

History lesson

Returning a Georgian townhouse, carved into scruffy bedsits, to its former glory was a challenge designer Sean Symington took on with gusto and the results deserve top marks

SITTING ROOM

A console flanked by matching lamps and chairs provides pleasing symmetry.

Large Bamboozle lamp and shade, £220, Pooky. Giant clam, £160, Sean Symington Interior Design



KITCHEN

Sometimes a table is preferable to an island, providing a place to dine and socialise more informally.

Carrara Matt Sealed Oval Tulip table, £4,222, Swivel. Rattan and black birch bistro chair, £108, Maisons du Monde

HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY Grade II-listed Georgian townhouse

ROOMS Sitting room, kitchen-diner, four bedrooms, two bathrooms, self-contained flat

LOCATION
Gloucestershire





SITTING ROOM
Two pairs of curtains
emphasise the
windows more.

Ceiling lamp, £656,
Swivel UK. Walls in
School House White
estate emulsion, £59
for 2.5ltr, Farrow &
Ball Merlin solid oak
block side table,
£140, La Redoute

‘When we lifted the old carpets, we discovered fabulous original floorboards so I simply stained them black’



HOW DID YOU COME TO BE INVOLVED IN THIS PROJECT?

I often collaborate with Hamptons estate agents. They had featured one of my interiors projects in their customer magazine. My client saw the piece and hired me off the back of it. The house was absolutely huge. It had been divided into separate bedsits and was in a very bad state. The brief was to turn it back into an elegant family home.

HOW INVOLVED WAS THE

HOMEOWNER? He was very involved and interested in the whole refurbishment. In particular he was keen that the architecture be allowed to shine and that the restoration of the period features should be authentic. He

even visited Cheltenham borough council archives to look at the historical records and photographs of the house, so that we could recreate an appropriately original look. It was definitely a passion project for him.

WHAT WERE THE BIGGEST PRIORITIES FOR THE HOMEOWNER?

The house had been chopped up into many rooms, and essentially, he wanted to blow it all apart and start again, creating a cohesive, liveable home. As well as restoring its character, he wanted to retain the existing period features where possible. For example, instead of fitting new timber flooring, when we lifted the old carpets, we discovered fabulous original floorboards, so I simply stained them black. For the upper

‘I didn’t want to bombard the house with colour so instead I introduced a calm scheme that made heroes of the vintage elements’



BATHROOM
Stone flooring gives the impression it has been there since the house was built. Di Scacchi tumbled marble tiles, £50sq m, Mandarin Stone. Find art prints with a similar feel on Etsy

floors I fitted sisal carpeting, which has a pleasantly rough feel. Both solutions brought a raw, rather than perfect, finish, which he loved.

WHAT WAS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE?

We played a lot with the layout, considering all the while how the space could be best used by a family. In a house like this, with multiple bedrooms and bathrooms, as well as a self-contained apartment that could be a granny flat or a holiday let, the choices were endless. I had the kitchen in four different locations before we finally got it right.

WHAT INSPIRED YOUR SCHEME? My client had a lot of inherited furniture, so the scheme had to work hard to successfully integrate these into the new

pared-back design. We made many trips to antiques markets where I bought furniture and art that would blend with and enhance his existing pieces, while bringing a more modern edge overall.

DESCRIBE YOUR STYLE I’m a lover of colour and layers usually, but this house needed to breathe. I didn’t want to bombard it with colour, so instead I introduced a calm, neutral scheme that made heroes of the vintage elements, while the skirtings and architraves contrast subtly with white walls. The mix of contemporary and classic elements is casual and relaxed, and ultimately very liveable, which is just what the client wanted. 25

Sean Symington Design, seansymington.com