

Character story

From bland to beautiful – Clare and Mike Singer have turned a featureless apartment into one with plenty of personality

PHOTOS *Paul Craig* | WORDS *Amelia Thorpe*
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ON THE DOOR

Crittall-style doors provide access to the roof terrace, their framed design echoed in the tall cabinetry



GRAND DESIGN

The striking pendant light and tall cupboards accentuate the grand scale of the room



‘atty’ is the one word Clare Singer uses to describe the state of the three-bedroom apartment in south-west London she bought with husband, Mike. ‘It was shabby, without being chic,’ she recalls, remembering the peeling wallpaper and threadbare carpet, ‘but we could see the potential for renovation and the opportunity to make a lovely home close to Wimbledon Village.’

Clare, who works in marketing, and Mike, a solicitor, contacted Neil Norton, creative director of Neil Norton Design, to help them re-design the flat, which sits at the top of a three storey Victorian house. ‘We had worked with Neil on our previous home and admired his original and striking ideas,’ says Clare.

The brief to Neil was to design a kitchen with character in place of the featureless style of before. ‘The sense of height is a strong feature of the room and we felt it represented a design opportunity,’ she explains. Neil’s solution is a set of soaring tall cupboards, custom-made to fit the pitch of the ceiling perfectly. Painted in a dark blue-black, the door fronts have a framed panel design that echoes the Crittall-style patio doors.

More visual interest in the room comes from the Bianco Calcite splashback, which is backlit for subtle glamour in the evening, and accents of richly coloured walnut to add warmth. ‘It feels inviting and relaxing when it’s just the two of us and works equally well when friends come for drinks,’ says Clare. The finishing touch in the room is a large mid-century pendant light, a factory-salvaged find, in keeping with the industrial mood.

Walnut is also used in the master bedroom, this time paired with a softer shade of grey to create a more tranquil feel. ‘We needed much more storage in what isn’t a huge space, so we asked Neil to design furniture to address that problem,’ explains Clare. ‘We love the way his design blends contemporary, clean lines with great functionality and practicality.’

Neil also designed a neat wall-hung vanity unit and mirror for the adjacent bathroom. Made of oak reclaimed from French wine barrels, the pieces add a touch of personality to a simple grey marble and white scheme. ‘The apartment felt so nondescript when we moved in,’ says Clare, ‘and now we love its sense of character.’ **EKBB**



WARM GLOW

A backlit splashback of natural Bianco Calcite adds a gentle touch of glamour

KITCHEN PROFILE

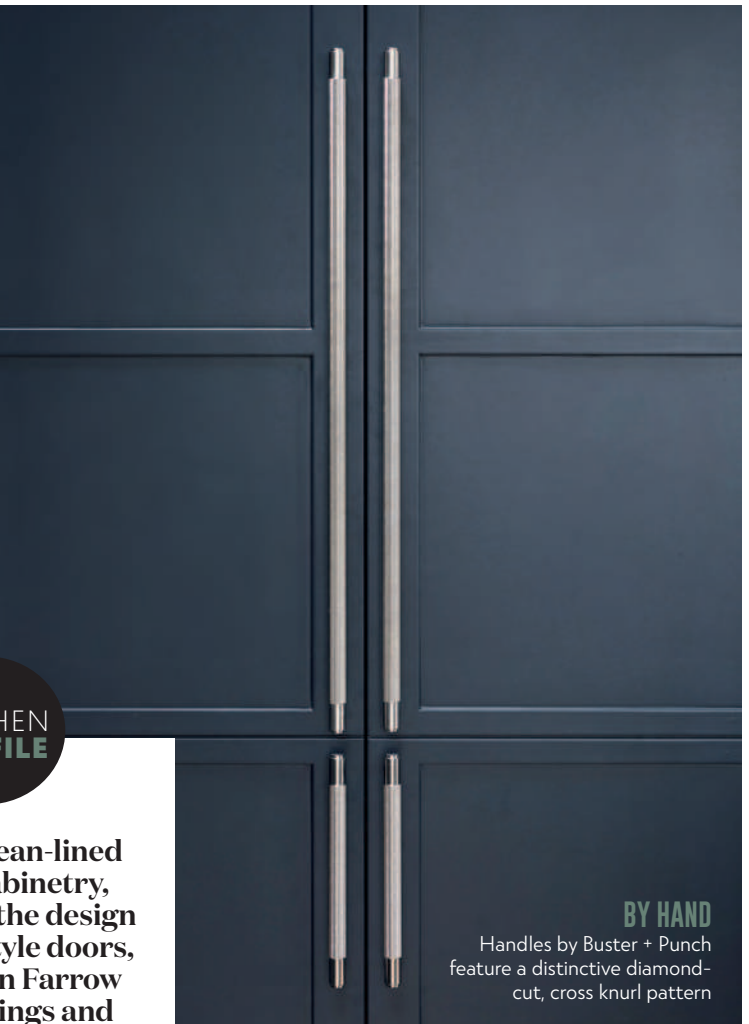
Bespoke clean-lined kitchen cabinetry, inspired by the design of Crittall-style doors, is painted in Farrow & Ball Railings and teamed with accents of American Black walnut and Neolith Cement sintered stone surfaces and backlit Bianco Calcite marble.

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Kitchen prices start from £30,000



MATERIAL DIFFERENCE

The natural grain of the American Black walnut drawer fronts contrast with the smooth spray painted cabinetry



BY HAND

Handles by Buster + Punch feature a distinctive diamond-cut, cross knurl pattern



CLEAN LINE

Slender Neolith worktops, made of durable sintered stone, accentuate the linear design of the cabinetry



‘The wall units have reeded glass doors with bi-fold lift up mechanisms and chamfered backs to fit the angle of the ceiling’

ON DISPLAY

Reeded glass panels in the wall cabinets add another detailed touch of character

HIGH LIFE

The ultra-tall cabinets provide top level storage for items only used occasionally

‘A set of soaring cupboards, custom-made to fit the pitch of the ceiling perfectly, have a framed panel design that echoes the Crittall-style patio doors’

Essential kitchens

FLOOR STORY

Clare and Mike chose a herringbone parquet floor for its vintage appeal



Q&A NEIL NORTON

CREATIVE DIRECTOR AT NEIL NORTON DESIGN

Can you tell us the key elements of the kitchen design? The tall cabinets accentuate the drama of the room's height. Of course, ceiling angles in old houses are rarely absolutely straight, and this one was no exception. It was technically challenging to make sure it was made to fit the slope of the ceiling precisely. The bottom section houses the microwave, a double-doored pantry, and integrated fridge freezer, while the top half is for storage of items used less frequently. The tall cabinets are teamed with a sweep of handleless base units, making a practical L-shape to include the sink and hob. The wall units have reeded glass doors with bi-fold lift up mechanisms, again quite technically difficult to make, with chamfered backs, so that they fit into the angle of the ceiling. The open walnut shelving makes a feature for interesting displays.

And the island? It houses the oven and provides work surface and storage, plus space for bar stools under the worktop.

How about the master bedroom? Clare and Mike wanted an uncluttered room, so we used every inch of space to provide storage. The bed head doubles as a bookshelf and bedside table; it has sliding panels which conceal charging points for phones and watches. The wardrobe fits the angles of the ceiling to maximise hanging space and the chest has drawers with compartments for jewellery, scarves and accessories.

Can you tell us about the bathroom? Previously there was an ugly shower cubicle which divided the room and blocked the light. This was replaced with a freestanding bath and wall hung vanity to create an open, spacious feel.

IN THE FRAME

Opposite the island, the dining table fits underneath the eaves, close to the casement windows, their frames repainted to match the kitchen cabinetry



SPACE MATTERS

A wall-hung unit fits neatly on one side of the bed, with sufficient space for a simple moveable stool on the other

‘Clare and Mike wanted an uncluttered, calm room, so we used every inch of space to provide storage. Even the bed head doubles as a bookshelf and bedside table’



COLOUR MIX

With woodwork painted in Farrow & Ball Down Pipe, the gentle grey and white scheme provides light contrast, while the reclaimed timber vanity and mirror add warmth



RIGHT CONSISTENCY

Wardrobe doors match the tall cabinets in the kitchen, bringing a consistent feel to the apartment's design

Essential kitchens



PRACTICALLY PERFECT

Left A freestanding bath and wall-hung vanity unit create an open, spacious feel, with the vanity offering ample storage beneath the basin to prevent the bathroom from becoming cluttered

BATHING BEAUTY

Below An ugly shower cubicle had previously divided the room, so this was ripped out and replaced with an elegant modern style freestanding bath placed below the pitch of the roof

STOCKISTS

APPLIANCES H6460BP oven, £2,199; M6032 SC microwave, £699; KWT 6321 UG built-under wine conditioning unit, £2,299; G4990 SCVi fully integrated dishwasher, £949; all Miele. Classic surface induction cooktops with downdraft extraction system, £4,140, Bora. ICBN 3386 integrated fridge freezer, £1,849, Liebherr. WDI147D-1 integrated washer dryer, £699, Smeg.

FIXTURES AND FURNISHINGS

Bespoke cabinetry with Buster + Punch handles; Neolith Cement satin finish worktops; Bianco Calcite backlit splashback, all Neil Norton Design, kitchen prices start from £30,000. Concetto single-lever sink mixer with hose, £404, Grohe. Peak PKX 160 34-18 undermounted stainless steel 1.5 bowl sink, £823, Franke. Similar parquet flooring, Oak Natural, from £47 per sq. m, The Natural Wood Floor Co. Vintage pendant light, from a selection, Skinflint. Neva bar chairs, from £695 each; Neva dining chairs, from £695 each; Pasha dining table, from £2,400, all Nina's House. Wooden serving boards, from £18, Truly. Blue mug and bowl, both Flying Tiger. White vase, from £28; Addison oval platter, £28, both Layered Lounge

BEDROOM Invito bed, from £3,200, Nina's House. Bristol table lamps in Concrete, £59 each; Grace pendant light, from £159, all Heal's. Trident bench in walnut, £630, Joined + Jointed. Reversible Velvet Eiderdown, £199; Rectangle Shagreen tray, £35; Embroidered Housewife pillowcases, £27, all Truly. Monograph Forest paperweight, £35; Fossil Organic medium glass tray by Notre Monde, £51, both Amara. Casablanca candle, £55, Victoria Cator.

BATHROOM Bespoke vanity unit and mirror, priced to order, Neil Norton Design. Formoso Petite bath, £2,299; Formoso basin, £299; both Clearwater. Design bath shower mixer set, £789; Design wall mounted basin mixer set, £369; similar back to wall WC, Svelte, £565; similar towel warmer, Edge, £349, all Crosswater. Similar wall tiles, Library marble, £125 per sq. m, Fired Earth. Bistro Grey hexagonal porcelain floor tiles, £65 per sq. m, Topps Tiles. Hooked 1.0 pendant lights, from £195 each, Buster + Punch. Beam painted in Modern Eggshell in Down Pipe, £28 for 0.75L, Farrow & Ball. No.1 bath powder, £26, Truly. For stockists see page 168

