

SOMETHING BOLD, SOMETHING NEW

How do you turn an 'unremarkable' new-build flat into a unique home? Punch it up with colour and standout touches, says interior designer Gemma McCloskey

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In the living room, a sumptuous sofa by minottilondon.com brings balance to Gemma's standout artwork and textiles. The bespoke rug is by diurne.com. The sun cushions are by lindellandco.com



Once just a plain white space, the entrance hall has been transformed by tonal shades and unique details. Gemma replaced the cupboard doors with stained plywood and Lucite handles from hautedeco.com. The mirror is from gubi.com

‘I would rather have nothing than buy temporary pieces that might not last,’ says interior designer Gemma McCloskey of kitting out her flat in West London. And by nothing, she really means it – when she and her fiancé Remko moved into the two-bedroom first-floor property two years ago, they spent months with just a blow-up bed for furniture. ‘We lived on it morning, noon and night while we decided how to decorate,’ says Gemma. ‘It’s best to take your time when making design decisions.’

For Gemma, the first and most important problem was how to turn a cookie-cutter new-build flat into something unique. While the fittings, including timber floors and stone worktops, were well-crafted, the space, she says, felt unremarkable. ‘Changing the compact layout wasn’t an option, so I had to lean heavily on the transformative powers of colour, lighting and furniture for character,’ she says.

Explaining her choice of palette, Gemma says, ‘I treated the space as a whole rather than separate rooms. So all the tones co-exist in harmony – soft green might be showcased in our bedroom, pale pink in the hallway or sunshine yellow in the guest room, but they are repeated elsewhere too in a smaller or larger format.’

As well as sticking to these tones for cohesion, they are, Gemma says, a great backdrop for her statement taste, from the bespoke Murano glass globe lights she designed to the colourful recycled plastic dining table she commissioned from Netherlands design studio Kooij (dirkvanderkooij.com).

The statements continue in Gemma’s choice of artwork, most notably in the hallway, where there’s a playful – and huge – pastel rendition of her and Remko by Studio Lenca’s Jose Campos (studiolenca.com). ‘I wanted the walls to step up to the rest of the punchy schemes, so the artwork, whether



To give the existing kitchen more character, Gemma replaced the splashback with tiles from bertandmay.com. The table and pink and white chairs are by dirkvanderkooij.com. The two vintage chairs are upholstered in yellow bouclé from pierrefrey.com. The pendant light is by gubi.com

tapestries or oils on canvas, had to be bold.’

Gemma’s talent for knowing where to save and where to splurge was also key to the flat’s transformation. ‘We mixed expensive rugs, such as the bespoke one in the living room, with simple jute, and plant

pots from Ferm Living with vases from Zara Home.’

Above all, however, it’s Gemma’s ability to balance bold elements with softer touches and, of course, not just her clout with colour but her love of it that have given the once boring new-build presence. ‘My mantra

is that colour is just as important as form and function,’ Gemma says. ‘Who wouldn’t want to wake up to buttery yellow or grounding green? It makes us feel uplifted every day.’

For Gemma’s interior design services, visit cuplastudio.co.uk



Scan me to see these rooms come to life

‘I like lighting to be mini works of art,’ says Gemma of the Murano glass lamp in her bedroom, which she designed. ‘I also like to balance pale colours with strong hues, so the russet curtain felt right against the softer yellows and blues. The room-wide headboard, one of her signature designs, is upholstered in fabric from yarncollective.co.uk. The vintage bedside table is from pamono.co.uk

In the guest bedroom, Gemma's clever use of blue and green tones unites the mix of clashing touches, including the cushions by conranshop.co.uk, the headboard, which is upholstered in fabric from dedar.com, and artwork by peterkeil.com



DIY RECYCLE: WALLPAPER

If, like Carrie Johnson, who's no doubt steaming off the gold wallpaper at number 10, you want to repurpose a favourite design, interiors editor *Nicole Gray* shows you how

YOU WILL NEED

- ★ hot water ★ wallpaper stripper (try amazon.co.uk) ★ spray bottle
- ★ putty knife or scraper ★ ladder, if needed ★ soap
- ★ cleaning cloths

1 Mix hot water with wallpaper stripper according to the manufacturer's instructions and pour the solution into a spray bottle.

2 Spray a small section – about 3ft by 3ft – of the wallpaper with your solution then allow it to absorb for a few minutes.

3 Using your putty knife or scraper, carefully peel off the wallpaper, starting from the bottom and working your way up the wall. Try to get underneath a full section of wallpaper-pattern repeat to give yourself the best chance of keeping a good chunk of it.

Depending on the age and type of the wallpaper (vinyl wallpaper is easier to take off), you should be able to remove it to reuse for, say, lining drawers, gift wrapping or even framing it as art.

4 Be careful not to mark the wall as you scrape. Keep going section by section until you have the wallpaper you need or continue until you've removed the whole lot.

5 If you are aiming to re-paper or paint the wall underneath, clean it with soap and water to remove any wallpaper residue.

LET THERE BE LIGHTS!

Switch up your space with these statement picks



Glass table lamp, £49.50, oliverbonas.com



Tinted glass pendant light, £149, houseof.com

Bubble pendant light, £67, pooky.com



Brass and glass wall lamp, £60, made.com