

'It's a calming PLACE TO LIVE'

IN CHARACTER

'There were virtually no period features, so we added interest with wall panelling'

COME ON IN!



ABOUT ME I'm Laura Smith (@renovate128), a solicitor, and I live here with my husband, Jamie, a project manager, and our daughters, Isla, eight, and Olivia, six.

OUR HOME A four-bed 1930s semi in Wanstead, London, which we bought in February 2018.

WHEN WE MOVED IN We had to rip up the carpets and fumigate the whole house as the previous owner had been a hoarder and every room was filled to the brim.

AND NOW I've achieved a clean, calm Scandi look with a colour scheme of darks and lights.

STYLE TIP To be confident that an idea will work, find a picture you love on Instagram or Pinterest and recreate the look.

IDEA TO STEAL

Bring warmth and texture into a dark scheme with a contrasting wood island

DREAM LOOK

'I'd saved lots of pictures of dark kitchens. The handmade cupboards are from Made by Greg Cox, painted in Farrow & Ball's Railings'

Blue-blacks and warm neutrals are the foundation of Laura and Jamie's Scandi-style home, which suits their family life

We were living in a Victorian terrace nearby but as our family grew it began to feel small and we were drawn to finding a wider house on a bigger plot,' says Laura. 'When we viewed this 1930s property, we immediately liked the proportions and upstairs had a great layout with rooms coming off a central landing.'

But we needed a fair bit of imagination as the house was in a real state and full of stuff. We couldn't even get inside one of the bedrooms and once we started hacking back the overgrown garden, we discovered it was three metres longer than we'd thought. Clearly it was going to be a huge project but we had to live here for a year and save up before we could start any renovations.

Early days

We had two weeks to blitz the house to make it liveable before we moved in. After fumigating, a decorator white-washed all the rooms and we laid a cheap lino. The kitchen was unusable with cupboards falling off the walls so we bought the cheapest kitchen we could find to make do. We spent the next year making plans. We wanted to extend downstairs and convert the loft space but we couldn't afford to move out and do the whole project at the same time, so we planned the work in two stages, starting on the upstairs first.

First floor rejig

We decided to convert the loft into two bedrooms and a bathroom for our daughters. This left us the main bedroom and three spare bedrooms on the first floor. We turned one into a guest room for Jamie's parents, who regularly >>



**SEAT WITH A VIEW**

'I love a window seat and everyone gravitates to it. My mum made the cushion in a blue and cream ikat fabric'

3 of the best BLUE BAR STOOLS

A rich hue and high back combine comfort with elegance

**PLUSH TOUCH**

Nova kitchen stool, £129, Cult Furniture

**DOUBLE VALUE**

Rosette button-back stool, £120 for two, Pepper Mill Interiors

**BUFFALO LEATHER**

Brooklyn bar stool, £169, Where Saints Go

**IDEA TO STEAL**

If your extension is north facing, skylights ensure you'll still get plenty of light

STYLE BOOST

'I didn't want the extension to look like a bland box so I made focal points by keeping the old fireplace and adding shelving'

**HANDY STORAGE**

'The pantry is great to hide away mess. I love the look of the reeded glass in the door'

**PERFECT FIT**

'I love the mid-century look and found this G Plan sideboard on eBay - it's immaculate!'

'FARROW & BALL'S STRONG WHITE WORKS IN OUR SCHEME - IT'S A WHITE THAT ISN'T BRIGHT, GREY OR BEIGE, IT'S SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN'

» come to visit. It made sense to turn the small bedroom next door, which had a funny high-up window, into the main bathroom. But I couldn't see us using the other little bedroom very often. My dad, who's a property developer, suggested we take over the entire back of the house and create one luxurious master suite. We were nervous about losing bedrooms but it made sense to turn the old bathroom into our en suite

and the adjoining fourth bedroom into our lovely dressing room.

Building work

A friend of my dad's turned our ideas into drawings for planning and building regulations. We found our builders, Summit Group, locally - they came highly recommended and were amazing. We relocated to a rental for six months while they tackled the loft and first »

» floor. The following year they returned, opening up downstairs, extending, and converting the garage into a utility and cloakroom. The two-phase approach meant that we could retreat upstairs at the end of the day, which was lovely and finished, and felt like staying in a hotel.

Planning the interiors

As soon as we moved in, I began saving images on Instagram and Pinterest, ripping out pictures from magazines and keeping moodboards for each room on

my phone. There were so many things I liked, I drove myself mad with ideas!

At first it was hard to make a coherent scheme but I really enjoyed the challenge. We were tied by our budget so I'd often recreate a look and gradually I began to see a theme. I love blues and pinks but I didn't go mad with colour because life is crazy busy and I needed to be able to come in, close the front door and feel calm. I'm a quiet person and perhaps that's reflected in my interiors – darks and lights, touches of plaster »

GLAZING SOLUTION

'The builders suggested we took the Maxlight sliding doors right to the ceiling and we get lovely light in here now.'



BESPOKE LOOK

'I'd saved pictures of huge library walls on my Pinterest board and asked our carpenter to make something similar so I could display my books and trinkets'



IDEA TO STEAL

Break up a large extension with rugs and frame with furniture to create different zones

'I LIKE DARKS WITH LIGHTS, TOUCHES OF PLASTER PINK AND MUTED SCANDI TONES – IT'S A SOOTHING COMBINATION'

Quick-fire confession

My one regret... *I wish I'd been brave enough to use the sitting room herringbone floor throughout the whole of downstairs instead of worrying it might look too much. Still, you learn something from every project to take to the next.'*

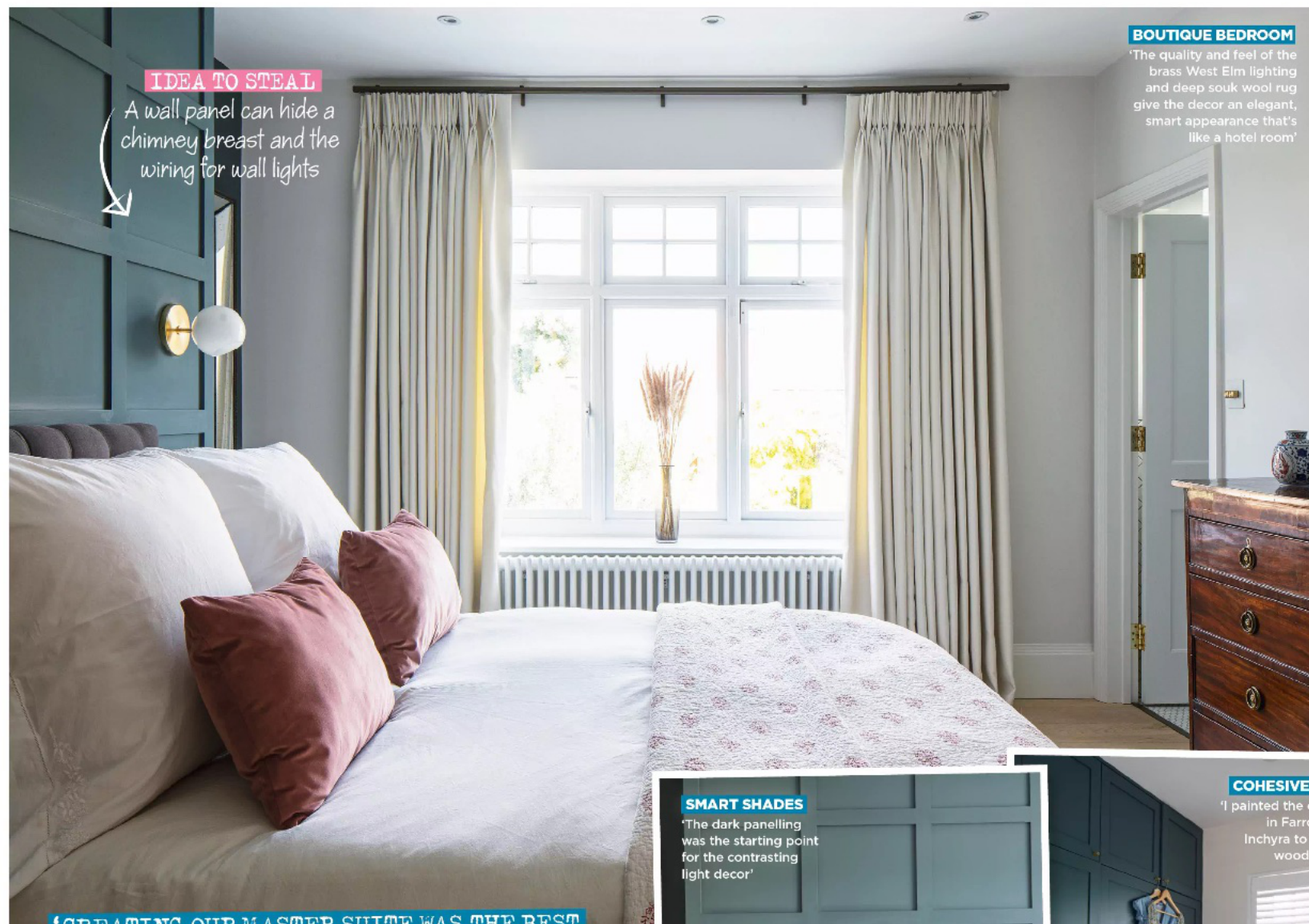
Do it! SHOP FOR ARTWORK

- ★ Be inspired by your interiors – Laura sourced original vintage Scandi art on eBay to go with her decor.
- ★ Neutral walls are the perfect backdrop for bright pictures and a way of introducing an accent colour.
- ★ Use art with a personal connection – Laura has a lighthouse painting she loves that was done by a friend's father-in-law.
- ★ Make art a focal point – bespoke shelves were designed with a central shelf for a Devon painting Jamie bought for Laura on holiday.
- ★ Whimsical prints uplift the mood – Laura chose the aerial framed beach print because she loves the sun and the sea.

GROWN-UP DECOR

'Our sitting room has a smart look as it's more of an adult space. The sofa is from [Sofa.com](#)'



**IDEA TO STEAL**

A wall panel can hide a chimney breast and the wiring for wall lights

BOUTIQUE BEDROOM

'The quality and feel of the brass West Elm lighting and deep souk wool rug give the decor an elegant, smart appearance that's like a hotel room'

'CREATING OUR MASTER SUITE WAS THE BEST DECISION AS IT'S A LOVELY, LUXURIOUS ROOM AND WE USE ALL OF THE SPACE EVERY DAY'

» pink, and muted Scandi tones such as pale wood flooring, simple wood furniture and neutral coloured walls.

Paint choices

A key decision was finding the right shade of white I could use everywhere in a tone that wasn't too bright, grey or beige. Farrow & Ball's Strong White sits somewhere in between and sets off everything I put with it. When I decorated the upper two floors, I wanted to bring in

a dark tone and I fell in love with Farrow & Ball's Inchyra, a deep blue-grey. I've used this on wood panelling and the wardrobes in the master bedroom. I then carried the darks and lights through to downstairs later on – the kitchen cupboards are painted in Farrow & Ball's blue-black Railings. I like how the blues feel like calm neutrals and contrast with the warm white, yet also complement the hints of pink. Furniture on my moodboards definitely had the »

SMART SHADES

'The dark panelling was the starting point for the contrasting light decor'

**COHESIVE DESIGN**

'I painted the cupboards in Farrow & Ball's Inchyra to match the wood panelling'

**HAPPY COMBO**

'I love the mix of wall, floor and shower tiles. I'd never have put them together without Pinterest inspiration'

Do it! COMBINING BATHROOM TILES

- ✦ Mixing patterns means keeping the colour palette tight. Laura went for a monochrome look in her en suite. White mosaic floor tiles and white metro wall tiles are finished in dark grout to complement the blue shower tiles with a white sunburst print.
- ✦ If you want the same style tile throughout, pick a design that comes in a variety of shapes to mix it up.
- ✦ You could also try mixing vertical

- and horizontal layouts of the same tile on different surfaces.
- ✦ Make one surface the focal point with a bright colour and/or pattern. Pick out the same tone in understated tiles elsewhere.
- ✦ Can't decide? Run a bold floor tile halfway up the wall to finish as a splashback behind the basin or bath. Use a plain tile above in the same colour tone or paint.



IDEA TO STEAL

A lively pattern on just one wall helps break up the neutral scheme

FUN WALL

'Olivia wanted a blue wallpaper with monkeys. Monkey Jungle at Wallpaperdirect is very sweet'



GARDEN HIDEAWAY

'A summerhouse at the end of the garden doubles up as a home office'

» Scandi look and we like mid-century pieces too, such as the G Plan sideboard I managed to find on eBay.

Pride and joy

That said, my pride and joy is the wall of floor-to-ceiling shelves in the living area. We'd looked at buying units but they were expensive and Summit Group's carpenter was fab. We drew the design on the plastered wall and he made the shelves exactly as we wanted. When it came to flooring, we opted for pale oak planks and a fluffy rug in our bedroom. Downstairs, we've got engineered oak in the main extension but large concrete-effect tiles in the kitchen because they won't stain. I put herringbone in the sitting room, which I love. Every time I come home I think this is a lovely place to live - I especially love our bedroom, which feels like a luxurious hotel room.'

'A SIX-BED PROPERTY HAS MORE APPEAL IF WE DECIDED TO SELL BUT A COMFORTABLE HOME THAT WORKS FOR OUR FAMILY WAS MORE IMPORTANT'

MONO LOOK

'Using white metro tiles in here makes both bathrooms feel cohesive'

