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Kids INC.

Is it possible to have a serene, sophisticated home with four children aged eight and under? Yes, say Anita and Hugh – it's all in the planning... And the cupboards!

Home profile

THE OWNERS Anita Fraser, a photographer and budding interior designer, her husband Hugh, a property investor, and their children Ollie, eight, Claudia, six, and twins Jonty and Lara, four.

THE PROPERTY A Victorian terrace in southwest London. On the ground floor is a living room and kitchen-diner. Spread over the first, second and attic floors are four bedrooms (two en suite), a guest bedroom-cum-office, a bathroom, shower room and study.

LIVING ROOM

'This is where great storage comes into its own,' says Anita. 'I had the unit under the TV made with three very large drawers to house all the children's toys and games and the cupboard [at the other end of the room] contains all their shoes, coats and sports kit.'

GET THE LOOK The bespoke storage is by Evoke. This is the Carmel sofa by Jean-Marie Massaud, the Elise pouffe and the Bug armchair by Paola Navone, all from Poliform. The button-upholstered armchair from thefrenchhouse.co.uk is covered in a Designers Guild linen. The Mantis BS2 wall light and BS1 floor light by Bernard Schottlander are from SCP. The Nud Aqua pendants are from Haus.





DINING AREA

'I love the way the sliding doors open up the house to the garden and really blur the distinction between inside and out,' says Anita.

GET THE LOOK This is a CH20 Elbow chair by Hans J Wegner for Carl Hansen & Søn. The table is from Bulthaup. The bespoke bench from thefrenchhouse.co.uk is upholstered in an Alma leather. The willow swallows are by Lizzie Farey. The painting by Gemma Frapp is from Wimbledon Art Studios.

• simple and useful and strongly believe a home can be both stylish and nurturing, responding to the daily rhythms of family life.'

The revamp didn't happen overnight, though. A year after moving into the house, the global financial crisis hit and initial plans to extend the ground floor with a side return were put on hold. As a temporary measure, 'We repainted all of the magnolia and multicoloured walls and replaced the dilapidated Seventies kitchen with a white one from MFI,' Anita recalls. For years, they endured a run-down plumbing system – 'I definitely don't miss the rattle and roar of the pipes when Hugh would have a shower after coming home late at night from work' – and increasing lack of space as the family grew. 'The lovely thing about living in the house for so long is that when the time finally came to renovate, I knew exactly what I wanted to do,' Anita explains.

It proved to be an extensive rebuild: not just rewiring, replastering and repainting the old terrace, but installing the latest mod cons, including underfloor heating and a wireless AV system, removing the hallway wall to open up the ground-floor space, adding a loft bedroom complete with en suite, creating the kitchen side return and putting a utility room into the basement. Keeping the original Victorian touches, such as the ceiling roses and cornicing, was important too, 'so as not to be too slick', but the key was to create 'a calm, plain space and then add layers of texture to make each room feel different,' says Anita. And while the downstairs floor is very open plan, 'I like that there are still distinctive areas to eat, watch TV and read, etc,' she says. 'So there are opportunities to retreat and do our own thing, but still be together at the same time.'

Anita's keen eye for detail, honed in a previous life as a lawyer, was an unexpected saving grace on the steep learning curve of her first major house renovation. It helped to ensure the project never veered far off track. When the glass panel that divides the living room and staircase (installed in lieu of the original dividing brick wall to satisfy fire regulations) was initially fitted upside down, she had the tenacity and expertise to get the glaziers to come back and fix it on the spot to avoid slowing up the next day's visit from the flooring crew.

In spite of such a pristine, uncluttered feel to the completed house, Anita insists she isn't a 'horrible mum who doesn't allow her kids any toys,' she says with a laugh. 'I love it when the living room is filled with their stuff and we have to tiptoe around building blocks and picnic rugs set for teddies and dolls, or when the kitchen becomes like an artist's studio with Play-Doh, paints and crayons. But I also love the fact that, at the end of the day, all of their toys have a "home", so within minutes everything can be returned to normal. I can dim the lights, light the candles and relax with my husband over a glass of wine.' Perfect proof that 'you can have a beautiful, elegant space that's child-friendly too,' adds Anita.

To learn more about Anita's first experience as an interior designer, visit anitafraser.com

'It was all about creating flow,'

says Anita Fraser of the radical transformation her once traditional London terrace underwent to become a light-drenched calm space. When she and her family first moved into the house in 2007, 'It was a nice home,' says Anita, 'but it had an awkward layout with a small galley kitchen and a double reception room where the children became "trapped"'. It wasn't until an Aussie friend said 'Kids need a circuit to run around' and then she watched an online chat with Japanese architect Takaharu Tezuka about designing a kindergarten in the shape of a circle, that Anita realised what she had to do.

Not that she turned the house into a Grand Prix racing track; instead, Anita and her husband Hugh cleverly created a great feeling of space by knocking through partition walls to make a series of open living areas connected via discreet glass panels and parquet floors that flow effortlessly together. These then allow the eye to travel uninterrupted from the front of the house to the back and out into the garden.

In addition, plenty of light wells and customised storage, often concealed or disguised, leave each space looking sleek and streamlined. 'I wanted to create a place that made it even more enjoyable to live as a family,' says Anita. 'I like things to be elegant,

KITCHEN-DINER

'I had planned a white kitchen and then wobbled at the last minute as it's hard to design around pure white,' says Anita. 'So I went for subtle grey.'

GET THE LOOK This is Bulthaup cabinetry. The herringbone flooring is from Cheville Parquet.





Home truths

ANY HOUSE RULES? With four young children, we live by the rule that one of us can only leave the house if we have at least two of them in tow!

DO YOU HAVE A CULINARY SHORT CUT?

I love to cook, but sometimes I cheat with a scrumptious lasagne popped into one of my own baking dishes by way of Bayley & Sage deli in Wimbledon Village.

WHAT'S THE LAST THING YOU SNAPPED ON YOUR PHONE? There were some amazing balloons hanging from the ceiling in the Anthropologie store in Richmond – they'd been coated with layers of plaster, sanded and then painted. Something I'd like to make for the kids.

DO YOU HAVE A KARAOKE SONG? I love karaoke! My all-time favourite is Don McLean's *American Pie*.

WHAT WAS THE LAST BOOK YOU READ? Susan Cain's *Quiet*, which is subtitled, 'The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking'. I found it fascinating.

MASTER BEDROOM →

Anita's minimalist style keeps her bedroom sleek and serene.

GET THE LOOK The built-in wardrobe is by Evoke. This is the Kanik side table by Trunk. The duvet cover and blanket are from The Conran Shop. The pink sheet and pillowcases are by Caravane.

← HUGH'S OFFICE

This space also doubles as a spare room, so the divan turns into a double bed.

'I wanted it to look more like a couch,' says Anita. 'Somewhere to "loungue", rather than be too bed-like.'

GET THE LOOK This is the Princess mattress in Tabac from Caravane. The bolster cushion and metal bowl are from The Conran Shop. The framed photograph is by Jimmy Nelson. The shutters are from Tudor Touch.

← BATHROOM

A false wall was built to hide the plumbing and there's a cupboard behind the mirror. The wall also allowed for an alcove to be created above the bath.

GET THE LOOK The bath, basin and fittings are from Alternative Bathrooms.



*'I love the idea of a house
with a scent – in summer,
this place smells of fig'*





← TWINS' BEDROOM

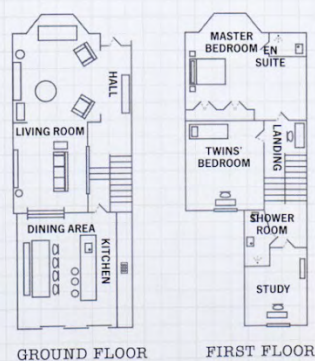
'This was an awkward space,' says Anita, 'and difficult to fit in normal-sized bunk beds, so I had them made slightly smaller with cupboards either side, allowing more room for train tracks and tea parties.'

GET THE LOOK The bespoke bunk bed and storage unit are by Evoke. The rug is from Heal's. The Flying Stork artwork is by Tamar Mogendorff at Bobo Kids. The Eames Elephant is from The Conran Shop.



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The blueprint





IDEAS toSTEAL

Mix luxe textures, industrial fittings and subdued shades for pared-back chic

KEY SURFACES



FROM LEFT Oak parquet flooring in Seashell, £74.94 per sq m, Fired Earth; Shirting absolute matt emulsion, £37 for 2.5l, Little Greene; and Blooms 34922143 cotton-mix in Nude, £51.30 per m, Camengo



KEY FEATURE Parquet flooring

Simple, elegant and bang-on trend, herringbone wood flooring adds instant character to a space. It's not only warm and welcoming, but also hard-wearing and easy to clean, so perfect for modern family life. Many colourways are available - dark will add drama, while using polished pale timber like Anita's throughout can help a space seem wider and brighter. As well as the new boards we suggest above, check out reclaimed parquet from sources such as Drummonds (drummondsflooring.co.uk).

KEY PRODUCTS



1 Carter wall lamp, £135, Shoreditch Lighting 2 Range ash side table, £79, Josie Morris for Made.com with Livingetc 3 Water hyacinth basket, £39, Toast 4 Dimple velvet footstool in Turmeric, £515, Loaf 5 Rose/Grey vase, £11, Holly's House 6 Grey Crosses cushion, £60, Georgia Bosson for Quirk 7 Lavenham linen love seat in Zinc, £3,395, The Conran Shop