

HOMES & INTERIORS

DETAILS

What A two-storey apartment that was modernised and reconfigured from top to bottom

Where Troon, Ayrshire

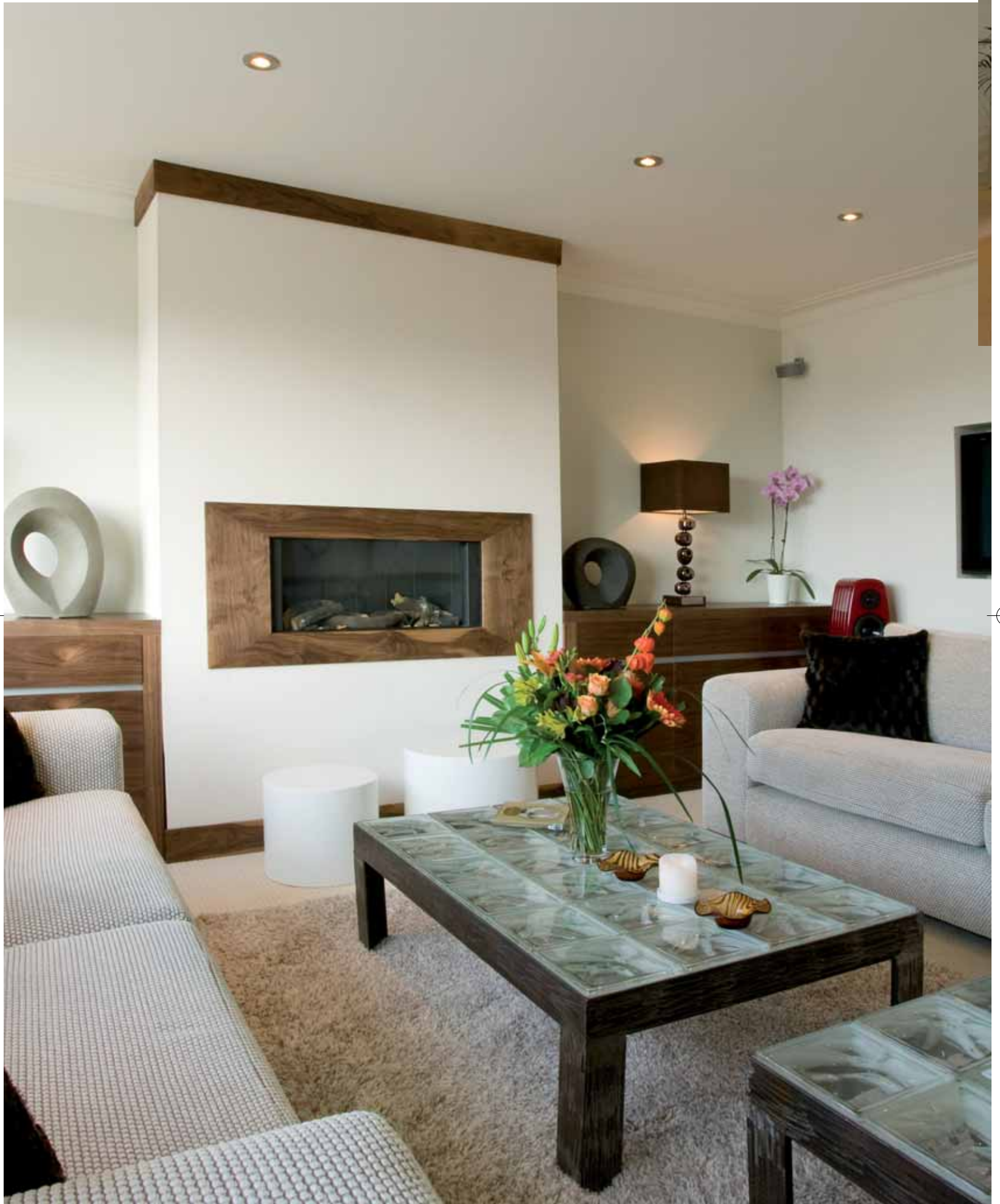




ADVENTURES *in* SPACE

Susan Bremner refused to let small rooms and low ceilings cramp her style, transforming a gloomy maisonette into a chic, contemporary apartment

Text by **Aileen Little** Photography by **Paul Zanre**





The three Cuba sofas [right] are from Choice in Glasgow; the log fire [below] is by Gibson & Goold, while its surround continues the flat's walnut theme; the glass-topped tables and white stools [left] are by Dwell



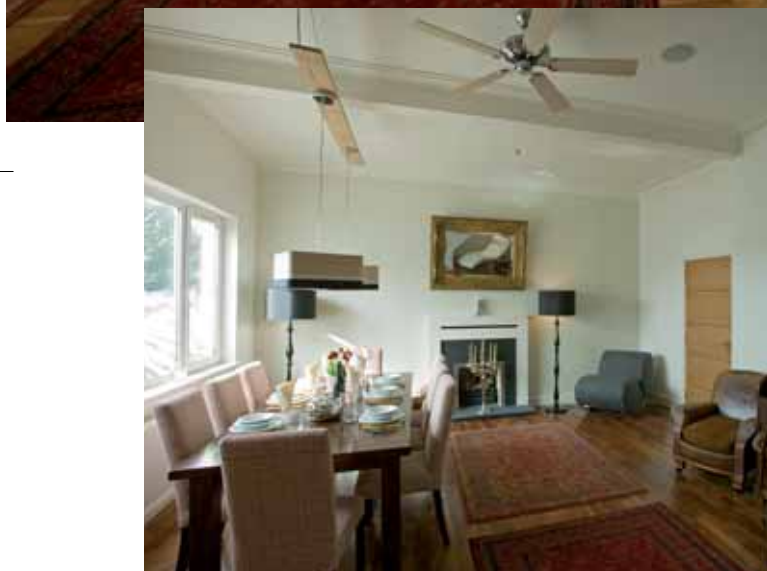
Small is beautiful – at least

as far as your home is concerned. Just ask Terence Conran: living in a small space forces you to be selective about what you buy, says the design guru, and that leaves you with more cash to spend on high-quality furnishings. Susan Bremner knows what he's talking about. The designer, who opened an interiors business in Troon last year, has transformed a cramped, unprepossessing maisonette in the town centre into an apartment that's both stylish and flexible.

Her business, Homes + Interiors (no relation), had been open just three months when David Henderson walked in. Despite living and working on the French West Indian island of St Barts for the past 25 years, the experienced hotelier still regards Troon as home. "David was in the process of buying a flat," says Susan. "He wanted to renovate it so it could be a base for him and his partner Laurent."

With the help of a local architect, John Keane, who secured planning permission, the property got a new lease of life. Susan's main task was to enhance space and fluidity and create more light. The original three-bedroom, split-level maisonette now has two bedrooms and two public rooms. On the lower level, the kitchen door was removed, and two windows in the hall/dining area (the original sitting-room) were replaced with a single large one. The staircase to the upper level was restructured, with a handrail fitted along with new treads in walnut – walnut and horizontal banding are themes echoed throughout the property.

Upstairs, the door to the sitting-room (a former bedroom) was removed and skylights were inserted in the flat roof. "Everything had to be stripped ▶

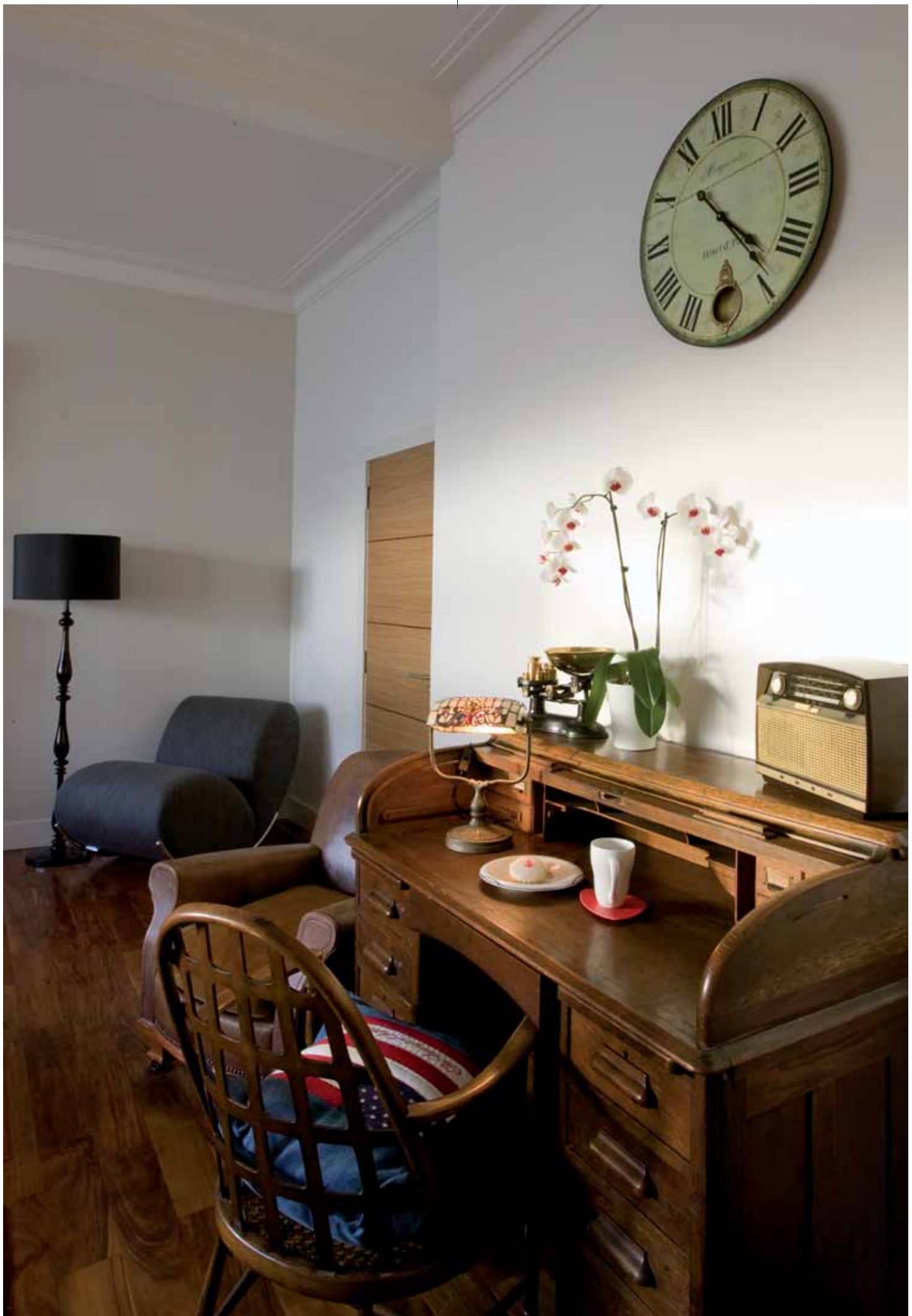


The staircase [above] has a new banister and treads; the desk and chair [right] were bought by David at auction; old Turkish rugs brighten up the dining area [left]; the tiny kitchen [below] is a masterpiece of space saving

back and the entire roof raggled to lay cables for ceiling lights,” says Susan, who project-managed the makeover for two of its four months when her client was abroad. “David and Laurent wanted to return to a finished flat, which didn’t give us long to install new heating and sound systems, to rewire and replumb.” Not that her client was in the least bit demanding – Susan describes him as “great to work with”. He is “very open to new ideas, and understands the value of design input: the right item at the right price. He has a good eye.”

Moreover, his business-like approach (honed running the 41-bed Christopher Hotel on St Barts) meant Susan had no difficulty tuning into his wavelength. She has forged a reputation for soigné, grown-up rooms. His hotel background informed his vision of a boutique look with touches of subtle luxury. “David sent me pictures and details of websites. It was like leafing through design magazines at a distance – the modern-day equivalent of a mood board.”

The starting point was the master bedroom, which was to determine the palette as a whole. David was smitten by a neutral scheme of cream and moleskin, with walnut (for the wardrobes and drawer units) and horizontal banding (on the door and furniture). The room, at roughly five metres square and the biggest in the property, dwarfs the king-size bed with wing tables. These, along with all the walnut storage, come from the Glasgow branch of Dwell – of which Susan cannot speak too highly. Concentrating on the boutique brief, she designed a super-sized headboard made locally, in two sections, by Troon Upholstery and installed on site. Set against a wall painted in Dulux soft ash, the board is covered in Designers Guild faux suede. Crushed velvet ▶



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drapes in platinum grey (supplied by Jab International) have edges matched to ruby velvet lampshades. The biggest challenge was manoeuvring the four-metre-long plywood pelmet upstairs.

The chaise longue, an auction find, is upholstered in Designers Guild moleskin. The second bedroom continues the walnut references – found here in the wall stripes (Romo wallpaper turned on its side). The Roman blind is by Glasgow-based fabric designer Natasha Marshall: Susan favours the convenience of local suppliers. An ivory wool waffle weave carpet softens all the upstairs floors. Both bedrooms look high-end, with lots of tactile indulgence. They happily stop short of mimicking a real hotel suite, though, as there is more than a touch of home comfort. Vibrant red accents bring the décor to life.

Blocks of statement brights punctuate the sitting-room too – the scarlet speaker, for instance, was made by one of David's friends. The three large Cuba sofas come from Choice in Glasgow, which makes frames on site, while the white gloss stools and glass-topped tables are from Dwell. The look is at once luxurious and laid-back.

To create clean lines at the window, Susan commissioned from Novatec a sliding blind system in oyster linen, which diffuses strong afternoon sun. Textures are balanced with a shagpile from Turnberry Carpets, shiny lamp bases, stipple-effect wallpaper in the recesses and chunky-weave upholstery. The walnut theme is picked up in the sofa legs, fire surround and sideboards. Susan provided a neat storage solution too: sliding doors conceal stereo and drinks cabinet.

The bathroom is arguably the star turn. The underheated floor is of feelgood, slabby stone and on it lies a tactile, deep-pile rug. The two white basins (on a walnut surface) are sharply delineated ▶

The headboard [above], in Designers Guild faux suede, was made by Troon Upholstery; the Wassily chair [below] is a Marcel Breuer classic, while the blind is by Natasha Marshall; Romo wallpaper is hung horizontally to good effect [right]





BEST BUY

Susan designed the supersized headboard in the master bedroom [left], which was made by a local manufacturer and installed on site.



against a backdrop of horizontal tiles suggestive of oriental rattan. Luxurious sanitaryware includes deck-mounted taps, and a Whirlpool bath by Laufen. Given free rein, Susan has created the perfect sanctuary.

She had to be even more inventive with the kitchen, given its tight proportions and David's desire to fit in an American-style fridge/freezer and a range cooker. The easiest way to introduce colour was with a red splashback in translucent glass. Mindful perhaps of Terence Conran's dictum about half size not meaning half measures, Susan employed all the tricks of the trade: good lighting, reflective materials (e.g. high-gloss cabinets and chrome cookware) and practical layout. There is little missing: this is a very functional kitchen.

The flat's remaining space had to be flexible enough to accommodate a workstation and a dining area. A mix of old and new, a quirky antique or two, is desirable if a home is to have soul and this attractive dash of 'scruffy' contrast comes with Turkish rugs, a desk and leather armchairs David bought at auction. A log fire by Gibson & Goold picks up on the warmth of solid wood flooring and ruby tweed upholstery on dining chairs. To minimise a less-than-picturesque view, David commissioned special window glass inlaid with colourful, abstract artwork, further enhancing the relaxing, comfortable ambience.

The makeover demonstrates how good design can transform a smallish flat. As for David and Laurent, they felt instinctively that Susan would deliver. "This is the home I've taken the most time over," says David. "It's great to look out and see people, and get that convivial, village feeling. I love that it's right in the heart of town." It's true: no one would guess that perched above a Chinese restaurant on a bustling street was such a cool, glamorous apartment. ■

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The shower, with a glass partition by Kudos, has a wet-room floor [top]; the interior's theme of horizontal stripes and walnut tones is echoed in the rattan-effect tiles [above]