

Starting over

When one family decided to replace their compact home with a big new build, they called on designer Jess Thomas to get the interiors right

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HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

Three-storey new build

ROOMS

Sitting room, office, kitchen-diner/living area, pantry, kitchen, boot room, cloakroom, indoor pool, cinema room, five bedrooms, five bathrooms, one-bedroom annexe

LOCATION

Hertfordshire

KITCHEN

'The L of the island is wrapped in brass to add warmth and interest to the sleek dark blue kitchen, with a mix of wood and composite white worktops,' says Jess.

Kitchen, Roundhouse; painted in a similar colour to Hague Blue, Farrow & Ball. Modern Petal bar stool, West Elm, has this look

HOW DID YOU COME TO BE INVOLVED WITH THIS PROJECT?

My clients had been living in a small house on a large plot for a while before deciding to demolish and build from scratch. It's a big house – there's a self-contained annexe and a basement with a pool, sauna, gym and cinema – and they needed an interior designer to add life and bring rooms together. A friend recommended me and I came on board while the basement was being dug.

WHAT WAS THE BRIEF? It's a modern house with huge windows to capture the outlook onto mature gardens and countryside views. They're a busy family with three daughters and

two dogs and love to have friends over and entertain. They wanted flowing spaces with a calm and neutral feel that looked stylish without being fussy and wouldn't compete with the bustle.

WHAT WAS A HIGH PRIORITY?

The open-plan kitchen-living space. We worked with Roundhouse because their approach really leaned into my client's taste for design details. A house this size demanded good quality bathrooms and bedroom cabinetry, too, and I employed two joinery companies so we didn't hold up the build.

HOW DID YOU PLAN THE INTERIORS SCHEME? I put together Pinterest boards and shared them with my client



DINING AREA

'I kept furniture simple but classic and highly designed to stand the test of time,' says Jess. Cross extending walnut table by Matthew Hilton, Nest. 675 chair by Robin Day; Series 7 dining chair by Fritz Hansen, both Holloways of Ludlow

BOOT ROOM

'Small details, such as the seat cushion and leather handles, elevate the room,' says Jess.

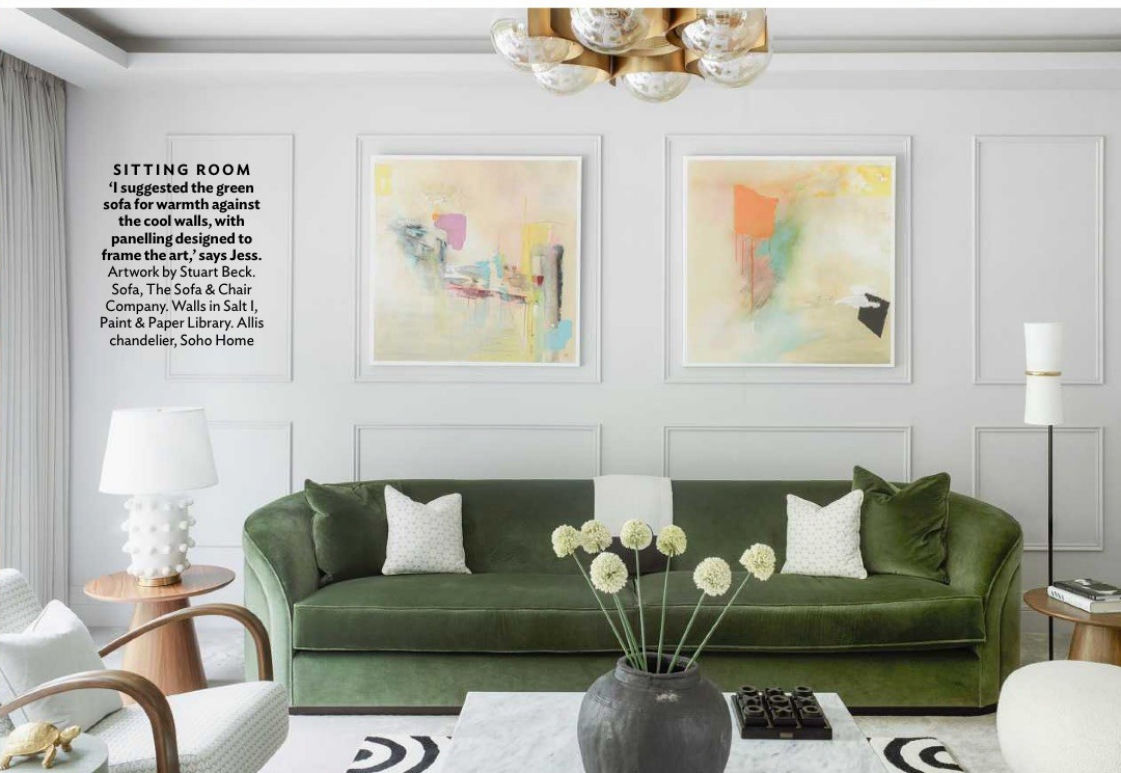
Walls in Squid Ink, Paint & Paper Library. Gold and leather round door knobs in Brown, Pushka. Try the Chester open shoe bench, The Cotswolds Company



SITTING ROOM

'I suggested the green sofa for warmth against the cool walls, with panelling designed to frame the art,' says Jess.

Artwork by Stuart Beck. Sofa, The Sofa & Chair Company. Walls in Salt I, Paint & Paper Library. Alis chandelier, Soho Home



and encouraged her to delete what she didn't like and pin her own ideas so I could understand what she loved. From this, I learnt they liked modern styles and cool greys with black details, like the black-framed doors they'd chosen. My goal was to add warmth with colour and brass and gold details so nowhere felt too austere. I injected character with wall panelling and joinery, as well as moving lighting and plugs on the electrical plan so they were in the right place for the furniture layout.

HOW DID YOU CREATE FLOW?

I mostly decorated in Salt from Paint & Paper Library's Architectural Collection, which comes in five shades of greys. Squid Ink is on the walls in

the basement guest bedroom and also the boot room. There are green tiles in the cloakroom and a green sofa in the sitting room. Curtains are neutral with a tiny pattern detail to blend seamlessly into the walls. The marble vanity repeats in bathrooms but in black or white.

WHAT WAS THE CLIENTS' REACTION?

They were thrilled, nothing jars, and commented on the small details, like premium leather handles, blind trims and so on, which make rooms feel that bit extra special. They moved in in time to celebrate their daughter's 18th birthday – the house gave them everything they wanted. 25

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'Having a wet-room style shower allows more options for fitting a large, free-standing bathtub in'

MAIN EN SUITE
'I emphasised the ceiling pitch with marble-look tiles and reworked the layout to fit a bath in,' says Jess. Tile Mountain sells similar marble-effect tiles. East Hampton Basketweave marble mosaic tiles, Fired Earth. Gold shower fittings, C.P. Hart



LANDING
'Big windows are on all three floors of the stairwell, with a pitched ceiling at the top,' says Jess. 'The pendant light was scaled to fit the space.'
Fin Grouping pendant by Original BTC, Holloways of Ludlow



MAIN BEDROOM
'We built the stud wall so the bed could look through the picture window to the garden,' explains Jess.
Hemp vinyl wallpaper by Christopher Farr Cloth, Jane Clayton. Headboard, The Headboard Workshop. Atollo metal table lamps, Oluce

