

Bright SPARKS



This sunny, light-filled apartment in Edinburgh lets its owners' fabulous collection of art take centre stage

Photography ZAC and ZAC Words Judy Diamond



DETAILS
What The upper two floors of a converted townhouse
Where Edinburgh's New Town
Interior design Jeffreys Interiors

Previous pages, left A pop of colour draws the eye to the Jonathan Adler bar cart. **Right** Looking into the dining room, where Charlotte James chairs surround a Julian Chichester table, with lighting by Heathfield and Kelly Wearstler; there used to be a solid wall between these two rooms, but the new double doors give a much better flow. **This page** The lounge is a serene space, in part thanks to its beautiful window treatments, with a sheer curtain (to diffuse the light) paired with a heavy curtain. The abstract rug, custom-made by Turnberry, is a piece of art in itself. The lighting is by Heathfield. The armchairs were made by Charlotte James in a burnt orange colour the owners love. **Bottom right** A corner of the snug: colourful objects shine against the Peden & Pringle cabinetry painted in Zoffany's neutral Storm Grey



Just as it is for a photographer, the foremost consideration for an interior designer is light. How much is there? Where does it fall? Is there enough? Is there too much? How does it affect the mood in a room? How can it be manipulated? Kimberley Bremner of Jeffreys Interiors was reminded of light's crucial role when she began working on an apartment in Edinburgh's New Town last year.

The owners, who were relocating from Aberdeen, had come to her after seeing a property she'd designed a few years ago, in Ann Street. It was full of rich, dark colours, and they loved its moody atmosphere. Could she do something similar with their new place? But when Kimberley went to have a look, she could see immediately that such a scheme would never work here. "The house in Ann Street faced north and it needed to feel cosy – the warm, dark tones achieved that," she explains. "This apartment, though, faces south, has lovely big windows and is filled with a beautiful light. Going dark would ▶





have felt really forced and would have jarred with the strong, almost luminous golden-orange light that streams in. I'd have been fighting with the natural light instead of working with it, and the interiors would have felt uncomfortable and claustrophobic."

If the clients had any doubts, they were won over once she explained how a dark scheme would impact their treasured art collection – a collection they'd told her they were planning to rotate and add to. "I said, 'If we go dark, we'll have to illuminate your paintings so you can see them, and that will jar against the darkness too. And if we put up picture lights, you'll be restricted over where you can hang things.' I had a lot of winning arguments!" She also had a solution: to go with dark elements – pieces of furniture and accessories – set against a calm, serene background. The walls, the ceilings and the doors are all one

colour so the eye can focus on what really matters: the art.

The apartment, on the top two storeys of a Georgian townhouse, had been recently overhauled by a developer, and looked in good shape on first viewing. But as soon as the Jeffreys team scratched the surface, all sorts of issues emerged: the floors weren't level, the kitchen was a cheap off-the-shelf model, and only some of the wiring and plumbing had been upgraded. "It just lacked quality. The craftsmanship was really poor," recalls the designer.

A bigger problem awaited on the upper floor, which was crammed with tiny rooms. It needed a total rethink. Working with an architect, Kimberley redrew the layout, getting rid of the utility room and a long corridor that took up a lot of space. The new arrangement still had three bedrooms, but each was bigger, brighter and more comfortable than before. ▶



This page and opposite The kitchen was made to measure by Peden & Pringle and painted in Craig & Rose's dark green Angelica. The wall (and indeed the rest of this storey) is done in Zoffany's Quarter Linen. "The neutral palette throughout means the owners can switch out their artworks whenever they want," explains lead designer Kimberley Bremner. "You can see how we incorporated their desire for a darker, moodier atmosphere here with the green cabinetry and the walnut detailing, while still keeping the space airy." The lighting fixtures are by Thomas O'Brien

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Above The principal bedroom was created by knocking together several smaller rooms. “With this newfound expanse at our disposal, we snuck in a wee dressing room behind the super-king bed – the half-height headboard separates the two areas into distinct spaces without confining the dressing room to a claustrophobic corner,” says Kimberley. “And the dark green curtains give us a splash of moodiness and continue the flow of the home.” The carpet is by Jacaranda and the lights are by Ralph Lauren. The bed was made by Charlotte James, upholstered in a Larsen fabric

This page and opposite “The en-suite is our *pièce de résistance*. It’s an opulent space,” says Kimberley. “We used large-format marble-effect porcelain tiling from Mandarin Stone – the bigger the slab, the better it looks: the pattern is neater, and there’s less grout.” Reeded details recur throughout the apartment and are prominent here in the Orac wall mouldings, the window and the shower screen. Heathfield lighting, Lusso Stone sanitaryware and a bespoke vanity unit by Charlotte James add to the luxe feel



There were changes downstairs too. The wall between the lounge and the dining room was opened up, so dinner guests can move from one to the other without traipsing through the hall. Double doors mean there’s still the option to close off the space for a cosier feeling.

“These clients are young – they’re only in their early 40s and they live a great life – so their home should reflect that,” says the designer. “Let’s not keep it trad and stuffy, because that’s not you,’ I told them. I felt it was important to create something that would suit the way they actually live, rather than focusing on what a house of this size ‘should’ have. Their interests, their social lives, how they spend their day-to-day – we took it all on board and incorporated it into the design.”

To that end, she ditched the traditional study you might expect to find and gave them a snug instead. “And the first thing

any snug needs is an enormous sofa. So we got the biggest one that would fit in and built the rest of the room around that.”

There is still plenty of respect shown to the apartment’s Georgian heritage, though, as can be seen in the new Shaker-style kitchen from Edinburgh cabinetmaker Peden & Pringle. “We could have gone for something a bit more modern, but the owners were clear they wanted it to be in keeping with the style of the house, a bit softer and more tactile,” says Kimberley.

A utility cupboard has been fashioned from an alcove, its contents hidden behind doors painted to match the pale walls, allowing the dark green island and cabinets to take centre stage. The island is topped with a single slab of quartz nearly 2.5m long and so heavy it had to be craned up three flights and in through the window. “That was nerve-racking – seeing all these expensive cars on the street below this giant block of stone!” ▶





Below Another view of the principal bedroom. Bright fabrics from Elitis, Designers Guild, Larsen and Christopher Farr all make an appearance. **Bottom** Cole & Son wallpaper in the downstairs loo. “We understand the importance of a quirky WC!” says Kimberley. The sanitaryware is by Lusso Stone



The bright, airy rooms work brilliantly in summer – but how do they hold up under Edinburgh’s iron-grey winter skies? Kimberley has pre-empted that problem, building in layers of lighting that give off the right glow and are in the right position in each room. “I like to illuminate corners with floor lamps and place table lamps on sideboards, for those nice mid-level lights,” she says. “Soft touches are everywhere too, and lightweight throws and cushions can be switched for heavier woollen ones. The layered window treatments help as well – a heavy curtain with a sheer one gives a lovely softness.”

The owners had quickly got on board with her bright scheme, and were keen to contribute; they would often snap photos of pieces they spotted when they were out and about, then ask Jeffreys if they could be used. “If they weren’t suitable, we’d find out what it was the owners loved about these pieces and then try to incorporate that element somehow,” she recalls.

Once or twice, though, the clients would insist: “We sent them to look at front door colours and they came back with this wallpaper [left], calling it ‘really good fun’ and directing us to use it in the downstairs loo...” laughs the designer. “We were happy to do it – we know it’s good for the soul to throw in something weird every now and then! We won’t steamroller you if you want to get a little weird sometimes – instead, we’ll make it work.” ■