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Modern

ECLECTIC

Shona Fleming and Clare Biddle have transformed their Victorian flat with a dose of clever thinking and statement style

Feature: **Amelia Thorpe** Photography: **Megan Taylor**

The background

Shona Fleming and Clare Biddle, who met in Abu Dhabi, returned to the UK after a decade living in the Middle East. Both business managers, they took up their new jobs in London while contemplating the refurbishment of their apartment in a converted Victorian school. "I'd bought the flat in 2005, lived there for a while and then rented it out when I moved abroad," explains Shona. "It had got rather battered along the way, so it was certainly due a refresh." At the same time, Clare's eye for spatial planning gave the couple some new ideas about how they could better use the apartment's generous size. >



The apartment

The schoolhouse was converted into flats in the 1990s. "The apartment felt dated, had an awkward layout and about a quarter of the space was unusable," recalls Shona. One and a half bedrooms on the mezzanine suffered from lack of privacy, while a central staircase was a substantial obstruction to the flow of the living space. After sketching out ideas, Shona and Clare discussed improving the layout with architect Stephen Kavanagh. The solutions included moving the staircase and installing steel-framed glazing to create two secluded mezzanine bedrooms. A new cinema room on the lower floor doubles as a third bedroom when needed.

The FACTS

Who? Shona Fleming and Clare Biddle with their cats Lady Puss Puss and Princess Hoppy

What? New kitchen and flat refurbishment

Where? Central London

Cost £30,000 for the kitchen

Time A year



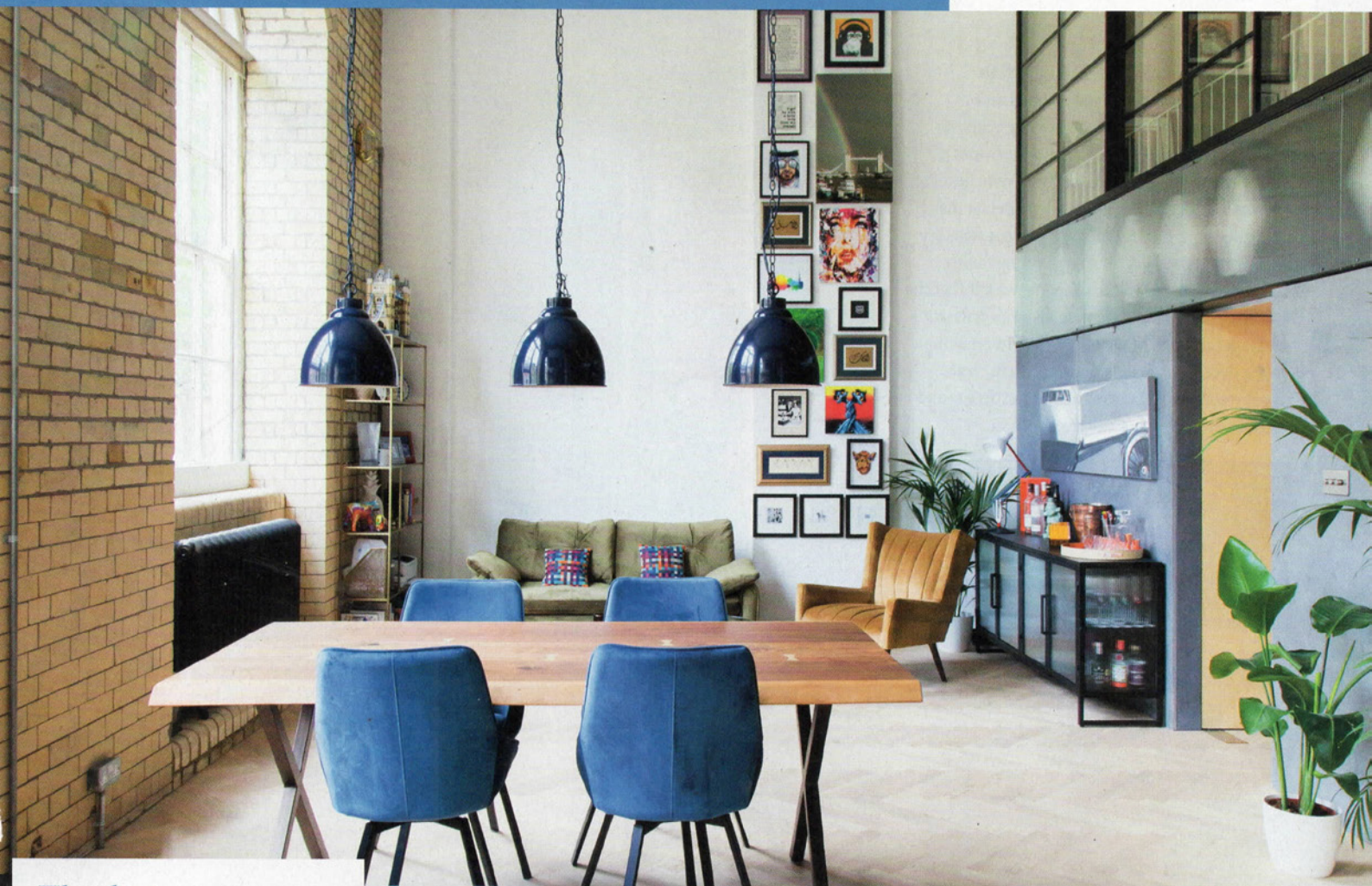
Extraction

Moving the **hob**, from Smeg, from the back wall of the kitchen to the front peninsula created a more sociable layout, so Shona and Clare can chat to guests while cooking. “We knew we needed a powerful extractor,” says Shona. To make the most of the double-height space, Stephen commissioned an eye-catching bespoke **extraction system** from Westin, complete with lighting and space to display plants to add character. It is finished in high-grade brushed stainless steel to match the kitchen cabinets, and hung from large suspension rods. As there are solid concrete slabs on the floor above, the exposed galvanised steel ducting punches through the external wall alongside the structural beam.

The kitchen

One of the main problems in the existing layout was the dated kitchen. “It was set on a raised plinth, like a stage – I’ve no idea why, as there was no wiring or plumbing underneath,” explains Shona. This design made the kitchen feel cramped, while minimal storage and work surface made the space impractical. “Our aim was to make the kitchen feel part of the living area and to accentuate the beauty of the double-height space,” she explains. The new scheme features a U-shaped layout, while the stainless-steel units and concrete worktops are designed to be durable. “The exposed brickwork and steel beam are such important parts of the building, it made sense to celebrate them with industrial-style materials,” Shona adds. The **cabinets** were designed by Stephen Kavanagh and built by Cavendish Equipment. **Worktops**, Haus Concrete.





The dining and living areas

By zoning the large room into distinct areas for dining, relaxing, and watching TV, it has a more natural sense of flow and makes better use of space. Arrangements of soft seating define the living areas, while a large table close to the kitchen area anchors the dining zone. Three dramatic pendant lights, suspended from the tall ceiling, create focal points and help to define the space. "I had to source chains and cord long enough, which was quite tricky," says Clare, who eventually found what she needed by scouring Ebay. "Our style is quite eclectic, and I love the Squid Ink Blue colour of the lights – they pop against the yellow splash back tiles in the kitchen and add more character to the space," says Clare. "We feel as if we have reclaimed the flat and made it ours." **Dining table**, Cosy Wood; **chairs**, Barker & Stonehouse.



The PLANS

The open-plan lower floor has been zoned into cooking, dining and relaxing areas.

- 1 Peninsula** The hob faces the dining area, so Shona and Clare can chat to friends at the table while they cook.
- 2 Wet zone** The sink and tap are positioned close to the fully integrated dishwasher and waste bin, which helps to make clearing as speedy as possible.
- 3 Preparation** A wide area underneath the tall window, flooded with natural light, is designed for chopping and mixing ingredients, with equipment stored in cupboards below. **KBB**



Storage

Wide drawers and cupboards maximise storage. Units built on legs enhance the feeling of space, while slender steel handles match the Fisher & Paykel fridge-freezer. High-level cupboards, from Kube, are ideal for less-frequently used items and conceal the boiler. Their handleless design and simple white finish minimise their impact. "We call them the "secret" cupboards I can't reach – it's where Clare hides my Christmas presents!" adds Shona. For dry food storage and extra kitchen equipment, floor-to-ceiling cupboards with sliding doors, including a pantry, have been built at the rear of the TV-cinema living area. **Pendants**, The Soho Lighting Company; **splashback tiles**, Terrazzo Tiles; **sink and tap**, Blanco.



SOURCEBOOK

Architect and kitchen design

Stephen Kavanagh Architects 07855 258629 stephenkavanagharch.com

Kitchen

Cavendish Equipment 01992 767105 cavendishequipment.co.uk **Handles** Häfele 0800 171 2909 hafele.co.uk

High cupboards Kube 01702 826878 kubekitchens.co.uk

Worktops Haus Concrete hausconcrete.com

Appliances Oven, hob, Smeg 0344 557 9907 smeguk.com; Extraction system, Westin 01484 421585 westin.co.uk; Fridge-freezer, Fisher & Paykel 08000 886 605 fisherpaykel.com; Dishwasher, Whirlpool 03448 224 224 whirlpool.co.uk

Sink and Tap Blanco 01923 635200 blanco.com

Splashback tiles Terrazzo Tiles 020 7485 7227 terrazzo-tiles.co.uk

Flooring Hawwoods 01524 737000 hawwoods.co.uk

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