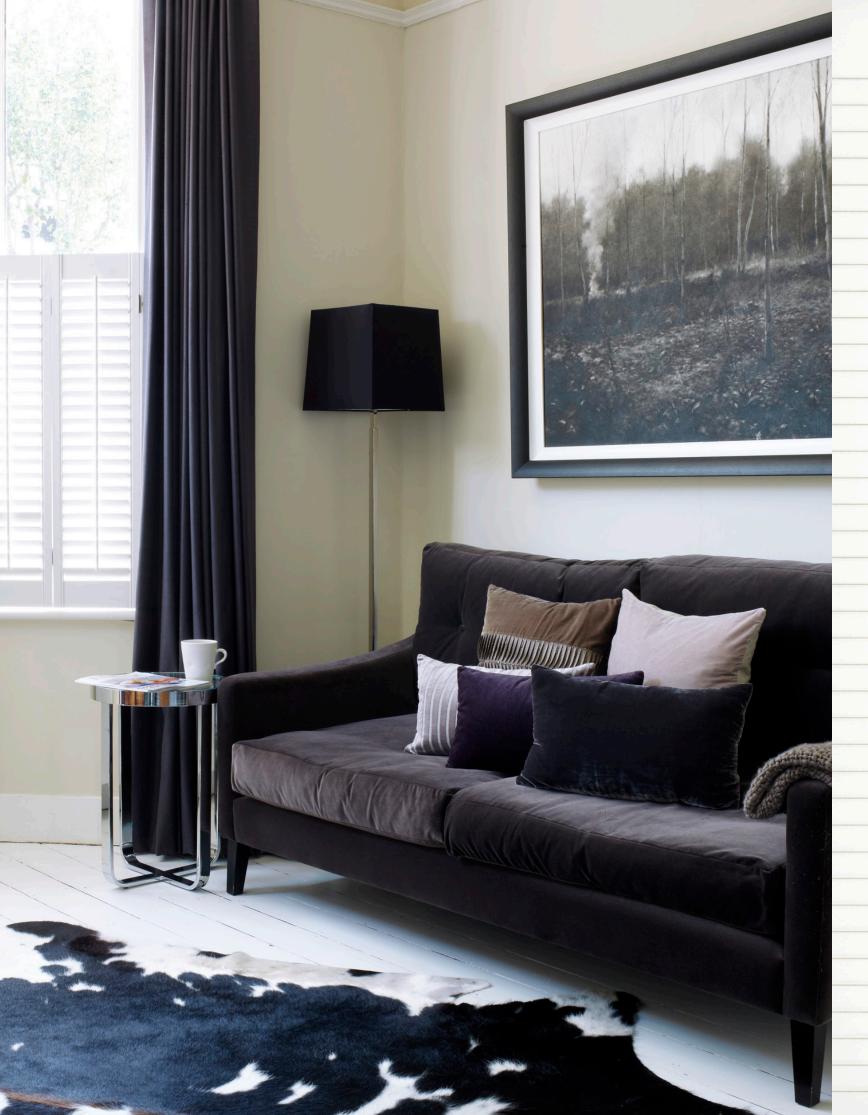


new beginnings

Styles and lives dwell harmoniously together in the elegant renovation of this STORY & STYLING RUTH WELSBY PHOTOGRAPHY RACHAEL SMITH



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LIKE ANY GOOD RELATIONSHIP, Simon and Caroline's home, in a leafy south London suburb, is a happy compromise between his exotic, ethnic style and her romantic and modern taste. In fact, the unlikely marriage of light and dark, soft and strong has positively transformed this three bedroom Victorian terrace.

A union, decorating or otherwise, wasn't on the cards for Simon when he was on the lookout for a bachelor pad back in 2002. Then unattached, this owner of a market research agency was searching for a solo renovation project when the property caught his eye. "The house screamed potential," he recalls. "It was rather dated but it had plenty of original features, well-proportioned rooms and was spread over three floors." First on his to-do list was to modernise and extend the lacklustre kitchen. Next came a revamp of the two bathrooms, then raising the roof in the loft guest bedroom. With all the

structural works completed within two years, Simon gave the rest of the house a quick onceover with the paintbrush and settled in.

Unbeknownst to Simon, his home and world were destined to be turned upside down with the arrival of Caroline in his life. A blind date led to a whirlwind courtship and an abrupt, happy end to his bachelor days. Within nine months, with an engagement ring on Caroline's finger, his muchloved pad was to be thoroughly reinvented. "The house needed some cosmetic help to turn it into our marital home," explains Caroline. "We wanted to create chic, relaxing interiors that reflected our new life together and merged our styles, but we weren't sure where to start."

With the pressures of a wedding to arrange and their differing styles to combine, the couple called upon the talents of Anne Marie and Nicola, aka Life Style Interior Design, to streamline the process and project manage the makeover. "Simon and Caroline have quite different tastes; she likes French provincial styles and he likes ethnic designs, so we

LIVING ROOM {above} Bathed in soft daylight from the large bay window, the formal living room's simple backdrop of cream walls showcases the couple's growing art collection, including a pair of leaf artworks found at Ecco Trading in London's Battersea. Period details are highlighted in bright

needed to achieve an agreeable compromise on the overall

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decor," explains Anne Marie.

The team focused on building a cohesive look with the couple's existing furniture and artwork, which led to the discovery of common ground in their differing tastes. This meant certain pieces had to go, but as Caroline admits, "It was a good excuse to have a good clear out and get rid the stuff we didn't need."

The points of commonality were used to create a scheme the couple would both love, loosely based around Caroline's passion for French interiors and Simon's interest in African art. The front of the house saw the bulk of the makeover, with minimal work undertaken in the kitchen and bathrooms. "The entire redecoration took place during the couple's week long honeymoon, so we had to act fast," recalls Anne Marie.

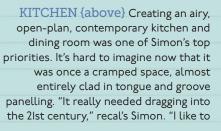
With the transformation complete, Simon and Caroline

returned to an elegant, relaxed home, unrecognisable from the one they had left. Much to their delight, the bright orange floorboards that dominated the ground floor had gone, now rationalised in crisp white. A neutral canvas of muted creams and soft whites enveloped the light, airy rooms, while bursts of colour and texture had been introduced by furniture, artwork and accessories. Spaces were also reconfigured and defined: formal and informal living rooms had been created at the front of the house, and swathed in a sumptuous palette of rich aubergines, warming tans and delicate greys. On the first floor, a study had been created and guest bedroom freshened-up, while the master bedroom had been re-imagined as an elegant boudoir, complete with soft lavender walls, silk cushions and chic glass lamps.

"I love walking through our house and seeing our favourite furniture mixed together and looking great," says Caroline with a smile. "It's

such a fantastic house to live in. We couldn't be happier

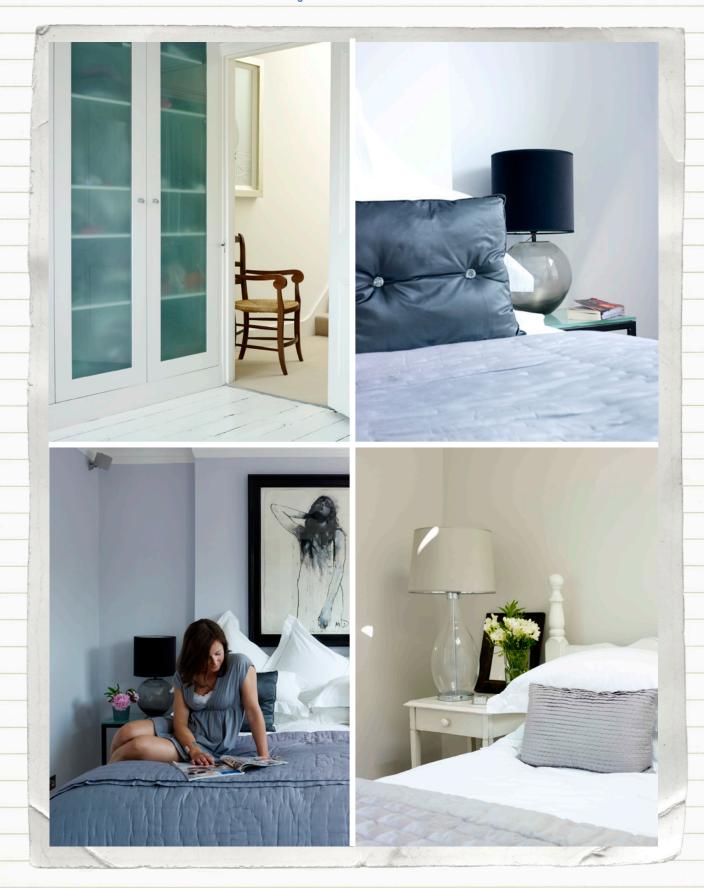
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"I work with colour every day, so at home I prefer to be surrounded by monochrome tones"



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the details

1. Master bedroom:

Old Stone Wall, Porter's Paints

2. Guest bedroom (pink):

Wimbourne White, Farrow & Ball 3. Living rooms:

Braidwood, Porter's Paints
Sitting room:

Sand Dune Shag in Sepia, Designer Rugs (purple rug) Black & white cowhide rug

Stockists, page ???



BATHROOM Delicate glass jars are filled with hand-picked shells and starfish for an organic, seaside touch. "My father was born



The taupe tiles on the walls and floor help to create a sophisticated bathing haven and don't show marks



GUEST BEDROOM One of Caroline's favourite rooms in the house, the loft guest bedroom has the added bonus of a smart

FLOORPLAN HERE