

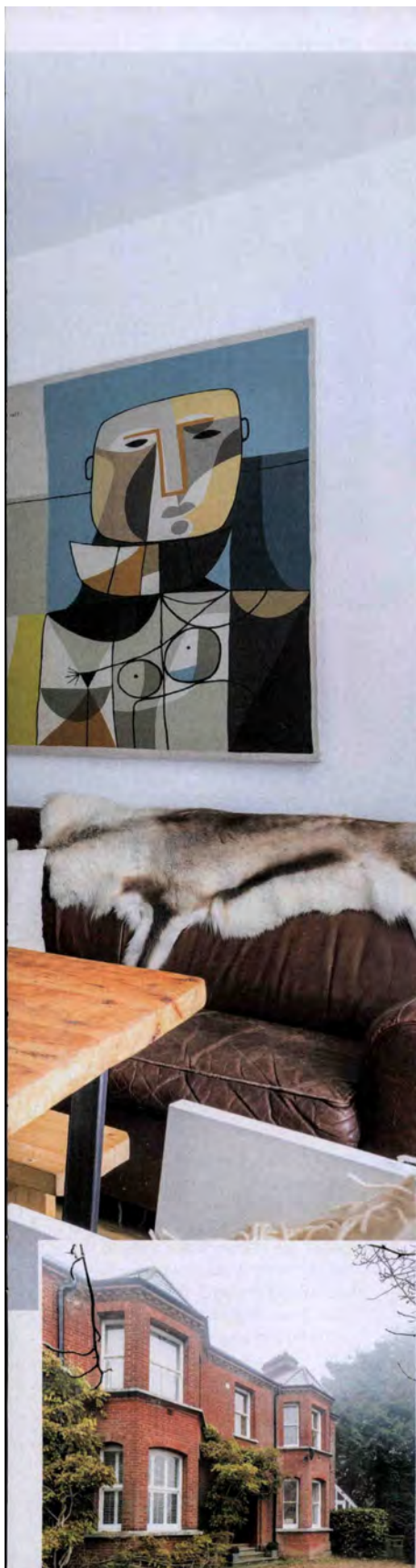
# SHADES OF GREY



When Lisa James adjusted her house-hunting criteria, she saw the potential of a dreary apartment and turned it into the elusive, spacious family home she was searching for







## home inspiration

**DINING AREA** Combining natural materials, such as the hand-woven rattan pendant shades with tactile soft furnishings, gives Lisa's dining space a relaxed, but cohesive look. Original timber floors and exposed metal pipework add an industrial element to the kitchen-diner

**LIVING ROOM** Painting the walls in a dark colour (Down Pipe, farrow-ball.com) creates atmosphere in the large living room, with a feature chandelier injecting a touch of glamour. Try lauraashley.com for a similar one, while the cushions are from Lisa's shop hihistore.com and the sofa from tradingboundaries.com



**F**aced with the challenge of downsizing, Lisa James was determined to stay in the beautiful conservation area of Oxted in Surrey, where you'll find her clothing and gift shop Hi Hi Store, however she found it impossible to find a detached family house within her budget and decided to change her focus completely.

"I stopped looking at three-bedroom houses and began looking at two-bed properties with the potential to create a third," says Lisa. "I also widened my

property choice to look at any style, including apartments. That's how I came across our current home, which I found while searching through the property website Rightmove."

The ground-floor apartment was part of a handsome Edwardian villa, with a long private drive into wooded communal gardens. "When I was driving in, the exterior looked gorgeous, but I was soon brought down to earth when I walked through the apartment door," Lisa explains. "The interior was dreary and soulless, with magnolia paint on every wall. >>



## “Don’t try too hard to dress a room, but do buy furnishing items when you see them as you’ll always find a place for them”

What really shone through were the huge room sizes, which gave more square footage than our old house and loads of potential to create that essential third bedroom.”

Purchasing the flat in October 2015, Lisa was able to start a full refurbishment as she and her teenage children, Siena and Taylor, lived in a rented property nearby. “An architect drew up some ambitious plans, but the work would have been too expensive. I had a limited budget, so I turned to Natalie McHugh of NK Design, who came up with brilliant design solutions all within my price range,” says Lisa.

“My priority was to relocate the old kitchen in order to create that essential third bedroom for my 16-year-old son Taylor. He wasn’t initially thrilled about this, but once the units were ripped out, he could see what a great bedroom space it was, with a sloping roof and Velux windows.”

Next on Lisa’s wish list was the creation of an open-plan kitchen-diner, which was achieved by repurposing the large dining room. “It would have been such a waste of space to keep it purely as a dining room as we’d never have used it,” says Lisa. “Remodelling the layout to include a kitchen and dining area has given us greater flexibility and a fantastic family room that we use all the time.”

Original character features were revealed when all the carpets were ripped up: “Beautiful timber boards that had been hidden for decades immediately brought the living room and kitchen to life, and I couldn’t believe it when we discovered parquet



**BEDROOM** Large-scale furnishing pieces brings a sense of proportion within a huge room space. “My bedroom felt cave-like and cold, but an oversized bed and the lime-washed timber scaffolding headboard makes it cosier,” says Lisa. The bed is from [loaf.com](http://loaf.com) and the beaded star is from [thewhitecompany.com](http://thewhitecompany.com)

**BATHROOM** The family bathroom includes traditional style sanitary ware and a space-saving wall-mounted towel rail. “There was nowhere else to hang it, but it works well over the bath,” says Lisa. The rolltop bath is from [victoriaplumb.com](http://victoriaplumb.com)

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## home inspiration

flooring in my bedroom," says Lisa. "I wanted an elegant look to the new interior with industrial accents to bring added character, exemplified by the kitchen with its exposed brickwork and copper pipes."

Upgrading the bathroom and en suite in a traditional style that was sympathetic to the period of the house was a must for Lisa. "I love the way the bathrooms look, but in hindsight I wish we'd installed underfloor heating, as the rooms are very cold in winter," Lisa admits. "It would cost too much to retrospectively fit so it's on my 'to do' list to buy extra radiators to give us some back-up heat."

Injecting an industrial element included using old scaffolding boards, which proved a cost-effective option. "With such high ceilings, it was important to create a sense of proportion, so the builders framed the fireplace and took the timber up to the coving," says Lisa. "Finishing them in a dark grey wash gives them an aged appearance and adds impact to the room, turning a boring-looking fireplace into a feature."

A once-bland interior has been transformed into a stylish, welcoming family space using a clever mix of materials, paints and furnishings. "When the renovation was complete, I missed our builders when they left, which is not something everyone would say. As a team, we worked well – I had ideas and they came up with the design solutions," says Lisa. "This home makes me feel complete and it gives us all a hug when we walk through the door. I never dreamt that we could be so happy living in an apartment." **w&h**





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**home inspiration**

Peterstivy dining table, £565, [pib-home.co.uk](http://pib-home.co.uk)



Elmley ceiling shade, £90, [habitat.co.uk](http://habitat.co.uk)



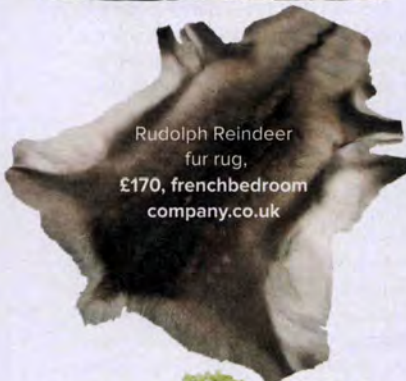
Platinum and white star cushion, £68, [dashandalbert.europe.com](http://dashandalbert.europe.com)



Helsinki wire large basket, £8, [sainsburys.co.uk](http://sainsburys.co.uk)



Velvet-effect quilt with linen edge, £229.99, [zarahome.com](http://zarahome.com)



Rudolph Reindeer fur rug, £170, [frenchbedroomcompany.co.uk](http://frenchbedroomcompany.co.uk)

**How to GET THE LOOK**

- + Find artwork that you love, and use it to base a colour scheme around.
- + Painting ceilings a dark colour will add warmth and make a room feel cosier.
- + Introduce texture with rattan, leather, wood and exposed brickwork.



Down Pipe Estate £43.50 for 2.5 litres, [farrow-ball.com](http://farrow-ball.com)



LSA Chimney clear vase (H30cm), £60, [black-by-design.co.uk](http://black-by-design.co.uk)



Woody double bed, £995 (excluding mattress), [loaf.com](http://loaf.com)

Long bench with iron legs, £315, [iansnow.com](http://iansnow.com)



Moroccan sequin cushion, £40, [monsoon.co.uk](http://monsoon.co.uk)