

THE BEST IN INTERNATIONAL DESIGN AND DECORATION

# HOUSE & GARDEN<sup>®</sup>

JUNE  
2011

## REAL-LIFE HOMES

A masterful restoration of  
an English country house

**An architectural villa in  
the wilds of Provence**

US\$7.99 | CAN\$7.95  
INTERNATIONAL £4.00

## MATTERS *of* TASTE

*Blue-and-white decoration*

**Stylish wooden dining**

**tables** *Two contrasting interiors  
in London* **Cooking up a feast –  
classic French favourites**



# NEW STAMPING GROUND

*The Roman designer of this lateral-conversion flat in west London has created a chic home for his sophisticated, Anglo-Italian clients, as well as a popular 'runway' for their young children*

TEXT **CAROLINE CLIFTON-MOGG** | PHOTOGRAPHS **SIMON BROWN**  
LOCATIONS EDITOR **LIZ ELLIOT**



**BOTH PAGES CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE** In the drawing room, colourful cushions in a Nobilis fabric complement the curved sofa designed by Raffaele Generotti. The composite photographic print is by English photographer Edward Dimsdale. The existing, neoclassical-style chimneypiece is balanced by antique Chinese lacquer cabinets



**T**he smart, twentieth-century, oval dining table in this London flat is a fine piece of furniture. 'Ah, yes,' says the owner, 'it took us ages to find the right table, and when we did – in this country – we sent it to Italy to be restored; they're so good at that sort of thing.' She adds, by way of rather unnecessary explanation, 'I am a perfectionist; my husband and I are very particular and we do like nice things.'

Indeed she is, and indeed they do, and the spacious apartment, in one of those half-hidden, silent west London squares, is ample testimony. The apartment you see today, however, is twice the size of the flat that the couple bought 10 years ago, when they first moved to London from Rome. 'When we first saw it, we were reminded of home,' says the owner. 'It had character and large, well-proportioned spaces, unlike so many London flats, which all seem to be narrow and cramped.' The strong architectural lines of the interior also made a suitable background for the couple's growing collections of twentieth-century furniture and modern black-and-white photographs.

In the owner's eyes, there was only one man to take on the task of refurbishing the flat – Raffaele Generotti of Roman architectural partnership GM Studio Architettura. Raffaele was – in design terms at least – almost part of the family, having worked over several years on projects with the owner's parents and sister. 'I wanted to use Raffaele to get a new look,' the owner explains. 'I knew he would view things in a different way. I'm Italian for goodness' sake – I wanted to put an Italian stamp on the place.'

For Raffaele, it was an exciting experience to work on a London property. 'The minute I walked into the flat I knew what I wanted to do,' he says, 'the first thing being to install dimmable lights all over the flat so that they could be used during the day. London



BOTH PAGES CLOCKWISE FROM THIS PICTURE The original encaustic-tiled floor in the entrance hall is laid in a sweeping design to follow the curves of the walls. The rose artwork in the dining room is by Francesco Pignatelli. Christine Van Der Hurd designed the carpet to match the tones of the Giò Ponti chairs. The pendant lights in the kitchen are by Flos





daylight can be so dull that extra, low-level lighting is often needed.'

The original parquet floors were restored, as was the striking encaustic-tiled floor in the entrance hall that had been laid out in an unusual sweeping design to follow the curves of the passage walls. In the drawing room, it was decided to keep the striking but heavy-looking, black neoclassical-style chimneypiece, and balance it with a pair of antique Chinese lacquer cabinets placed either side. Throughout the flat, there are examples of cabinetry that Raffaele designed to complement the owners' existing pieces of furniture. He introduced polished Italian city smartness to the kitchen and devised a grotto-like bathroom, with iridescent emerald mosaic tiles from ceiling to floor.

There was another person in this close-knit design equation, namely textiles designer Christine Van Der Hurd, who, like Raffaele, had worked over the years not only with the owner, but also with her parents in Italy. 'The owners' style is mid twentieth century,' says Christine. 'They love the work of iconic designers such as Giò Ponti and they also love black-and-white photography, of which they have a wonderful collection. All of this meant that the flat was a study in texture and shape rather than colour, so they needed me to introduce that element through the carpets and cushions.'

Through teamwork the perfect flat was created – perfect for a couple, that is, but not so perfect when, a few years later, they found they were expecting their first child. However, by serendipitous coincidence, the adjoining flat became available. They were able to buy it, and immediately set about planning how to merge the two apartments.

Raffaele was called back to make the consolidation seamless. 'Actually,' he says, 'it was not that difficult. As soon as I saw the adjoining flat, it was obvious that we needed a central corridor to be the link between the two spaces and also to provide access to what would be a new bedroom.'





The resulting corridor was quite long, so it followed that there should be a visual connection between the two spaces. Raffaele designed soft overhead lighting in the form of box panels set at intervals all along the ceiling, and Christine was once again brought in, this time to design, among other things, a rug that would run the length of the narrow space. It was not easy; the challenge, as she – and the owner – saw it, was to design something interesting, attractive and that led the eye onwards. The result is a triumph – a rug woven in a mixture of silk and wool, with undulating streaks of colour that seem to move of their own accord down the corridor, like ripples in a dark stream.

Part of the newly acquired flat was converted into a self-contained bedroom suite for the owners. Overlooking a quiet garden, it is fitted out with solid, panelled cabinets, silent sliding doors and a smart, black-tiled bathroom.

A bonus of the new arrangement of rooms was that what had been the main bedroom in the original flat could now be transformed into a dining room, with a carpet designed by Christine to echo subtly the colours of the Giò Ponti chairs, as well as complement the tones of the encaustic tiles in the hall beyond.

Now that the couple have two small children, how does this very chic, extremely city-oriented, Anglo-European setting work as a family home? 'It's wonderful,' says the owner. 'All the children's friends want to come and play because the place is great for hide and seek, and the long corridor is just the best place to run up and down – fast.' Which surely must be one yardstick of good modern design □

*Raffaele Generotti:*

00-39-06 80 70 279; e-mail: gm.studio@fastwebnet.it

*Christine Van Der Hurd:*

020-7313 5400; www.vanderhurd.com



OPPOSITE A narrow corridor (top right), with a rug by Christine Van Der Hurd designed to draw the eye through, links the original flat to the adjoining one - and makes a good 'runway' for the children. The new space houses a bedroom (top left), with a leather bed made by Mufti, and a smart bathroom (bottom) hung with black and white photographs.

THIS PAGE A sliding door separates the study from the dressing room; the blue chair in the study is by Cappellini