

SW

ARCHANT

May 12 | Issue 275 | swmag.co.uk

*Why Clapham author
John O'Farrell set his
new novel on home turf*

Sonny's spruce up

The local duo behind the revamp
of Barnes' revered restaurant

Digging deep

Creating extra space
under your home

Portraits and Pensioners

A Fulham photographer's
unique insight into life at
The Royal Hospital Chelsea

Battersea-based fashion label Ingenue's trends for spring/summer | Sudi Pigott samples Sticks'n'Sushi in Wimbledon





Labour *of love*

An interest in design led Battersea-based Emma Green to make a dramatic career change, and to transform her dusty loft into a hotel-style master suite finds Lorraine Crighton-Smith

Photography by Joe Lord

Emma Green moved into the Battersea home she shares with her husband Dominic and three-year-old son Charlie in the year 2000, before she pursued her dream career as an interior designer. The then legal recruiter had some experience in property development – the couple's former home, a flat on Elspeth Road that they had renovated, sold within four hours of going on the market – but it wasn't until 2004 after a 'eureka' moment that she enrolled on course at KLC School of Design and turned a labour of love into a profession.



Functional space with good storage leads to a calm and harmonious environment

Looking around the stylish SW11 space today it's hard to imagine what it looked like when they first moved in 12 years ago. "The previous owners had four children so it was painted bright yellow in every room and it had office blue carpets," explains Green. "We just quickly repainted it. We sanded the floors, put some new kitchen units in and a new family bathroom, that was more or less it at the time." But after training to become an interior designer, and gaining experience working on several high-end projects in the West End, Green's plans for her family home became more ambitious and work on a loft conversion began at the start of 2009.

"The loft was the main thing," she says. "It was just storage space [before]. We did it in a couple of stages because it's bigger than most lofts. We had to do the back first and then the front to get permission for it to be so big; we wanted a master suite not just a bedroom. So we did that from start to finish."

The couple wanted to create a master suite with a hotel feel – not just a bedroom – and Emma used her expertise to plan the master suite. "It's quite an unusual layout so I got an architect to reconfigure the doorway and the stairs going up from the bathroom into the bedroom to make sure the heights were right, and then did the planning myself," she confirms. "Tiling layouts, all the lighting plans and circuits, electrical layouts... I think the builders were a bit sick of me!"

Once the loft was complete the Greens set about refreshing the rest of the house, with the works drawing to a close two weeks before Charlie's birth. "We actually had this sofa [that Emma's sitting on when I interview her] arrive when he was a week old – it was a bit stressful!"

"Charlie's room used to be a study that was filled with boxes and files and goodness knows what," she continues. "We cleared all that out and changed it into his room, and our old bedroom became a guest

The living room is one of Emma's favourites in the house. The photographs pictured above the sofa were shot by her husband, Dominic

It's all in the detail. Emma adds character to her clean-cut design with covetable accessories



I like to add character to clients' homes by using items from travels, artwork or photos – as in my own home



room. Then we repainted the hall, the stairs and landing, the two rooms here [living and dining room] and the kitchen, because they all got very dirty when we were doing the loft."

While the loft was a huge job, the rest was more of an aesthetic overhaul, or "quick touches" in Emma's words. These included changing lights and adding bespoke silk lampshades around the chandeliers in the hallway, and staining the floorboards a darker shade (they were pine coloured previously).

"We changed the background – the walls and floors," says Green. "We got new chairs, and there are a couple of Victorian balloon-back chairs mixed in with the Ghost ones. We repainted [those] and put new seat covers on to brighten them up a bit.

"One's in purple velvet to echo the sofa and the other seat pad's in a very bright turquoise silk to pick up on the [detail of the] cushions."

The interior designers also updated the kitchen replacing the old units with new glossy ones.

"It looks like a new kitchen and we only spent £700-800 to it transform it," she says.

Emma seeks her inspiration on her travels: trinkets and ornaments from across the globe can be found in her SW11 abode



One thing that stands out from the Green home (aside from an abundance of style) is how tidy it is – even with a toddler in the house. Emma informs me this is down to very clever storage. “Functional space with good storage leads to a calm and harmonious environment,” she affirms. The row of subtle gloss-fronted storage cupboards, and the impressive wardrobe space in the master suite, will be the envy of all fashionistas.

American designer Barbara Barry is one of Green’s favourites – “she’s quite clean lines and neutral palette” – and she picks up inspiration from her travels. “From countries buying objects, in hotels and restaurants, it could even be from a nice picture that you might see in an art gallery or an exhibition, something you see in a magazine,” she expands. Her travels are evident at home, the iconic photographs above the purple sofa were shot by husband Dominic in India; there are relics from Africa and Indonesia around the house too. “I like to add character to clients’ homes by using items from travels (as in my own home), artwork or photos taken (again as in my own home), using existing pieces of furniture but in the new ways,” she states.

While it’s important for homes to be “beautiful and stylish”, Green strongly believes they must feel comfortable and should “adapt to clients’ lifestyles”. Her other ‘insider secrets’ include the clever use of texture in the home to create contrasts, as seen in her own living room (the sumptuous purple velvet sofa with linen cushions piped in turquoise silk, against original wood floorboards stained dark).



Top: the hotel-style master suite Emma and husband Dominic wanted is finally complete. Above: their en suite bathroom. Right: Emma’s eclectic collection of dining chairs





Emma updated her kitchen giving it a whole new look for just £800

"One of the trends filtering down from very high-end work is the creation of master suites (like mine) where clients can have somewhere to sleep, bath and dress in one space in privacy, luxury and serenity," says Green. But it's not all about following trends. She recommends that you should look to give your home a spruce up once every five years – although is quick to point out that's in a ideal world ("it was an eight-year gap before we did our first one"). What's next for the Green home? "I'm always thinking of doing new things, I might just paint one room if it changes use or goes from being one room to another. I might make slight changes; move artwork about and things like that. I do intend at some point soon to do a side return, a new kitchen and dining room and then redo this. That's my next plan." }

To see what Emma Green Design can do for your home visit emmagreendesign.com



Charlie's bedroom. Emma reveals that she enjoys designing childrens' room as "you can really use your imagination"