

Serene update

# 'This house helped me unleash my creative side'

Lucy Wiltsher took on a project property and rediscovered her love of design, creating a beautiful and functional home with clever hacks and a natural palette of soft greens



Lucy built the scheme around a rustic coffee table she bought in a local shop. 'It goes well with the neutral sofa, jute rug and wood flooring,' she says. 'Curtains with a purple tone unify the cushions on one side with the dark blue wall opposite'

When Lucy and Ian Wiltsher began house-hunting for their first home together, they were delighted to discover that the first property they viewed was exactly what they were looking for. After seeing a few more

properties in the area, the couple decided there was no competition with the three-bed semi. 'The house felt spacious compared to our one-bed London flat and ideal for starting a family,' says Lucy. 'The location was perfect – close to family and friends as well as

commutable to London. The garden was lovely and mostly we liked the layout of rooms. We decided to put our energy into improving the look and functionality.'

After moving in, Lucy soon revived a creative side she'd not tapped into since she



**IN THE NAVY**  
Bring in the bold with a feature wall, while toning it with accessories like throws, cushions and coffee table books. Also check the undertones of your neutral paint so they blend together

'I was inspired by a friend's dark blue room but focused on one wall in case it looked too much,' says Lucy. 'Farrow & Ball's Hague Blue modern emulsion has a sheen that adds depth and works with the blue undertones in Blackened elsewhere'

**LIVING ROOM**  
'I like an accent colour and love how the pink chair pops alongside the navy wall and sideboard,' says Lucy. 'The fabric is brilliant, it's wipeable and forgiving'

**OUR MUST HAVES**  
The Big Chill 1.5 seater snuggler in Blush Coral, £944; Rebel 3 seater sofa in Taupe, £1,124, both Snug. For similar, try geometric cushion covers, £13.49 for 4, B&Q. Sienna cushion in Teal, £7, both Dunelm. Abigail Ahern Harkness curtains in Vapour, from £176, Hillarys. Walls painted in modern emulsion in Hague Blue and Blackened, £59 per 2.5L, both Farrow & Ball. For similar, try Essen jute rug, £120 for 160cm x 230cm, La Redoute. For similar, try Woodcroft bleached pine coffee table, £595, One.World



COME ON IN...

**WE ARE** Lucy Wiltsher, 35, a content creator (@lucys\_hillside\_house) and home stylist. I live here with my husband Ian, who works in finance, and our daughter.

**OUR HOME** is a three-bedroom, 1950s semi in Surrey.

**MY TOP TIP** If you're stuck on choosing paint colours, I like the way Lick describes the undertones in their paint, as well as the main colour. For example, White 03 is a creamy shade with a warm yellow undertone and really brightened up our dining room.

**WHAT I LEARNED** We are better at DIY than we thought. We had a bad time with the kitchen fitter but were able to fix things that were wrong or not finished.



Feature Jane Crittenden Styling Lucy Wiltsher and Marisha Taylor Photos James French



'Instantly, the wall of joinery brought a tricky room together and I finally fell in love with the space'

**DINING ROOM**

'I picked up the repurposed dining room table at Ardingly Antiques Fair,' says Lucy. 'The craftsmanship is beautiful, made from an old barn door and with a waterproof limewash seal that doesn't show marks'

**OUR MUST HAVES**  
 For similar, try Large 8ft dining table, £565, [MadelnInTheCellar.etsy.com](#). For similar, try Lars rug in Light Grey, from £72.95, Benuta. Harmony large ribbon ceiling light in Grey, £150, John Lewis & Partners. Joinery painted in Lick Green 12 eggshell, £45 per 2.5L, B&Q. Walls painted in White 03 matt emulsion, £45 per 2.5L, Lick. For similar, try Churchgate hurricane candle holder, £35, Dunelm. For similar, try Rao floor lamp, £149, Cult Furniture



▲ The hidden desk is ideal as a temporary place to use a computer with a drawer that pulls out for the keyboard

was young. 'My mum had her own interiors business so I grew up surrounded by creativity, but that fell away as I got older,' she explains. 'I worked in finance in the fashion industry and in many ways that kept my creative energy flowing. But it wasn't until we moved out of rented accommodation and bought our starter home that I discovered just how much I love interiors.'

The property's stand-out problems were the kitchen and bathroom. Both had been cosmetically patched up for the sale and soon showed signs of wear and tear. A cumbersome boiler was another issue, taking up valuable kitchen space, while a separate upstairs toilet

▶ 'I sketched out a design for the joinery, but we weren't sure about the shelves going all the way across,' says Lucy. 'I'm glad we put in the break and the panelling as the finish looks less bulky and it's nice to have a focus on the art'



**KITCHEN**

'This was my favourite project,' says Lucy. 'I wanted a Shaker style to suit the period of the house and I've always adored sage green. I designed everything around the colour – the wood shelves and antique brass handles work beautifully'

**OUR MUST HAVES**  
 Vard cupboards in Eden, from £3,030; Hive handle in Antique Bronze, £7.89; oak floating shelf, £54; Marble Veneto compact laminate worktop, £505 for 3000mm x 645mm x 12.5mm, all Smile Kitchens. Venice traditional tap with swivel spout in Brushed Gold, £69.95, Victorian Plumbing. For similar, try Olive linen double oven glove, £32, Sophie Allport. Marrakesh brick White gloss tiles, 5cm x 15cm, £72.36 per sq m, The Baked Tile Co.

▼ 'A pair of glass cabinets break up the run, so it doesn't feel boxed-in,' says Lucy. 'A thin heat-and-stain-resistant carrara marble-effect worktop is a look I like but more affordable as it's made with compact laminate'



▲ 'Relocating the boiler to the attic created a whole new cooking area,' says Lucy. 'I love that the herringbone layout of the white tiles is the story rather than a bright colour or pattern. Our tiler suggested the gold trim, which I never knew existed'





**HALLWAY**

Lucy created a smart welcome by decorating the hallway and staircase. 'I painted the treads with Frenchic's al fresco paint. It's robust, self-priming and self-sealing, and has lasted really well'

**OUR MUST HAVES**

Stairs painted in al fresco paint in Black Jack and Dazzle Me, £21.95 for 750ml, Frenchic Paint. Walls painted in modern emulsion in Elephant's Breath, £59 for 2.5L, Farrow & Ball. For similar, try Black arched mirror, £94.95, Melody Maison

**BATHROOM**

'Using an independent, family-run bathroom company was invaluable to get the practicalities of the room just right,' says Lucy. 'We discovered we couldn't move the toilet but we could have a wider bath below the window'

**OUR MUST HAVES**

Freestanding basin unit with Carrara White worktop, doors and integrated White basin in Dark Olive, £1,594, Burlington. Gloss White bevelled metro tiles, £24.60 per sq m, The London Tile Company. Ribera mirror, £247, Fyl. For similar, try small recycled stool, £69, Greige Lifestyle. The plank bath board, £48, The Interiors Yard



▲ 'My Pinterest was filled with pictures of bathrooms with green fixtures and white subway tiles,' says Lucy. 'I loved the style and colour of the olive vanity straightaway and repeated the look on the bath panel'

limited how they could change the bathroom layout. 'We couldn't do these projects straight away, so I compromised and painted the kitchen tiles and cabinets first,' says Lucy. 'I also decorated the front living room and adjoining dining room in the same colour. However, the cool grey white didn't work as well at the back of the house as the dining room doesn't get as much light.'

Unsure which colour to use instead, Lucy decided to have a think and focus on other projects. By now, the couple had funds to gut the bathroom and knock down the wall between the separate toilet. However, Covid restrictions and delivery delays scuppered progress and, after making a start with a bathroom company, the work went on hold. In the meantime, Lucy busied herself painting the hallway and fences in the garden, and panelled the guest bedroom. 'I'd already chosen an olive green bathroom and then I unconsciously chose a sage green paint for the wood panel,' she says. 'I hadn't realised green had become my favourite colour until my husband pointed it out to me! I drew inspiration for the palette from the woodlands on the hill behind us with earthy greens, browns and neutrals with a pop of colour for personality.'

Part of the changes to the bathroom meant moving the landing loft hatch so they could bring the door forward to maximise space. The rest of the project continued smoothly, thanks to their helpful bathroom reno team. 'We liked that they asked questions to be sure we



'I hadn't realised green had become my favourite colour until my husband pointed it out to me!'



**NURSERY**

'This started out as our guest bedroom. We removed the old sink and decorated,' says Lucy. 'I wanted to have a wall panel feature so I bought the longest planks I could find'

**OUR MUST HAVES**

For similar, try full height V-groove panelling 3000 x 1800mm, £235.23, Cut My. Panels painted in Green 02, £45 for 2.5L, Lick. Pennant bunting, £9.99, H&M Home. Patara curtains in Sandstorm, from £125, Hillarys

**PANEL STYLE**

Wall panelling that finishes around a foot from the ceiling won't overwhelm a space especially if you're decorating in a bold colour. The decorative beading edge is also ideal for displaying art



**BEDROOM**

'Our bed is super comfy and there's nothing too busy in the room, which is how we like it,' says Lucy. 'The central grey tone cushion brings together the light grey curtains on one side and the blue vases on the other'

**OUR MUST HAVES**  
Bamboo lampshade in White, £119.99, H&M Home. For similar, Luxe window mirror in Black, £100, Dunelm. For similar, try Rattan folding chair in Black, £95.20, John Lewis & Partners. For similar, try Madrid dressing table, £349, Futon Company. Coco super king bed in Natural Cotton Linen, £1,495, Loaf. For similar, try Cotton blanket in Amalia Ivory, £29.95, Benuta



▲ Positioned behind the door, this slimline dressing table doesn't encroach on the entryway. The gallery of art prints are from the Poster Store

had everything we needed for now and later on when we started a family,' says Lucy. 'For example, we didn't choose a vanity-mounted basin as there's no overflow, which could be a problem if a tap was accidentally turned on and left running. I absolutely love having baths too, so the transformation has made me really happy!'

With the bathroom complete, the old boiler could come out of the kitchen and a new combi was installed in the attic. The small change had big impact. 'We gained wardrobe space in the guest bedroom as we no longer had an airing cupboard,' Lucy explains. 'We also had more kitchen space, which paved the way for a new layout when we gutted the room.' Lucy was drawn to sage green Shaker-style cupboards supplied by online kitchen firm, Smile Kitchens. 'We had Zoom calls and they sent us samples so we could check the colour and quality and we were impressed,' she says.

The finished project spurred Lucy to look again at the dining room, where she liked the rustic table but was unsure if she'd made a mistake with the neutral chairs. Inspired by an IKEA hack she'd seen online, Lucy got rid of her free-standing shelves and built a wall of bespoke joinery. 'Malm drawers, Lack

shelves, MDF and tongue and groove achieve the streamlined look and instantly brought this tricky room together,' she says. 'I finally fell in love with the space, and love the chairs all over again too! Our whole house project has been about making rooms beautiful with all the functionality we need, and the joinery is a great example of that. Our work showcases everything that we've learnt along the way – it's been lovely to rediscover my creative side.' 🍷



Make this!  
See p62

**PATTERN CLASH**  
To add interest to your bedscape, follow your colour scheme but opt for different patterns. Start out with a couple of plain cushions mixed with spots or stripes on others