

'I just buy what I like, then put it all together'

Kate Whitfield's not about following rules, so she didn't let her home's distinctive Victorian character stop her indulging her love of modern style and just seeing what happened...

Love
KATE'S STYLE?

Turn to page 71
to shop the look

Don't follow rules

'I love putting a quirky, modern twist on period style,' says Kate. 'There are no rules when it comes to décor because it's all about your personal taste. It's your home and it should make you happy.'

BUY THE KEY PIECES

For a similar sofa, try the Clement, from £1,295, Johnny Moustache. Leather ottoman, £300, Made.com. Bamboo lounge chair, £195; cushions, £60 each; all An Artful Life. Mosslanda picture ledge, £8.95, Ikea



Welcome to my home



Kate Whitfield lives here with her husband Andrew and their twin sons Archie and Stanley, eight. Kate is an interior designer and Andrew works for the MoD

THE PROPERTY
A three-bed Victorian terrace in north Essex.

VALUE
Bought for £275,000 in 2012 and now worth around £440,000.

“It’s perfect as a family house. Our last place was an open-plan flat, which didn’t work for us once the twins arrived!”

Kate and Andrew Whitfield managed to see beyond the dire state of their house in north Essex when they first viewed it in 2012. ‘Someone was living in part of the property, but it was dated and rundown, and needed everything doing,’ says Kate. ‘In spite of all that, I fell in love with the period features, high ceilings and good light.’

‘Renovation is in my line of business, so I wasn’t too worried about having to do all the work,’ says Kate, who has her own interior design company, An Artful Life (anartfullife.co.uk). The couple got cracking straightaway, drawing up plans and choosing a builder from a shortlist of three local companies, so the work started just before Christmas that year.

‘The kitchen is in an extension at the back that was like a shed,’ says Kate. ‘It had no foundations and there was a narrow scullery leading off it. We wanted to create a large, light-filled kitchen-diner, so our first job was to demolish the existing room and extend properly. We knocked down a wall to open up the scullery and part of the staircase and hallway to create one large room. We chose bifold doors to maximise the light and in summer we open them straight onto the garden.’

Kate and Andrew turned a room leading off the kitchen into a more formal dining room for themselves after the twins are in bed, and for entertaining. ‘It’s perfect as a family house,’ says Kate. ‘You need an adult space once the children have gone off to bed, so you’re not just picking up toys all the time. Now the house is finished, much as I love the new space at the back, I think I like the living room the best. It’s homely and comfortable, but also a little bit quirky. It’s where we can all relax together as a family.’

Take a quick tour...



FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR

Put on an art show

High ceilings and grand architraves can handle bold, modern artwork. ‘I do like to see paintings on walls, but it’s too permanent,’ says Kate. ‘So often I’ll prop them on shelves so I can swap them around.’

BUY THE KEY PIECES

Prints, from £12.50, Tom Pigeon. For similar armchair, try the Peggy, from £540, Sofa.com. For similar rug, try Stockholm 2017, £250, Ikea



PAINTED FLOOR
A cheap and easy way to hide less-than-lovely boards

IDEAL HOME loves
Industrial lighting
 Great for adding character and 'wow moments' to properties old or new

VINTAGE HANDLES
 Make Kate's B&Q units look more expensive



Choose old over new

The couple wanted to put back the period character of the house. 'We shopped around for recycled materials, like the reclaimed parquet flooring in the kitchen-diner,' says Kate.

BUY THE KEY PIECES

Reclaimed parquet flooring, £30 per sq m, Retrouvius. Round slab kitchen table, £200; boot bench, £250; both Tom Dixon

ROUND TABLE
 The most space-efficient choice for a small dining area

Mix modern and vintage elements

'Our new kitchen island was built bespoke to fit with an old butcher's block we already owned. The island hides the appliances and I like the way the light bounces off the marble.'

BUY THE KEY PIECES

Similar units, try Cooke & Lewis Woburn, £2,348 for eight units, B&Q. Pear-shaped bulb lighting, from £17 each, Urban Cottage Industries

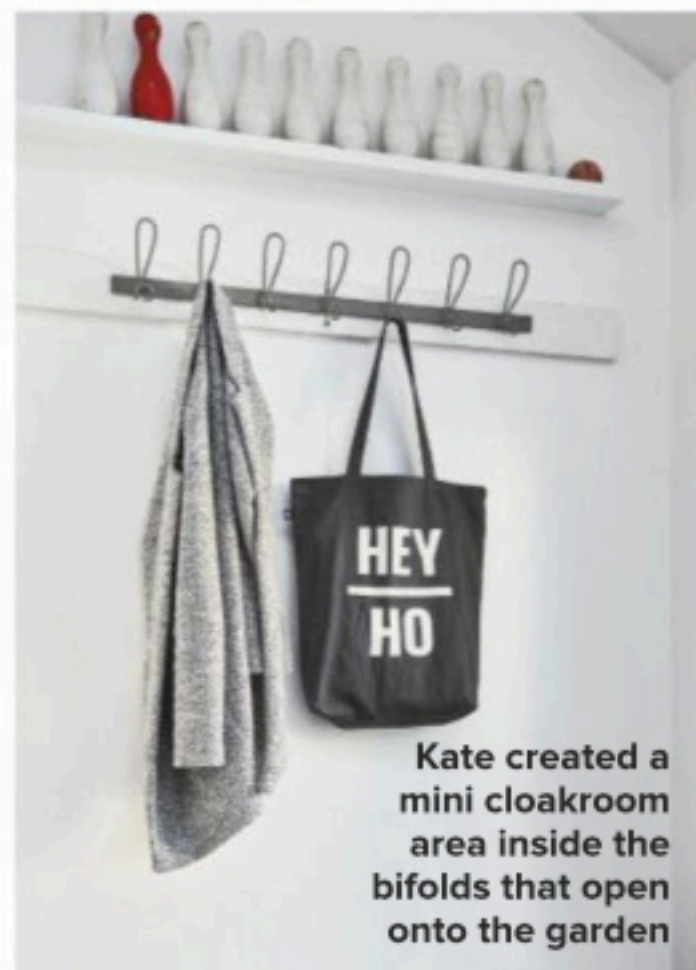
Simplify the backdrop

'In the dining room, we painted the walls, ceiling, fireplace and piano all in the same colour. It creates a seamless look and covers up any colours you don't like, for example the orangey-brown of our piano.'

BUY THE KEY PIECES

Walls, piano and woodwork painted in Elephant's Breath estate emulsion, £43.50 for 2.5ltr, Farrow & Ball. Pendant ceiling light, £300; bench seat, £600; both Tom Dixon. Beech dining table, £300, Habitat

“Lighting is very important. It should be a feature in itself rather than just there for illumination”



Kate created a mini cloakroom area inside the bifolds that open onto the garden



MATCHING CEILING
 Paint it the same colour as the walls to make a room feel bigger



Be clever with colour

'I thought white walls would be too stark in the boys' bedroom but painting them bright yellow all over would be too overpowering. So I split them into white and yellow bands. Archie and Stanley really like them.'

BUY THE KEY PIECES

Similar yellow paint, try Dulux Golden Bark 4, £14.99 for 2.5ltr, Paint Direct. Kallax unit, £130, Ikea. Similar rug, try Pearl, from £59, Marks & Spencer. Round jute and blue dash rug, £45, An Artful Life. Similar initial bags, from £10, Alphabet Bags



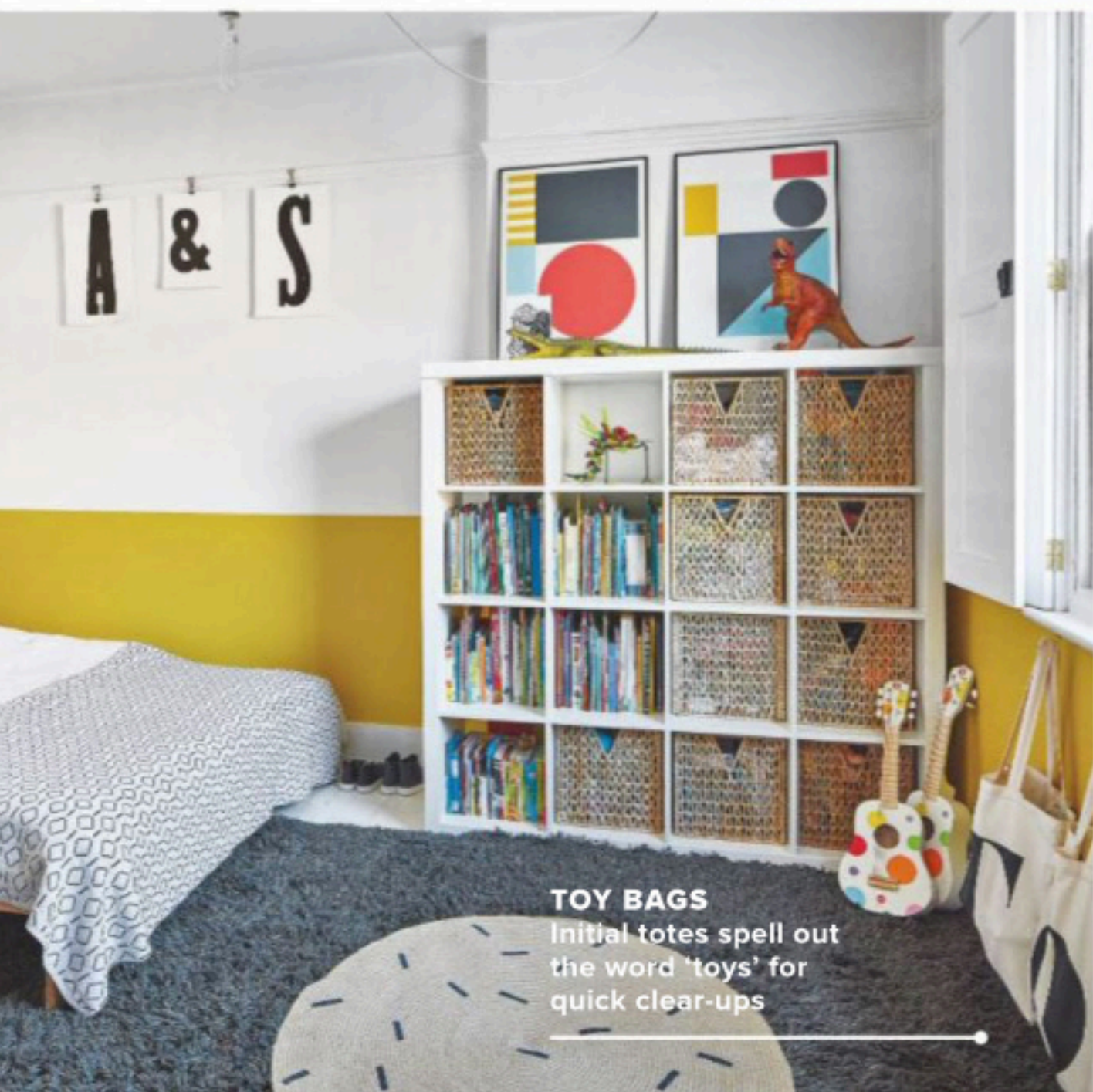
HANGING PLANT
Works with the looped light to create a bold focal point

Show off quirky original features

'We chose shutters for the unusual windows, which a joiner made for us,' says Kate. 'They shut out the light and mean we don't need curtains.'

BUY THE KEY PIECES

Metal bedside tables, £120 each, Tom Dixon. Ceiling flex and bulb light, price varies, NUD Collection. Kelim rug, £79, An Artful Life



TOY BAGS
Initial totes spell out the word 'toys' for quick clear-ups



WHAT WE LEARNED

“It's hard finding the right shade of grey! A lot of them are very cold, which I didn't want as this isn't a sunny house, but warm greys can have a purple tone, which I didn't want either. I used several samples until I got the right one”



DON'T MISS THE DETAILS...

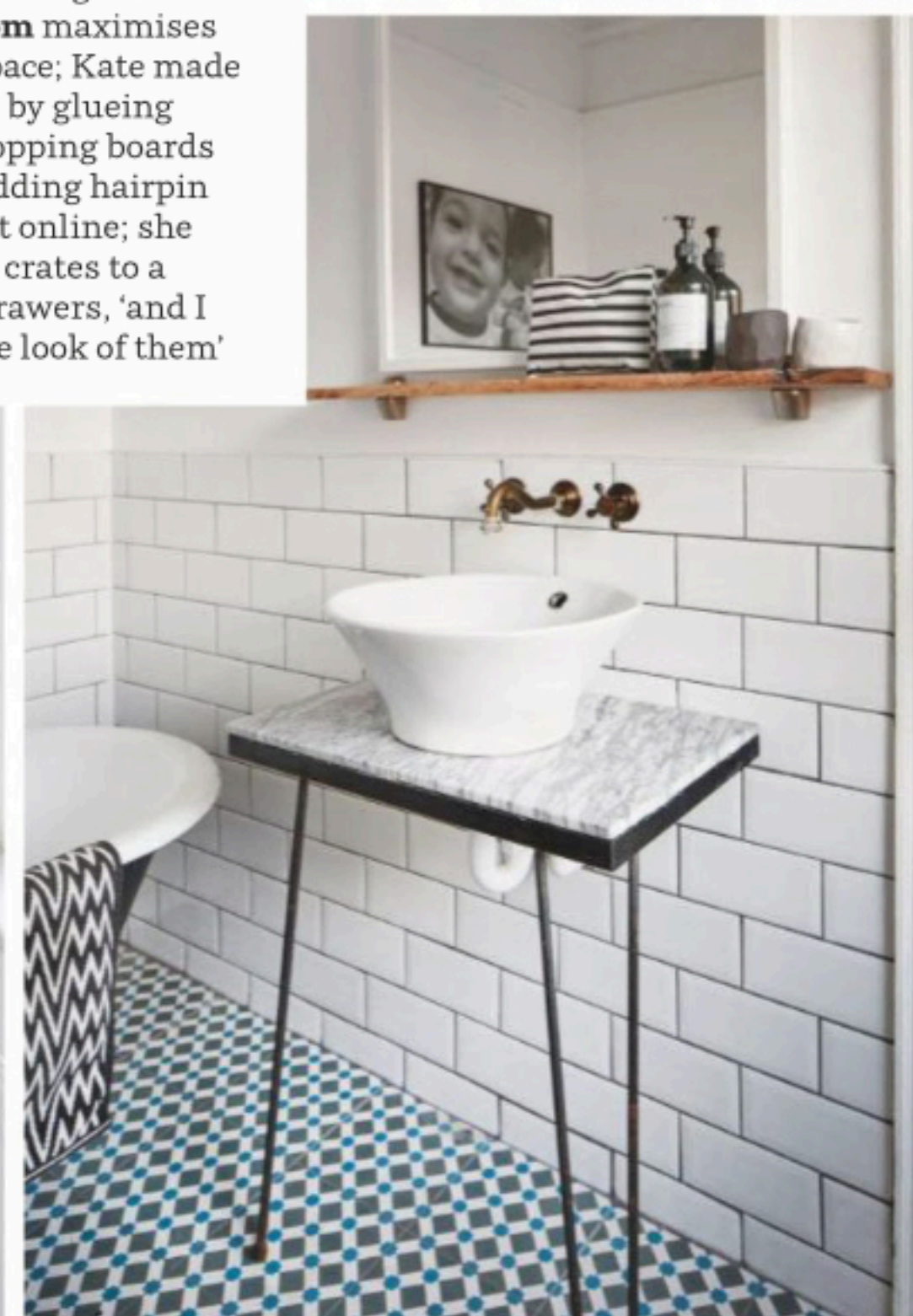
Clockwise from top left: Place artwork on shelves like Kate has done in the **main bedroom** - 'it means I can move things from room to room'; open shelving in the **small bathroom** maximises its feeling of space; Kate made the **basin unit** by glueing two marble chopping boards together and adding hairpin legs she bought online; she added old fruit crates to a **bookcase** as drawers, 'and I love the vintage look of them'



HALF TILING
Cheaper than going to the top and gives walls more interest with two surfaces



FEATURE SHARON SMITH, VANESSA RICHMOND
PHOTOGRAPHS DAVID PARMITER PLANS AGENCY SERVICE





Make it work for you

KATE'S STYLE: CONTEMPORARY ARTISAN

Abstract prints, natural weaves and key design pieces create a modern scheme with mid-century flair

IDEAL

SHAPE SHIFTER

Green and Yellow by Inaluxe, from £55, King & McGaw



LIGHT BULB MOMENT

Marble and brass lamp, £165, Printer & Taylor



GREAT DEAL

MOUNTAIN SCENE

Day Shapes screen print, £40, U Studio



INDUSTRIAL EDGE

Lina table lamp, £50, Oliver Bonas



ABSTRACT ANGLES

Axle printed circle cushion, £20, Made.com



RETRO STYLE

Pols Potten Tokyo rattan chair, £261, Amara



TAKE IT EASY

Kawa rattan lounge chair by House Doctor, £150, Arbol House



ARTISTIC FLAIR

Painterly print cushion, £15, House of Fraser



DRIP EFFECT

Taka reactive glaze ceramic vase, £35, Habitat



WOVEN WONDER

Round wicker basket, £35, Mink Interiors



NATURAL CHOICE

Seurat seagrass basket with lid, £25 for two, Habitat



SUNNY CERAMIC

Reactive vase in ochre, £16, Next



FEATURE STEPHANIE DURRANT PHOTOGRAPH DAVID PARMITER



BUTTON DETAIL

Primrose Hill sofa in Kneb Light Grey, £993, Sofas & Stuff



HOME COMFORT

Tivoli three seater wool sofa in Light Grey, £889, Swoon Editions