



Tranquillity in THE CITY

Zan Tariq planned to sell the London flat she inherited, but an interior designer's skilful transformation persuaded her otherwise

AT HOME

Zan Tariq lives in a light-filled three-bedroom flat on the second floor of a 1920s apartment building in Central London. Zan is an advocate and also runs an exclusive chauffeur and laundry service. She has three children, all of whom are frequent visitors to the flat: James, 23, who is at university in America and dreams of a career in aviation, Hugo, 20, who is studying medicine and Josephine, 14, who is at secondary school.

When Zan Tariq inherited a London flat after her father died, her first thought was to sell it as soon as possible. "It had been decorated years before in dark colours and flouncy floral chintz, which is the complete opposite of the light, bright pared-down look that I like. I knew it would be a wise move to renovate the flat before putting it on to the market so I asked my interior designer friend, Stephanie Dunning, to take a look and suggest how best to go about renovating it."

Zan and Stephanie first met more than 20 years ago when they were both living in Battersea. "There was a new interiors shop in Queenstown Road with a Porta Romana painted chest in the window," Zan remembers. "I was in the process of doing up my house so I went in and got talking to Stephanie, whose shop it was. I think I was probably her first customer. She offered to help me with my house project and later, when I moved to the country, she decorated that house and then did my mother's flat in London. Over the years, we have become very good friends, and I have complete faith in her taste, which is always impeccable."

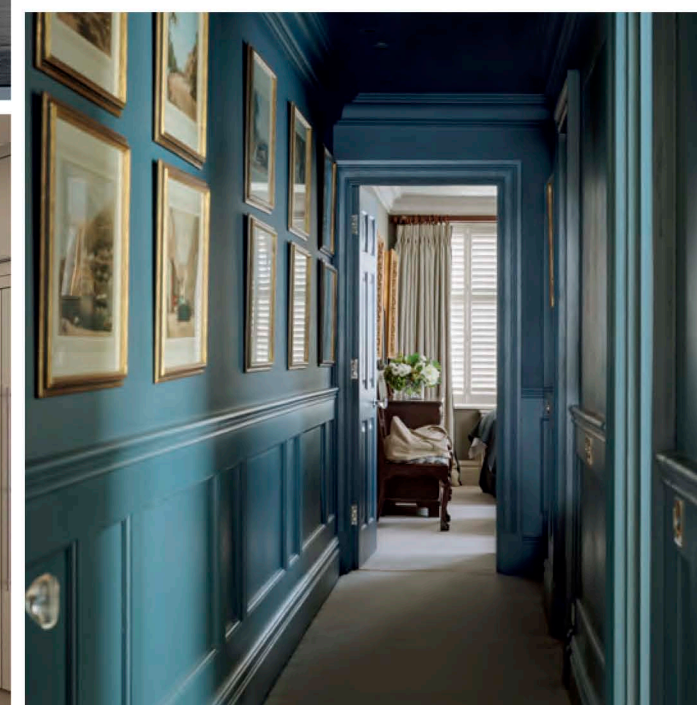


A pair of comfortable, generously proportioned sofas and matching armchairs designed by Stephanie Everard have been covered in a plain linen from Nicole Farbre. A marble fireplace by Chesney's provides a cosy focal point, flanked by smart bookcases by The English Joinery Company.

The tones of Zan's collection of marine paintings, inherited from her father, are picked up in the colours of the silky velvet cushions from Inky Velvet, adding warmth and texture to the scheme.



English Calm



Stephanie's first action on starting the renovation was to knock down all the dividing walls to create one large open-plan living, dining and kitchen area. The flat was located on the second floor of a residential block built during the 1920s and the layout was rather formal and very much of its time, with separate sitting and dining rooms at the front of the building, and a kitchen tucked away off the hall. A long corridor led to the three bedrooms at the rear of the building. The footprint was generous but

the space needed reorganising to make it work for modern living. Although Zan planned to sell the property, Stephanie could not help thinking that if it were given a new look, the location and size would make it ideal as a London base for Zan and her three children; she has two student sons in their early 20s as well as a teenage daughter.

Zan and Stephanie discussed the project and, in due course, Zan gave Stephanie the go-ahead to begin the complex planning process. The starting

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT A chic glass chandelier from Porta Romana hangs above the dining table. A console table by Julian Chichester provides space for family photographs. Hall walls are in Hicks Blue by Little Greene. Stephanie Dunning designed the kitchen.



point was the Crittall windows, which were original to the building and gave the interior its character. The original ones needed replacing, so the new ones are identical, apart from the fact that they are black instead of white, and double-glazed to comply with the new building regulations, which has made a huge difference to the noise and heat insulation. Another factor to contend with was that the building had been constructed using the concrete block-and-beam method, so installing conduits for new pipework and lighting meant that the ceilings had to be lowered and the floors raised. Air conditioning is often considered a luxury in this country, but it made sense to install it whilst the other work was ongoing; this turned out to be a wise decision – on sticky summer evenings the flat is now an oasis of cool.

Before work actually began, Zan had started to feel that the flat could be a keeper. “Apart from all the

memories it had for me, I’d begun to enjoy spending more time in London and I knew the children would make good use of it in the future.” She then had the task of choosing which items belonging to her late father to keep. “It was agonising sending some of the pieces to the saleroom. I kept his collection of marine paintings and books and one or two pieces of furniture, but so many things simply had to go. For my sake, as well as that of my children, I wanted the flat to be a place in which we would all feel comfortable, so getting rid of that tired ‘granny flat’ look was essential. I wanted a relaxed, somewhat masculine, de-cluttered look that emphasised the feeling of light and space but having it well lit at night to show off the paintings was important, too.” Displaying the paintings to their best advantage was the cornerstone of the decorative brief; “that, and banning any hint of floral chintz!” adds Zan.

Once work began and the walls dividing the reception rooms, hall and kitchen were demolished, Zan became totally convinced that keeping the flat was going to be the right decision. “It was amazing seeing the transformation take place. Knocking down those walls gave the place a new lease of life,” she recalls. “Instead of being hidden away, the kitchen is now the central hub of the flat, but Stephanie’s understated design means that it blends in unobtrusively with the rest of the space. I positively look forward to walking into my new home, which reminds me in the nicest possible way of a super-comfortable hotel. It’s devoid of clutter, it’s light, it’s pared down; I immediately feel relaxed. There’s no room service, but entertaining is a pleasure now that the living area and the kitchen are adjacent to each other. It creates a much more friendly and informal atmosphere which suits all of us.”

TOP LEFT AND ABOVE Plain colours and simple lines create a contemporary backdrop in the guest bedroom. Curtains were made using Turnell & Gigon’s Decortex Fizzy fabric with Wave Weave Shell by George Spencer Designs for the leading edge, whilst the headboards are covered in Decortex Fizzy. The table lamp is from Porta Romana.

BOTTOM LEFT The walk-in wardrobe with its neatly arranged columns of shelves and drawers was made by The English Joinery Company.



*“Knocking down those walls gave
the place a new lease of life”*

The long corridor connecting the living area with the bedrooms was given a dramatic new look by lining the walls with panelling painted a deep indigo blue. “I felt the panelling added architectural interest,” says Stephanie, “and the inky blue was a great backdrop for the topographical and marine watercolours that hang on the wall.” In the guest bedroom, the combination of grey walls and dark blue bedheads trimmed with bronze studs create a masculine aura whilst the master bedroom is a study in pale misty greys. The idea was that the decoration should be in keeping with the style of the building so there is a hint of 1920s glamour with the mirrored bedside tables, the silvery wallpaper and the satin cushions. Every aspect is very smart and low-key and, needless to say, the finishing touches were the quirky bedside lamps by Porta Romana. After all, it is thanks to them that Zan and Stephanie first met. ■

LEFT The original bath was retained, and the addition of mirrored panels has increased the sense of light and space.
TOP The palette of pale misty greys gives the master bedroom an air of serenity.
RIGHT A pretty collection of vintage glass bottles and other decorative mementos are displayed on the glass shelves in the mirrored recess in the shower room.

