

## Sleek renovation

# 'We added value to our home with a DIY overhaul'

First-time buyers Becca and Jordan modernised their dated bungalow on a budget, doing the work themselves and giving it a high-end look with chic dark décor



Howden's Fairford kitchen in Charcoal provided the basis for Becca's soft-chic scheme. 'The colour is almost black, which we find relaxing and cosy, whereas a white kitchen would have looked too clinical and bright,' says Becca

Determined to get onto the property ladder, Becca and her partner, Jordan, decided to move back in with their respective parents and spent nearly four years saving for a deposit. In late 2019, they were in a position to begin seriously looking for their first home. 'We quickly realised space meant more to us than location and we rejected a studio in central Brighton in favour of a bungalow by the coast in nearby Peacehaven, where Jordan's parents live,' says Becca.

'When we first came inside, we both had an instant feeling that this property was the one.'

## FORWARD THINKING

Although the bungalow was stuck in a time warp – pink and green carpets, Artex ceilings, beige decoration and a kitchen and bathrooms that had seen better days – the couple relished taking on the renovation project. Not only was the sale price less than an equivalent property already done-up, Jordan

is a carpenter and builder and could do most of the work himself. 'As first-time buyers we needed to increase the property's value so that we'd be able to move up the ladder later on,' says Becca. 'This was the biggest bungalow we'd seen and saw instantly that we could knock down the wall between the kitchen and living room and create a more social open-plan room.'

As soon as the sale went through in December 2019, the couple got to work



'We wanted our home to be special but without overspending, so we didn't splash out on a marble worktop and instead sourced a great marble-effect laminate from IKEA.'

◀ Becca chose metallic fixtures and fittings to lift her dramatic dark kitchen and make it feel upscale. 'We focused on the details, choosing a brass tap, handles and plug sockets – even the radiator has brass fittings,' Becca explains

▼ The breakfast bar is a focal point thanks to custom pendants from Creative Cables. 'I put together my own look choosing the ceiling rose, cable, lamp holder and half-brass bulbs, which look lovely without lampshades,' says Becca

## KITCHEN

'I like to support independent businesses and found Metro Tiles through Instagram,' says Becca. 'I chose the Urban Metro tiles as they're slightly bigger than the standard metro design – each one measures 10cm x 30cm'

## OUR MUST HAVES

Siena bar stool, £89, Dunelm.  
Ekbacken worktop in marble effect laminate, 236cm x 2.8cm, £55, IKEA.  
13 amp 2 gang DP switched socket in brushed brass/black, £6.85 each, TLC Direct

## MAKE IT POP

If you've opted for a black kitchen scheme, just like Becca's, finish it off with gold or brass fixtures and accessories, such as cupboard handles, taps and lighting. It creates contrast and warms up the cool monochrome colour scheme.



## COME ON IN...

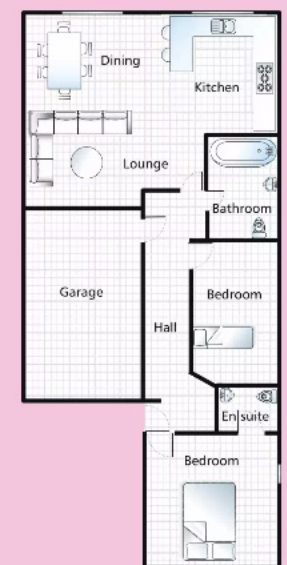
**WE ARE** Becca Larkin, on Instagram @renovationliving, 26, an account manager for beauty brands, and my partner, Jordan Sutton, 27, who's a carpenter.

**OUR HOME** A two-bedroom, semi-detached bungalow built in the 1980s located in Peacehaven, East Sussex.

**MY BEST BARGAIN** Was IKEA's Ekbacken laminate worktop. It was really affordable, we paid £550 and I recommend it to everyone.

**SHOPS I LOVE ARE** Creative Cables, my favourite independent for lighting, and the Decorating Centre Online is really handy – you type in the name of the paint, they colour-match it and send a sample pot.

**MY BEST PROJECT** The floating shelf in the kitchen was made from a piece of scaffolding board painted the same colour as the living room, with ironmongery I spray-painted gold.





'Black is a powerful neutral that we separated with white panelling in the living room and with a white worktop and tiles in the kitchen.'

#### LIVING ROOM

Becca has echoed her geometric wall panel with abstract lines and curves on cushions, accessories and prints and matched the marble-effect kitchen worktop with a sleek coffee table to tie it all together

#### OUR MUST HAVES

Wool rug beads in Cream, £135.95, Benuta. Edie Editions modern round coffee table in White Marble/Glass/Gold, £302, Fyfe. Comfi fabric corner sofa with chaise end in Cosmo Mist, £1,595, Furniture Village

#### EASY UPDATE

Painting accent walls in strong, bold colours is an easy way to bring soft furnishings back to life as the colour contrast will refresh and reinvigorate.

stripping walls and ripping out carpets and the kitchen – all while still living at home. Jordan had a long list of jobs to fit in around his day job. 'All the rooms needed re-wiring and we discovered we had to replace the boiler and heating system, which was a cost we weren't expecting,' says Becca. 'Jordan took every job as far as he could and then he'd bring in an electrician or gas engineer he knew through work to certify the final stages.'

#### SOCIAL CLIMBER

First, the kitchen wall needed to come down. Becca, a digital marketing expert, began playing around with social media platform, TikTok, and noted it didn't feature many renovators. 'I uploaded a video of Jordan knocking down the wall and we got to 1.8 million views!' says Becca. 'Now we have 123,000 followers on @renovationliving.' Pinterest and Instagram became a source of inspiration for Becca, too. She found herself following accounts such as @lustliving and @renovating\_love\_lane for ideas. 'They have

▲ The fireplace didn't work with the new layout, so the couple blocked up the chimney and made a feature of it. 'I wanted some kind of abstract panelling somewhere in the house and it's perfect on the chimney breast,' explains Becca

#### DINING AREA

A white geometric panel between the dark walls zones the open-plan space, and Becca has brightened up the black wall behind the dining area with a round brass mirror. 'It looks better in this alcove as it reflects the kitchen, rather than the TV,' says Becca

#### OUR MUST HAVES

Grey two-tone 12-piece dinner set, £18, George Home. Lisabo dining table, £129; Odger chairs, £70 each, both IKEA. For a similar curtain pole try Trinity metal eyelet curtain pole in Antique Brass, from £25, Dunelm





### MAIN BEDROOM

Becca's bedroom centrepiece is her velvet bed, which makes the room feel ultra-luxurious. 'The dusty pink bed was inspired by @lustliving and I knew it would look lovely against the green wall,' she says

#### OUR MUST HAVES

Chao two-drawer bedside table, £67.99, Wayfair. Riva Home Mongolian faux fur cushion, £40, Next. For a similar pendant shade try natural seagrass woven pendant lampshade, £35, Oliver Bonas



### DÉCOR DILEMMA

If you want to add practical wall lights without needing the assistance of an electrician, search for plug-in lamps where the cable is part of the design, like Becca's. This unique design adds a utility twist to her plush bedroom.

### EN SUITE

Becca has packed a lot of style into the petite en suite – black accents echo the décor throughout her home, while green floor tiles match the bedroom walls for a sense of flow between the two rooms

#### OUR MUST HAVES

Green Hex Waterlily tiles, £52.78 per sq m, Metro Tiles. Saturn bar 1,120 x 500mm towel rail in Black, £190.96, Trade Radiators. For a similar towel ladder try Ines decorative ladder in Oak, £44, Maisons du Monde

▲ The relaxed vibe of a holiday in Bali inspired the couple's bedroom, with natural textures and plush fabrics. 'I picked out a rattan lampshade from MADE.com, and added sheer curtains and plants to make the space feel chilled and tranquil,' says Becca

a similar interiors style, which I love, mixing darks and neutrals with subtle muted tones to create a calming feeling,' she says. 'Luckily, Jordan thinks the same. For us, too much bright colour would be overwhelming and not particularly relaxing.'

The inky-black kitchen and living room walls form the foundation of their scheme, kept light with crisp white decoration and a pale oak-effect floor. Bathrooms are bright, too, while their bedroom is infused with soft tones of dusky pink and green. 'Black is a powerful neutral that we separated with white panelling in the living room and with a white worktop and tiles in the kitchen,' says Becca. 'I like the balance, it's not heavy and gothic, nor stark and clinical.'

### PASSION PROJECT

By the time the pandemic sent the country into lockdown in March 2020, the couple still had a lot to do. Becca moved in with Jordan





## REAL HOME

at his parents' house so they could safely carry on renovating the bungalow together in their spare time. As the months went on, they kept an eye on their £30,000 budget, using a spreadsheet that outlined the costs to keep them on track so they didn't break the bank. 'Sometimes it was hard to stick to the budget,' says Becca. 'As our first home, we wanted it to be special but without overspending, so we didn't splash out on things like a marble worktop and instead sourced a great marble-effect laminate from IKEA.'

In July 2020, the work was completed and Becca and Jordan were finally able to move

in, although there's still more they'd like to do. The bathroom is their most recent project, finished just a few months ago, and they're considering converting the loft or the garage – or perhaps moving on and starting again. 'We've both absolutely loved working on our home, it's become a real passion and I hadn't realised how into interiors I would get – now I care more about renovation Instagram accounts than fashion!' enthuses Becca. 'I'm super proud of Jordan's work, we couldn't have achieved any of this without him. It still blows our mind that we live together and own this house, we've become real homebodies.' 



▲ 'Originally, the guest bedroom walls were pinky-brown, but when it became my office, I didn't find it very relaxing,' says Becca. 'We made wall panels with beading and painted in Coty 1, a nude shade by Decorating Centre Online – now the room feels more like us'

### OFFICE

Becca added a brass handle from Amazon for a simple way to elevate a plain IKEA desk, while IKEA's Ivar cabinet is unrecognisable after she worked her magic on it with dowels and candy-pink paint

### OUR MUST HAVES

Bailey accent armchair in Grey Velvet & Brass, £369, Cult Furniture. GoodHome Baldaz matt brass-effect table light, £30, B&Q. For a similar mirror try Archway gold wall mirror, £98, Oliver Bonas



'As first-time buyers we needed to increase the property's value so that we'd be able to move up the ladder later on.'

▼ Laying Porcelain Superstore's glossy white metro tiles vertically, and white marble-effect tiles on the floor, makes the space feel bigger. 'They're well-priced and good quality, with enough detail on them so the room doesn't look flat,' says Becca



### BATHROOM

As the rest of her bathroom scheme is white and marble, Becca added warmth with natural tones. 'I wanted a textured vanity in a colour contrast with the white tiles and fell in love with this wood-effect style for its Scandi look,' says Becca

### OUR MUST HAVES

Countrywide White tiles, £37.50 per sq m; Florence floor tiles, £27.84 per sq m, both Porcelain Superstore. Milano Bexley 600mm wall-hung open shelf vanity unit with basin in Light Oak, from £399.99, Big Bathroom Shop. For a similar bath rack try bamboo bath rack, £19.99, H&M Home



### UPCYCLE IDEA

Add bicarbonate of soda to standard emulsion to give paint a thick, chalky finish that can be used to decorate glass jars and pots, like Becca has done here with this vase.

### STEAL MY STYLE

'I pair statement black with pastel and golden tones to soften a bold dark hue' Becca



1. Saiphi pendant lamp in Gold, £75, B&Q 2. Palm Springs Green porcelain tiles, £66 per sq m, Porcelain Superstore 3. Madison coffee table in white, marble and brass, £299, Cult Furniture 4. Metod 60cm x 60cm base cabinet in Lerhyttan Black Stained, £100, IKEA 5. Vivian bed in Rose, £599, Dunelm 6. Regal select matte in Black Beauty, £24.50 per 0.94L, Benjamin Moore

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