

Several shades of grey

Moody hues enhance Stuart and Asta Young-Smith's stunning four-bedroom flat in Edinburgh's New Town

Words Fiona Reid

We never feel as if we own a property in the New Town," Stuart Young-Smith says.

"You're a custodian of a property like this and you have to do your best for it." Stuart is speaking about the Blisted four-bedroom Georgian flat at 13 Broughton Place in Edinburgh he and his wife Asta bought in September 2014. It had been a student let and "everything was magnolia", says Stuart. "These Georgian properties weren't designed to be boring – quite the opposite."

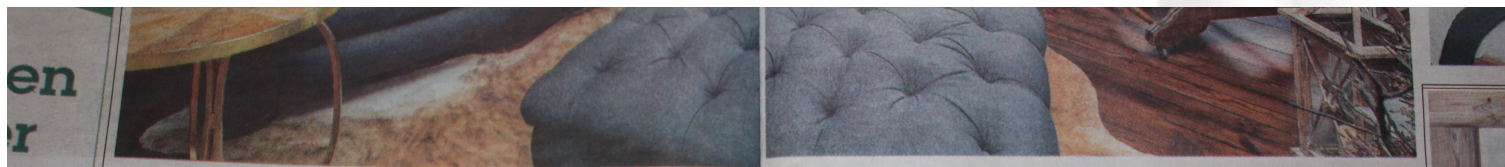
Decor aside, while the interior retained its period features, they were in poor condition. Some of the original window shutters were hanging off and the timber had started to rot. Every room needed to be overhauled along with new electrics and plumbing and a new central heating system. Asta is a designer with the Edinburgh kitchen and bathroom design studio Development Direct, while Stuart originally trained as a landscape gardener and ran his own company before working as a project manager for a joinery firm. He left that job in December to set up his own business tackling restoration and refurbishment projects, so it's little surprise to discover that the flat has been meticulously refurbished and redesigned. "The first day we moved in, I came home from work at night and Asta had already lifted all the carpets. They were so bad, she wasn't going to live with them for a day," says Stuart.

The couple, who have three children, Matias, 12, Lucas, 18, and Marcus, 20, started the redesign in the bow-ended living room. The windows were



The sleek cabinetry in the kitchen combines Hacker German furniture with Silestone Quartz worktops

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overhauled, the shutters repaired and the painted tiles stripped out of the original marble fireplace.

Aside from the period features, the striking thing about this room is the colour – a wonderful moody dark grey for the walls and woodwork, including the curved panelled doors. This hue is the perfect complement to the marble surround and offsets the warm tones of the original timber flooring, which was stripped, sealed and stained.

"We love grey," Stuart says, "and we'd originally thought about using this dark grey in the hallway, but we painted this room first and then decided to use a lighter shade in the hall that would complement it. Asta has a great eye for colour. This living room is big, so sometimes it's about having the courage to make a space feel a bit smaller with colour, as it has to feel cosy too."

The rich grey is continued into the furnishings and is complemented by the tones of the antique and vintage wooden pieces, and by the orange accents that range from a deep burnt hue in the pendant light to the colour-pop cushions. Looking around, your eye falls on a vintage Boys' Brigade drum that's now used as a TV stand, which was found in a Leith antique shop.

"We see things we like and then figure out how to use them," Stuart says. "If we like something, we know it'll work somewhere."

This approach is evident throughout in the mix of old with new. In the hallway, for example, the couple found



Clockwise from above: old and new in the hallway; the bow-ended living room, with original timber flooring stripped, sealed and stained; three of the four bedrooms

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the wall sconces when the flat was still a building site, but they had the vision to see how these pieces would look here. Likewise, Stuart picked up the oil portraits hanging in the hallway from an auction in Dundee. They were £50 each – cheaper than many off-the-shelf prints – yet they have such a presence in this space.

Needless to say given Asta's professional life, the kitchen and bathrooms in this flat are beautiful. When designing the kitchen, she took her cue from the colour of the living room and carried the dark grey into the sleek cabinetry featured here, combining Hacker German furniture with Silestone Quartz worktops. "I wanted to have a handleless style kitchen which can help to create a clutter-free look, making it the best choice for small kitchens where space is at a premium," she says. Development Direct's creative director, Colin Wong, was also involved in the design. "Colin is a master of spatial layouts and I always respected his opinion," says Asta. "He has helped me to finalise the look of this kitchen and as always he has done a great job."

Again, Stuart mixed up the style by adding older pieces, like the vintage scales and the rustic table, which he made for this space, combined with bentwood chairs, while the world map wall sticker was found on Amazon.

The master en-suite was created from scratch. Previously there had been an archway between this bedroom and an adjoining space, and Stuart removed this

and reinstated the doorway and period architraving. The couple created a generous shower room with large profile porcelain tiles – from Development Direct, as throughout – and the main bathroom echoes this en-suite with its neutral palette of tiling and contemporary Vitra fittings. Meanwhile, rather than trying to make the internal shower room feel artificially light, the couple created a luxe feel with dark grey tiling. As Asta says, using large profile tiles makes a smaller room like this appear bigger.

Throughout this interior there's a sense of "Scottishness", from the fabrics used – Asta designed the tweed upholstered headboard in the master bedroom – to the bunches of heather displayed in vases and picked from the Lammermuir Hills. Stuart isn't averse to filling his car with tree branches, as he did for the logs that fill the fireplace, or tree roots, as he did to create the display in the hallway – or as he says, "planks of wood covered in gunk, which were just lying in a field at a salvage yard in Airth". He brought the timber home, dried and cleaned it, and then used it to make the bedside tables for the master bedroom and a few other pieces.

Before selling, Stuart spent three months working on the finishing touches. "It was about doing what was right for this property," he says.

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