

'Our rental has HEART AND SOUL'

SMART DESIGN

Amélie has given her rental home a chic but cosy feel



IDEA TO STEAL

Painting one wall a shade of charcoal helps to make the wooden elements and leather sofa shine

COME ON IN!



ABOUT ME I'm Amélie Pellerin (@topology.amelie), 35, an interior designer at Topology Interiors ([topologyinteriors.com](https://www.topologyinteriors.com)) and I live here with my husband, Konstantinos Adraktas, 33, a dentist.

OUR HOME A two-bedroom rented flat on the eighth floor of a new-build block in Dalston, East London. We moved here in December 2019.

WHEN WE MOVED IN The flat was unfurnished, bland and unhomey but the neutral flooring and fittings were a good starting point to make my mark.

AND NOW I've created an inviting home that's relaxed with budget buys, DIY projects and lighting tricks.

STYLE TIP To give depth to a modern home, use paint colours with warm tones, natural textures like linen and rattan, and layer lighting.



An earthy palette of soothing neutrals, wood tones and charcoal details – plus a few design tricks – add warmth and cosiness to Amélie's home

I grew up in France, where eating together is the most important and most pleasing part of the day,' says Amélie. 'A home needs to make you feel something and I wanted mine to have the happy feeling that I enjoy when I'm sharing a meal with family and friends.'

The challenge was how to do this within the limitations of our rental flat – and persuading my husband, Konstantinos, it could be done without spending a fortune! I had to be very creative with the interior.

Property search

I've lived in London for 10 years now and it's where I met Konstantinos, who's Greek. After living in separate house shares, we started looking for our first home together. We wanted to avoid the potential problems that sometimes crop up in older properties, so we set out to find a new-build flat to rent with modern (and reliable) fixtures and fittings. When we viewed this place, Konstantinos was put off by the rooms crammed with furniture and baby stuff – but I could see beyond the chaotic layout.

I loved the big windows, vast views across London and the space, particularly the large kitchen-dining-living room. We couldn't change the beige carpet or laminate floor, but they were inoffensive, and along with the white decoration, provided a modern, neutral foundation to add personality and character.

Visualising the space

We moved into the flat with just a second-hand sofa and my collection of plants. I started thinking about the interior and took the same approach that I do with client projects. I imagined coming into the flat as a guest and wondering what my journey would be like. I try and create spaces within a space, using an arrangement of >>

COHESIVE COLOUR

'Lick's Black O2 has red undertones to bring out the wood hues and caramel leather sofa. I stained La Redoute's mid-century inspired coffee table in a light brown to fit in'



ROOM ZONING

'The Atkin & Thyme mango shelf creates a point of interest between the eating and relaxing parts of the room'

» furniture, plants and lighting to draw people in. I could imagine hosting our friends at a beautiful wooden table, or lounging on the sofa, with layers of soft lighting around us.

A contemporary approach

I set out to embrace the flat's modern bones and inspired by visits to Konstantinos' family in Greece, I incorporated lighting, wood grain and an earthy Mediterranean palette to infuse warmth. The flat can get cold and the new-build architecture felt cold too, so I had to find the right balance of tones and textures. Wood and natural materials break down the modernity and introduce an organic textured look.

Key furniture pieces were a priority and we went for a simple Ikea bed, caramel leather sofa and a six-seater dining table. I find the quality of furniture and »



FINE DETAILS

'The bespoke Etsy dining table was surprisingly affordable'



WRAPPED UP

'Covering the Ikea units with a vinyl wood-effect wrap helps it fit in with the decor. It also acts as extra seating'

IDEA TO STEAL

Prints in similar accent shades add interest to a plain white wall

Do it! ADD COOL LIGHTING WITHOUT AN ELECTRICIAN

- * Buy plug-in wall lights and fix to the wall or hang from ceiling hooks.
- * Use smart bulbs activated by voice via an app or remote control.
- * Change the tone of the light with a different bulb. Warm white is much more forgiving and subtle than a harsh bright white. An amber bulb gives a candle-like glow.
- * Floor and table lamps emit low level lighting that's perfect for ambience in the living room.
- * Replace a light switch with a dimmer or adjust lamp lighting using a dial on a plug-in dimmer.



OUTSIDE ROOM

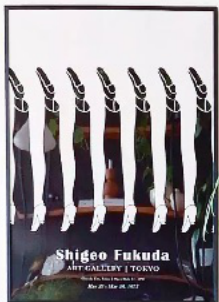
'I added faux grass and a hammock from Amazon to brighten up the balcony'

'I WANTED MY HOME TO HAVE THE HAPPY FEELING THAT I ENJOY WHEN I'M SHARING A MEAL WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS - I THINK I'VE ACHIEVED THAT'



IDEA TO STEAL

Ikea's Mosslanda shelves are the ideal size for spice storage, but use matching jars



DISGUISE WITH HOUSEPLANTS

'There were limited changes I could make so I styled the extractor with plants and hung them from the ceiling'

Make it! DIY STORAGE BENCH

- ★ Buy two three-door Ikea Besta TV units and two extra back panels. Assemble without the feet.
- ★ Find a wood-effect vinyl in a realistic timber pattern and colourway that matches your decor.
- ★ Wrap all the surfaces in the vinyl. Lay the two extra back panels end to end onto the floor where you want the benches to sit.
- ★ Secure each unit on top and make sure they're aligned tightly next to one another. This will create the illusion of one long piece of furniture and make them the right height to sit comfortably at the dining table.



CURATED STYLE

'Hanging the Picasso print on the blank wall draws the eye into the space'

'I LIKE SCANDI-STYLE VASES AND OBJETS FROM H&M HOME AND ZARA - THEY'RE GREAT FOR A HIGH-END LOOK ON A BUDGET'

» lighting from French brands Maisons du Monde and La Redoute very good. I also like Scandi-style vases and objets from H&M Home and Zara - their collections change quickly and they're great for a high-end look on a budget.

Creative solutions

With limited space, I made our furniture work hard and came up with the idea to turn white Ikea cupboards into extra seating and storage, covering the surfaces in wood-effect vinyl. To get the right height for sitting at the table, I placed the whole unit on another length of the panelling and recessed it back - the result looks as though the furniture has been made to fit.

In fact, my DIY project was so successful I continued the bench storage through to the living area where it provides a surface for the TV and plants too. Before, this end of the room felt disjointed but now the long unit looks like bespoke joinery and draws the eye to create the illusion of space and openness. I'm amazed how much bigger our flat looks and feels compared to our neighbours'.

I also created a similar built-in style in the guest bedroom/home office where we needed storage for my interior »



SCANDI SHAPE

'I got a flawless finish on the cupboards by priming the surface in shellac and using a small foam roller'

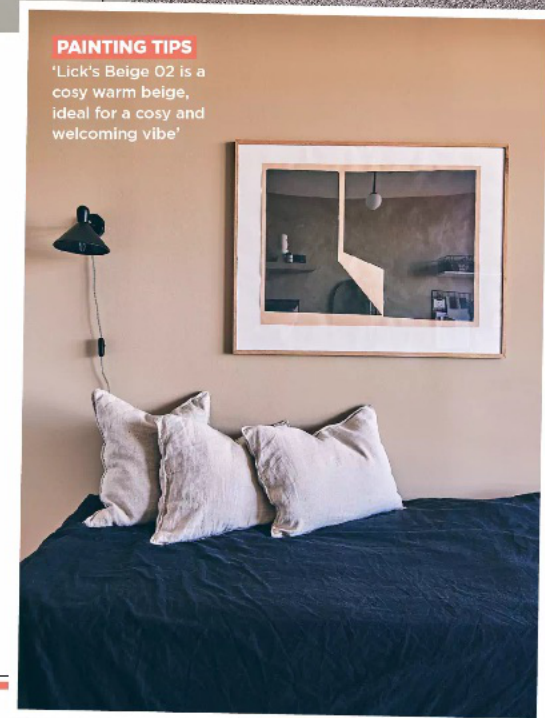
Quick-fire confession

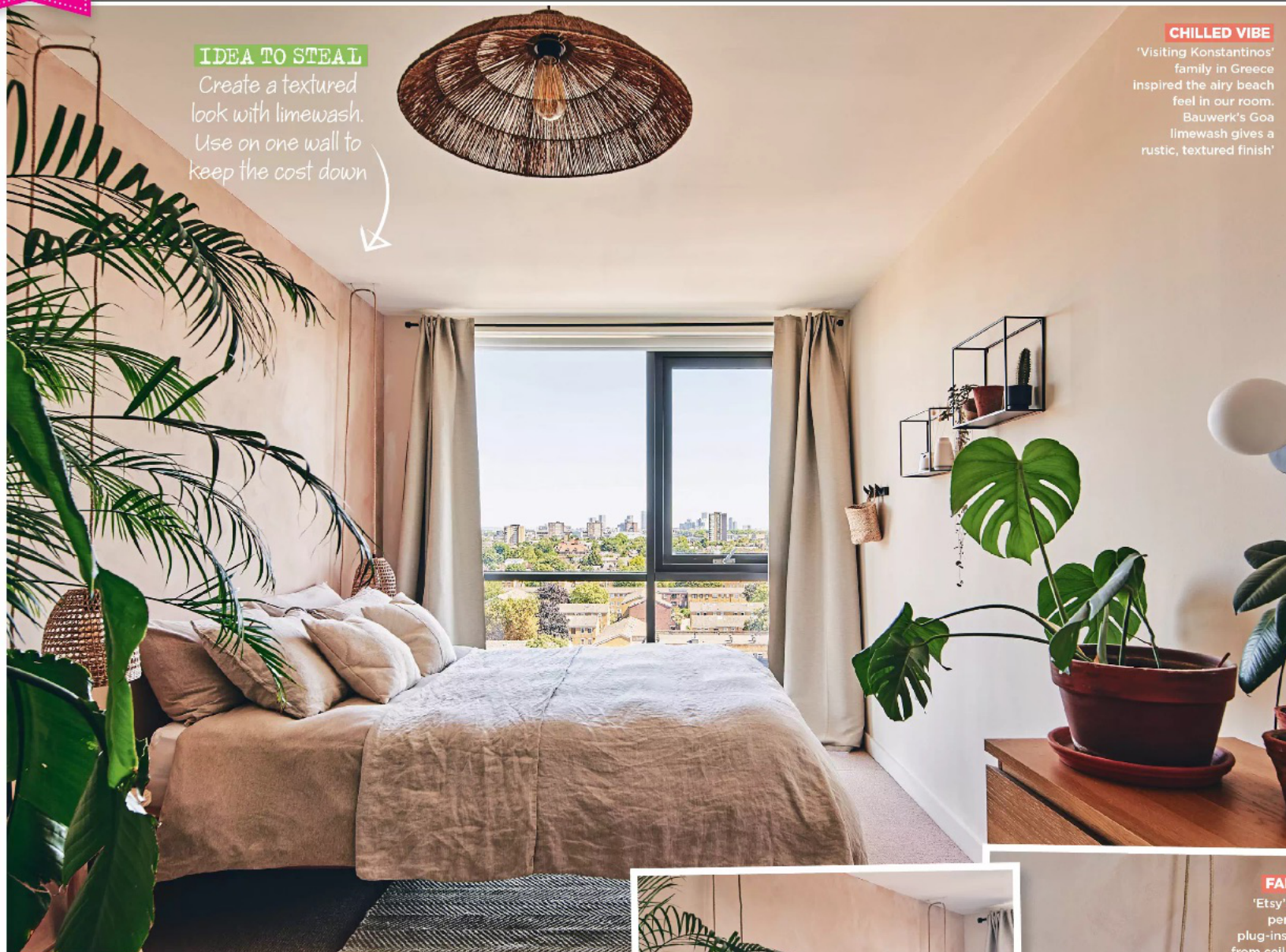
My secret homeware addiction is...

'Plants. My passion began when I lived next door to a plant warehouse and I've been cultivating plants ever since. I propagate them - I split my tall strelitzia into two pots - and they come with me in every house move. Ikea is also good for affordable tropical plants.'

PAINTING TIPS

'Lick's Beige 02 is a cosy warm beige, ideal for a cosy and welcoming vibe'





IDEA TO STEAL
Create a textured look with limewash. Use on one wall to keep the cost down

CHILLED VIBE
'Visiting Konstantinos' family in Greece inspired the airy beach feel in our room. Bauwerk's Goa limewash gives a rustic, textured finish'



GREEN UPDATE
'I couldn't change anything in here but I added the artificial hedge tiles from The Outdoor Look'

'WOOD OR NATURAL MATERIALS LIKE SEAGRASS WILL SOFTEN THE MODERN LOOK AND INTRODUCE AN ORGANIC TEXTURED FINISH'

» design work samples and Konstantinos' musical instruments.

Colour schemes

I painted the cupboards in the same beige as the walls to blend in, while in the main bedroom we used limewash on one of the walls. I started out with a rich terracotta but I wanted the bedroom to feel more calming. Limewash is a mineral powder mix with a beautiful textured finish.

Elsewhere, I've left the decor white, except for the long charcoal wall in the living area. I found I wanted something more from the interiors to give contrast to the leather and wood tones. Rather

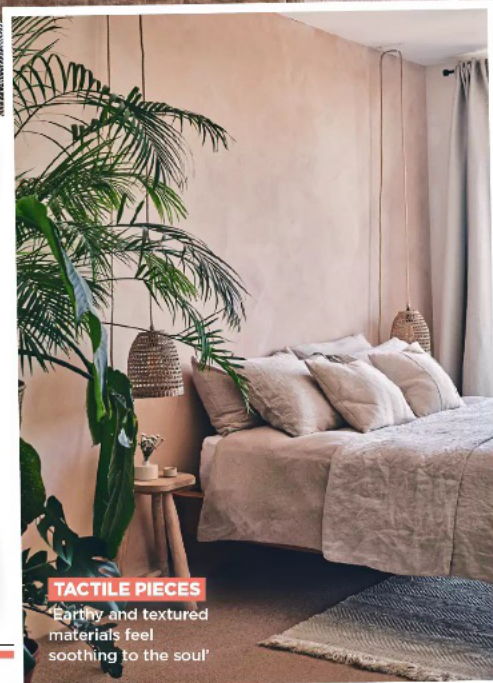
than looking too bold and too much, charcoal gives the room depth and makes the space feel bigger.

Finishing touches

I've used lighting to showcase focal points with table and floor lamps, as well as bespoke solutions, which didn't need invasive electrical work. You can completely change the tone of a room with good lighting.

I'm so pleased with how far I've been able to take the interiors even though we're only renting. But what pleases me most is when the table is set, the lights are low and guests arrive - that's when our flat comes alive.'

FAFF FREE
'Etsy's seagrass pendants are plug-ins and hang from ceiling hooks'



TACTILE PIECES
'Earthy and textured materials feel soothing to the soul'

3 of the best PENDANT LIGHTS

Choose a woven pendant for a more tactile finish



SIMPLE STYLE
Noko rattan conical pendant, £175, Nkuku



SUSTAINABLE CHOICE
OH Dome natural lampshade, £175, Lighting Lover



MINIMAL LOOK
Kesler rattan pendant, £90, Dar Lighting