



diamond in the rough

In London's jewellery quarter, a tired flat has been turned into a little gem courtesy of interior designer Omar Bhatti

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LIVING ROOM

Herringbone flooring, fluted oak and an art wall - which also includes a TV - add depth.

Iggy sofa, Sofa.com. Chair, H&M Home. Footstool, Loaf. Media unit designed by Space Shack and made by Origins Design

ENTRANCE HALL

An upholstered in-built bench creates a natural pause point.

Cabinetry designed by Space Shack and made by John Lewis of Hungerford



home profile

THE DESIGNER

Space Shack's Omar Bhatti revamped this space for couple Chris and James, who work in property and law respectively.

THE PROPERTY

A 51sq m top-floor apartment in a post-war building in central London. It has an entrance hall, living room, kitchen/dining area, bedroom and bathroom.

DINING AREA

'The panda was an impulse buy,' says Chris, 'but we like the playful element it brings to the space.'

Bridge **table**, Case at Heal's.
New Baron **chairs**, Calligaris.
Concrete **side table**, Decorum





‘It strikes the right balance between being a dynamic space and a rejuvenating bolthole,’ says Omar.

Just as cut and brilliance are behind any good diamond’s bedazzle, so the appeal of this diminutive apartment lies in its behind-the-scenes precision detailing. Located in the heart of Hatton Garden, known for its clutch of diamond dealers, the fourth-floor space was once the studio of a gem specialist. But there was little precious about it when owners Chris Marks and James Brennan stumbled upon it back in 2016.

The compact one-bed had no decorative features, a dated kitchen and an awkward layout. Hankering after an interior that reflected its cosmopolitan setting, the couple hired Space Shack’s Omar Bhatti to inject it with his own brand of contemporary cool. ‘Chris and James wanted to create a space that could work just as well for suppers with friends as it could for unwinding at the end of a long day,’ says Omar. ‘There was little scope to alter the layout, but there were so many clever refinements that would make all the difference.’

When it came to the brief, the couple had only two, slightly left-field, stipulations – no velvet and no swathes of mirroring. ‘Before getting to the decorative details though, we had to get the bones right,’ says Omar, who initially trained in architecture before setting up his design practice. He sketched out multi-level storage to break up the long entrance hall, chased endless exposed pipework into the walls and removed a bulky door between the hall and living room. Blue became an anchoring colour, featured in the kitchen cabinetry, repeated in a generous corner sofa and echoed in the sky-blue tones of the hallway storage.

Having grown up in London, Omar brings a cosmopolitan edge to his interiors, which have a naturally

‘warm urban’ appeal. He takes his cue from the boundary-pushing yet functional design of the city’s upcoming hotels and restaurants, the playful schemes of designer Kelly Wearstler and a sense that the diversity of the outside world should be reflected within. ‘City apartments don’t often have gardens so the key is to be imaginative and find different ways of celebrating the natural world,’ he says. ‘London is such a touch point for me. I relate to the word ‘urban’ and I’m always thinking about how city interiors can be both dynamic and re-energising.’ Here, that’s reflected in the addition of textured woods, standout artwork and tactile accessories. A media unit fronted in laser-cut fluted oak conceals storage in the living room, its lines repeated in a vertical wall panel in the hallway. In the bedroom, a lattice-cut wooden wall panel takes the place of a traditional headboard. ‘For me these textural layers are a way of bringing the outside in,’ he says.

The couple’s artwork, comprising a selection of portraits, prints and maps, has been enlivened with the addition of a bold modern abstract that Omar sourced from Degree Art, which champions the work of art students and graduates. ‘The media wall needed some oomph and as soon as I saw that piece, I knew it would add the right vibe to the space.’

After four years of putting up with a functional but bland space, Chris and James wholly approve of Omar’s efforts. ‘They joked that the new space is going to make them up their entertaining game,’ says Omar. This central London home is certainly ready to shine bright once again.

x

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home truths

LAST THING YOU BOUGHT?

Omar: I just got the keys to my new east London apartment. Super-exciting, but even more appealing is the prospect of getting started on the renovation works. Watch this space...

IN ANOTHER LIFE YOU'D BE...

...a more experienced version of myself.

MOST TREASURED POSSESSION?

Childhood photos – they remind me of how far I've come, how much I've accomplished and how grateful I am for my upbringing.

FAVOURITE AUTUMN RITUAL?

Keeping warm and cosy on the sofa, watching a TV series whilst sipping Earl Grey tea – simple!

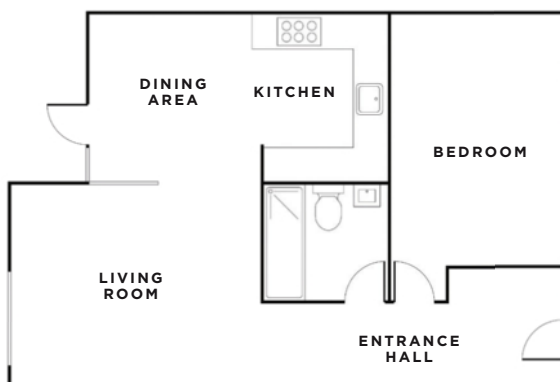
ON YOUR COFFEE TABLE?

Architectural Digest at 100: A Century of Style.

INTERIORS TREND THAT YOU ARE LOVING?

Tone-on-tone colour schemes. This can really bring some drama into a room if you choose deep hues.

the blueprint



KITCHEN

The pull-bar handles mimic the sleek lines found elsewhere, such as in the hallway panel.

Kitchen made by John Lewis of Hungerford and painted in Farrow & Ball's Hague Blue. **Skyscraper handles**, Dowsing & Reynolds



BEDROOM

A laser-cut wall panel makes a striking alternative to a traditional headboard.

Wall panelling designed by Space Shack and painted in Farrow & Ball's Green Smoke. Verne **bedside table**, Swoon



BATHROOM

Chris and James replaced a tired bath with a generous showering space clad in marble-effect tiles. A black-framed shower screen lends a graphic edge.

Oikos Gold **tiles**, Tiles & Baths Direct