We rarely used the ground floor, which had an integrated garage and a cold, dark room at the back with a sofa bed and desk," says Andre. "We were wasting space and felt disconnected to the outside, because this was our only access to the garden." Suyin adds: "The ground floor stepped back from the first storey by 1m and our neighbours had extended to bring the two in line. We thought

about moving the kitchen-diner downstairs, but were torn. We loved the first floor – it was so spacious and unusual and we didn't want to lose its 'X Factor'. On the other hand, updating the ground floor didn't seem a big enough change, as we'd still have to come through a bedroom to go into the garden. We brought on Nimi and Tim at Nimtim Architects and talked these concerns through."

How did you find working with architects?

"Nimi and Tim live in a Mid-century house similar to ours and have worked on a number of projects with a strong contemporary flavour," says Andre. "They were enthusiastic and respected that our renovation was a big deal for us. They were also very patient – we spent two years on the design." Suyin adds: "I'd had a double-height look in my mind for a while – we thought it was a bit crazy, but Nimi and Tim came back with a design that resolved all of our problems. As well as extending, we cut back some of the first floor to create a mezzanine, swapping space around and gaining more by reducing the size of the garage. The double-height curtain wall of glass really draws light into the room."

What were your ideas for the kitchen?

"Nimtim created a rough plan, including the hob run, island, and tall units, which I used to put together the final design before taking it to Naked Kitchens. >



The design simplicity of the circular **table** from Made evokes a Mid-century look. **Chairs**, John Lewis & Partners.

I didn't want it to look too formal, so chose an oak design with dovetail joint drawers and cut-out circular handles, with some units painted the same grey as the walls to blend in," says Suyin. "The extractor is hidden in a cupboard, too. We nearly chose a pink concrete worktop but the thinnest depth was 50mm – and I'm small and wanted the counters to be as low as possible, so we went for 30mm quartz."

How about the bedroom and ensuite upstairs?

"As the first floor was one big space we were able to play around with the internal walls," Andre explains. "The bedroom naturally slotted into the spot where the kitchen had been and we designed the ensuite as a shower room with a palette of wood, grey and pink."

Can you tell us about the finishing touches?

"The architecture is a talking point and we didn't want to crowd this out with bold colours," says Suyin. "We chose an understated grey scheme, advised by Farrow & Ball colour consultant Joa Studholme. Picking tiles was the hardest decision – the kitchen, ensuite and entrance all influenced one another – and we were nervous about the big splashback. Then we saw Decorum's Arc tile and loved the Mid-century look, choosing a soft pink for a modern take on the 70s. The bespoke full-height bookcase is one of my favourite things – I love it. We have lots of books, it's lovely to be able to look at them."

What's it like living here now?

"We can't believe how beautiful our house is," says Suyin. "We love that we were able to keep the open-plan look and we've gained so much light in the process. It was a big decision to go over our budget on this bolder layout, but we're so glad we took the risk." >



Bespoke shelving, made by the couple's builders, accentuates the volume of the double height space and is one of Suyin's favourite features. **Sofa**, Sit and Sleep; **wall lights**, Atom Interiors.

Suyin and Andre's **WORDS OF WISDOM**

- Plan for the future. Quotes for the double-height space were more than our budget. We did an imaginary walk-through of our daily lives with and without the big change and knew we'd be disappointed if we didn't take the plunge.
- Graph paper is useful for space planning. We found hand-drawing ideas for the kitchen layout much easier than using an online design tool.
- Make all your decisions upfront – even small details such as handles – so once you're on site you don't hold the project up.
- Make lots of lists. To keep on track, we came to site with things we wanted to check, plus our concerns and questions. We kept the previous meeting's notes to make sure we didn't forget anything.
- Use a colour consultant. The advice reassured us that the paint shades would work in each room individually and together in the whole house.



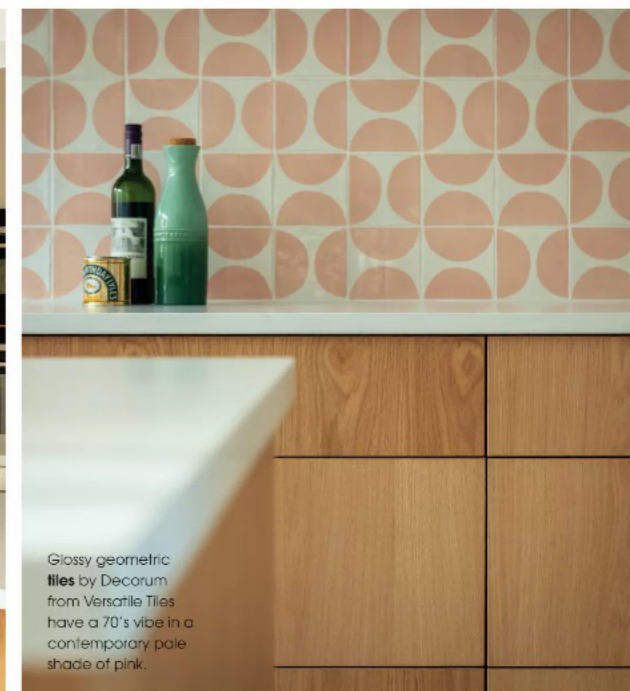
above The architects suggested a hook for the lighting flex of the Muuto Aarhø pendant light so the couple have the freedom to move the table and chairs at a later date. **Chairs**, West Elm.



The architect-designed kitchen, using **units** from Naked Kitchens, mixes oak and painted cupboards with simple circular cutouts as handles. Unstone's Bianco Assoluto **worktops** from The Marble Store, are white quartz in a softly-brushed lacino finish.



Suyin wanted the kitchen to be pared back in the open-plan room so the bank of floor-to-ceiling cupboards were **painted** the same as the walls in a colour-match to Farrow & Ball's Cornforth White.



Glossy geometric **tiles** by Decorum from Versatile Tiles have a 70's vibe in a contemporary pale shade of pink.



The entrance into the open-plan ground floor is visually linked to the garden. The original open-tread staircase has been updated by **painting** it in a colour matched to Farrow & Ball's Mole's Breath, complementing the kitchen.

SOURCEBOOK

Architect Nimit Architects 020 8693 0878 nimit.co.uk

Kitchen and worktop Naked Kitchens 01328 838854 nakedkitchens.co.uk

Splashback Versatile Tiles 020 8397 6363 versatiletiles.co.uk

Appliances AO.co.uk

Resin flooring Chasing Space 020 8265 2855 chasing.space.co.uk

Glazing North Glass 01895 206650, northglass.co.uk

Bathroom floor tiles Damus 020 848 9500 damusgroup.com

Bathroom shower tiles Walls and Floors 01536 314 730 wallsandfloors.co.uk

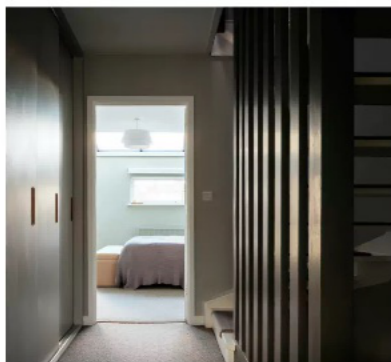
Bathroom fittings Potter Perrin 020 8677 5321 potterperrin.com

Vanity Tikamoon 020 8514 7098 tikamoon.co.uk

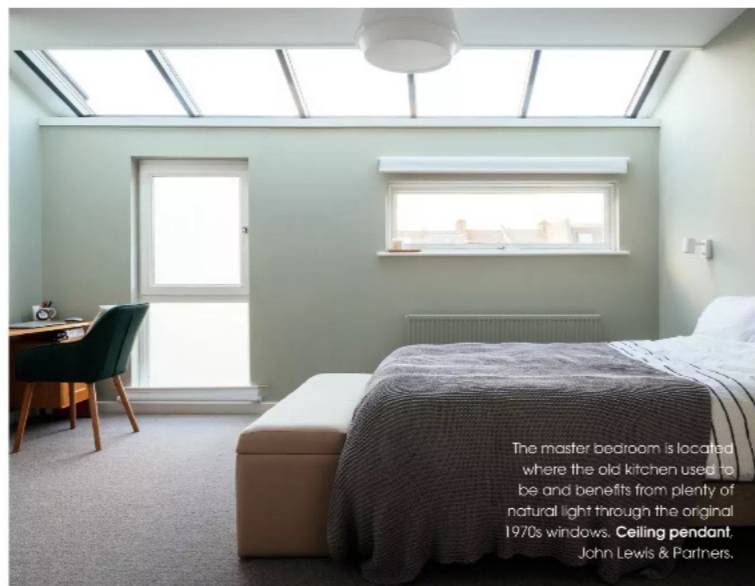
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The living room on the new mezzanine floor enjoys views across to the garden.



above The reconfigured first floor now has a master bedroom and, to the left, a utility cupboard for the washing machine and dryer behind sliding doors.



The master bedroom is located where the old kitchen used to be and benefits from plenty of natural light through the original 1970s windows. **Ceiling pendant:** John Lewis & Partners.



left The warm wood of in the Tikamoon vanity and a touch of pink in Geometria's Half Decor floor tiles from Domus in the ensuite echo the kitchen's colour scheme. Mid-grey decoration in a colour matched to Farrow & Ball's Pavli on Gray embrace the dark room. **Shower tiles:** Walls and floors; **fitings:** Potter Perrin.

The PLANS

The renovation of a three-storey 1970s terraced house, including a ground-floor extension, revived an underused space.

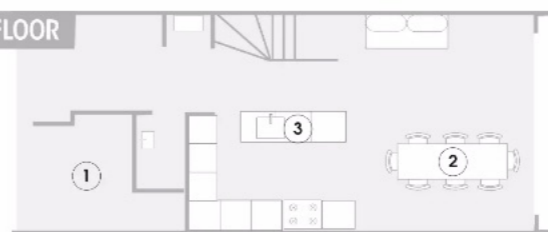
- 1 Garage** Reducing its size increased the kitchen footprint and created a downstairs WC, leaving enough room for storage that's accessed through double garage doors at the front of the house.
- 2 Dining** The generous area allows

easy access to the garden and has plenty of circulation space. It was designed to give the couple options if they want to add furniture or change the placement around.

3 Layout The island is positioned within easy reach of the hob and food storage, without compromising on safety or obstructing access.

4 Master suite The bedroom sits where the old kitchen had been, with an ensuite created from space in the large multi-purpose room.

GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



shop the look

- 1** Southbourne mirror, £120, Garden Trading, gardentrading.co.uk
- 2** Bodo pendant in light grey, £99.99, Dowsing & Reynolds, dowsingandreynolds.com
- 3** Palm Springs porcelain tiles in pink, £66 per sqm, Porcelain Superstore, porcelainsuperstore.co.uk
- 4** Paris Grey paint, £49.95 for 2.5 litres, Annie Sloan, anniesloan.com
- 5** Weathered oak stool, £165, Rose & Grey, roseandgrey.co.uk

