

A stylish marriage

The union of clean, contemporary lines with the period features of this Victorian home results in a harmonious open-plan space

Report: Caroline Foster Photography: Ed Reeve Styling: Malena Burgess Illustration: Peter Davies



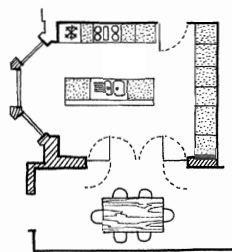
Above: Glass doors link the kitchen to a dining room, which has been converted from a garage space. The expanse of glass and the large bay window help stop the kitchen feeling too dark

Thoughts of their forthcoming wedding prompted Josephine King and her partner Jonathan to transform their Victorian house.

Josephine, a fashion buyer, was inspired by the latest designs and style trends she had seen in magazines to create a more modern feel with cleaner lines and greater space. "I prefer contemporary styles and Jonathan prefers a more classic look," says Josephine, "so it was a case of combining the two."

Friends had recommended Paul Van Geens, a designer whose work they had seen in the book, *Fusion Interiors: The International Design of Andrew Martin*. "They liked how I opened up space and maximised the potential of properties," comments

Right: The granite-topped central island features a double sink, and is perfect for preparing food. There are no wall-hung units, leaving the worktops bathed in natural light



Paul, who seized the chance to do just that for the Kings.

Existing walls were removed to create more light and a feeling of space, but Paul knew he had to be sensitive to the building's original Victorian features. Decorative corning which had deteriorated was taken down and restored. "We then decided to use granite, stone and limestone throughout the house," says Paul, "and I think these materials lend themselves very well to the character of the place."

Clean lines within the kitchen are exactly what Josephine wanted, with cream lacquered cupboard doors contrasting with the warmth of walnut used elsewhere. Brushed stainless steel finishes on the oven units and kitchen appliances add a fresh, modern appeal and introduce further tonal contrasts to the wood and lacquer finishes of the kitchen units. Stylish, but practical, porcelain floor tiles look and feel like limestone but won't stain.

"They were looking for a useable space to enjoy their cooking," says Paul. "I think it's always a question of finding the balance when mixing what's old with what's new." An example is the island, where a large glass section, raised off the unit, sits on brushed stainless steel upright poles which have been fixed into the island's granite worktop. The resulting bar can be used as a table for a casual kitchen breakfast-bar experience.

The extensive lighting circuits can create a multitude of different lighting styles – for example, brighter areas over the work surfaces help the cook when preparing food. In the evening, the couple can create mood lighting wherever they want at the flick of a switch, and, to enhance the feel, a sophisticated sound system runs









Q&A: HOMEOWNER

Do the finished kitchen, bedroom and bathroom now meet your expectations?

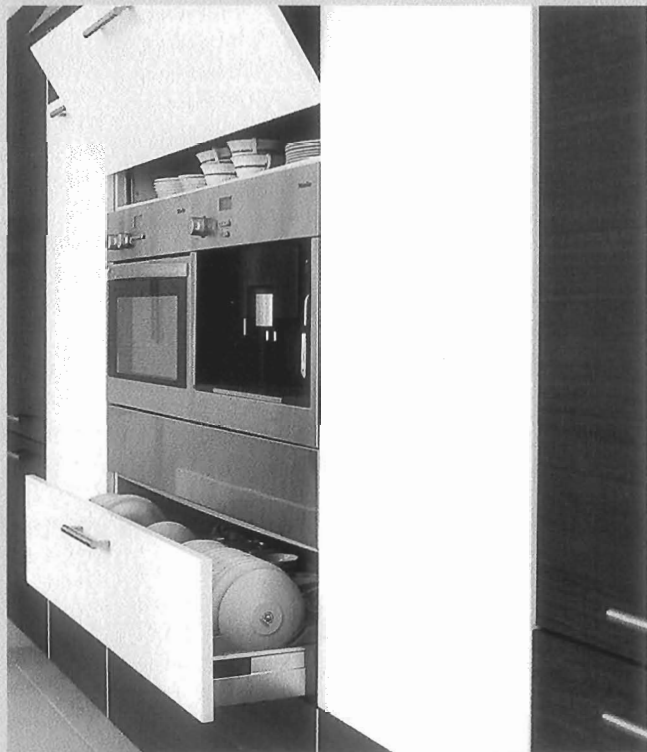
"Yes, and more so! Using a designer made life a lot easier and it was great to have somebody to work with the builders."

How would you describe the look you were going for?

"Contemporary in areas, but keeping the Victorian touches. We put down new parquet flooring and replaced the traditional corning."

What was the biggest luxury?

"The Miele coffee machine – I have cappuccinos every morning; and the hole-in-the-wall fireplace in the bedroom, which is remote controlled."



Is there anything you'd change?

"No. It was done very quickly, very well and the attention to detail is fantastic. We've been back in the house for three months and it suits us perfectly."

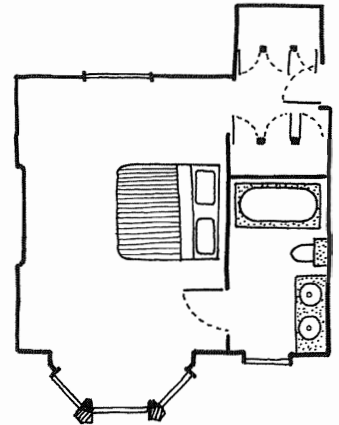


Above: To maximise space around the island unit, the doors in the adjacent cupboards open upwards, revealing more storage and a built-in coffee machine

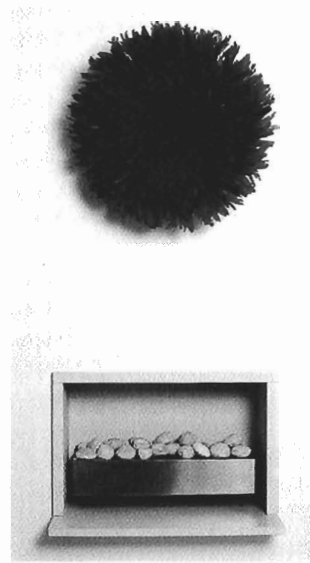
Left: The warm walnut of the units sits well with the stainless steel oven and hob, creating a sophisticated effect

Far left: In the taller set of units, the dark walnut is offset by white lacquer doors in the centre





Above left: A dressing chamber with tall built-in wardrobes on both sides adjoins the bedroom. The light wood stops the space feeling cramped



Left: The original fireplace has been replaced with a pebble-filled gas fire recessed into the chimney breast, giving a more modern focal point

Far left: The main bedroom has the natural advantage of having two windows in opposite walls, meaning lots of light pours in. The high ceiling with original cornicing adds to the sense of space

Below: Just off the bedroom is the small en-suite bathroom, designed in similarly neutral hues





Top: To counter the small space of the bathroom, the walls are kept light with limestone tiles and lots of mirrors. The bath screen folds back when not in use

Above right: Twin basins perch, lotus-style, on a walnut vanity unit

Above left: Toiletries sit on these delicate glass shelves, which, with the mirror behind them, almost create a floating effect

through the house, allowing music to be played from different sources. These high-tech features are a luxurious visual and aural addition, making the kitchen space a versatile and inviting part of the living area.

The theme of clean and well-defined lines that features in the kitchen area continues through the rest of the home. In the bedroom, the furniture's impact is enhanced by natural light streaming in from large original bay windows. In a modern twist, the old Victorian fireplace has been replaced by a state-of-the-art, hole-in-the-wall model, operated with a handset, allowing the Kings to switch it on and off from the comfort of their bed.

Next door, a beautifully designed en-suite bathroom makes maximum use of a small area. "We've used a lot of mirror on the back wall," explains Paul, "to give the illusion of spaciousness." Generous cupboards are concealed behind two mirror sections, below which a pair of simple, but beautifully designed, Vola basins sit neatly on a walnut plinth. With economy of space in mind, a glass screen has been attached to the bath using two brackets allowing it to fold back parallel to the wall when the shower isn't being used so that it doesn't intrude into the room.

Fresh and functional design flows through each room, creating a relaxed atmosphere. "This is Josephine and Jonathan's new matrimonial home and the challenge in introducing contemporary design into a classical Victorian property was to achieve the right balance," says Paul. "I didn't want it to be too clean or too minimalist. It wouldn't have felt liveable or homely."

COST

Paul Van Geens undertakes refurbishments from £100,000 and up to £1 million

CONTACT DETAILS

DESIGN

Paul Van Geens, Clifton Property (020 7352 3300 or www.cliftonproperty.co.uk)

KITCHEN

Units Quantum Fitted Furniture (020 8892 6430)

Coffee machine Miele (01235 554455 or www.miele.co.uk)

Handles Danico Brass (020 7483 4477)

Sound system D2C (01727 873338 or www.d2c.co.uk)

BEDROOM

Fireplace Edwardian Fireplaces (020 8870 0167)

Accessories Side tables and lamp, Bo Concept (020 7388 2447); Bed throws and cushions, The Conran Shop (020 7589 740)

BATHROOM

Tiles Elite Tiles UK Ltd (020 8202 1806 or www.elite-tiles.co.uk)

Basins Vola (01525 841155 or www.vola.co.uk)

Accessories Toiletries, Jo Malone (020 7730 2100)