

From Edinburgh, with love

When Kimberley Bremner was asked to work on a property on Edinburgh's illustrious Ann Street, there was no doubt in her mind that it would be a designer's dream, says **Nichola Hunter**

PHOTOGRAPHY: ZAC+ZAC

The old with the new: The sitting room is decorated with a charcoal wallpaper by Jim Thompson and is complemented with bespoke furniture by Charlotte James.



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This Ann Street property was the first time that Jeffreys Interiors had embarked on a full turnkey project and now the company can't wait to do more.

Kimberley Bremner was the lead interior designer on the project and explains how her clients happened across their new home. ‘The clients were living in Australia but had travelled to the UK on business and stopped over in Edinburgh for a few days,’ she says. ‘They went for a walk around Stockbridge and saw a house for sale in Ann Street. They arranged a viewing and bought it the following day.’

While in Edinburgh, the couple had also walked past the Jeffreys Interiors’ show room and in May 2019 they made an appointment to meet with Kimberley. ‘They weren’t sure if their plan was to leave Australia and move here permanently,’ she recalls. ‘The house wasn’t big enough for the whole family to live in it full-time as they have three children.’

Until these plans were finalised, Kimberley focused on the one thing she knew that the clients were certain of. ‘I wasn’t really given a brief, but they mentioned that they had a large art collection and they wanted some of the rooms to be based around the art works;



Top: Peden & Pringle supplied the new kitchen which follows the basic footprint of the existing kitchen but with modernised and increased storage. **Above:** Originally the lounge, the glamorous first-floor bedroom runs along the entire frontage of the house. **Right:** The entrance vestibule has been treated as a room in its own right and showcases the property’s original period features.





TOP TIPS

For a tremendous townhouse...

1. Don't be scared to lose a principle room if you're not going to use it. It's your home, live in it how you want to.
2. Embrace the dark, you will help the room feel larger and give it more depth.
3. Make sure you have all your ducks in line before the project starts. Make a plan and schedule and give yourself a budget and time contingency.
4. Keep an open mind. You can be thrown curve balls, but you can work around them.
5. Don't do to the house what you think other people think you should. Do what you want and don't copy it from a magazine if it's not your personality.

Clockwise from top left: Period features in the family bathroom have been retained, refurbished and given a contemporary update; Ann Street was beloved by the Queen Mother who often drove along it on visits to Edinburgh; a seamless fit for the updated sitting room was the clients' mid-century sideboard.



that was actually a really easy starting point for me.'

In terms of layout and the sensitivity of the area, Kimberley couldn't do anything too radical. 'The houses on Ann Street are a bit like dolls' houses, they're actually quite small and because we had to keep a minimum of three bedrooms there wasn't a huge opportunity to create more rooms,' she explains. 'But by the time I picked up the keys, I knew that the clients were going to be living in Edinburgh almost full-time.'

With this in mind, Kimberley set about reconfiguring the layout to suit the way she thought her clients would live. The kitchen/diner remained on the basement level, as did the lounge, bedroom and family bathroom on the ground floor. On the first floor, Kimberley made the bold decision to forfeit the

formal drawing room and guest bedroom and reconfigured the space to create a luxurious principle bedroom suite which included a generously proportioned en-suite and dressing room along with a new guest bedroom. On the attic level she redesigned the space for the couple's daughter so that she had a bedroom with her own bathroom and dressing room on the same floor.

'Essentially, the house was dated, and the spaces needed to work harder. However, the original cornicing was in really good condition, the panelled doors and shutters were intact, the bones of the house were all there, it just needed a bit of love and care to bring it to life.'

Working with Bann, an Edinburgh-based construction company, the refurbishment was a thorough one and offered a few pleasant surprises. 'We uncovered a



Above: A vibrant teenage hang-out has been created using the verdant wallpaper (Bonsai, by Pierre Frey) and Tuscan red walls.

Below: Peden & Pringle created the bespoke dining table and banquette seating area to provide a space-saving seating solution.

fireplace behind the panels in the family bathroom and I just couldn't cover it up again. Removing the panelling also added an extra 600mm in the room which gave us the space to fit in a shower and a bath.

'In the basement, the kitchen floor was on several different levels which we wanted to rectify and when we dug down it was like a marsh. There was a lot of groundwork to do but we also found the original flagstones. Unfortunately, they only covered three quarters of the space so we had to lay porcelain tiles under the dining table, but they were still a great find.'

Original flagstones and tiles were also discovered in the hallway albeit

glued under carpet. 'We refurbished the stairs, along with the handrail and spindles, cleaned up the flagstones and polished the tiles.' Once the dirty work was complete, Kimberley started to bring in the artwork and finalise the colour schemes.

“ It just needed a bit of love and care to bring it to life

'The clients sent me pictures of the art and its dimensions; some of it was too big to be used as we simply didn't have the wall space and that was a challenge in itself, but I was able to use the style, colours and influence of the

pieces. The clients were so interesting and they'd travelled extensively and had some amazing pieces. Sadly, there were a few pieces they couldn't bring to Edinburgh but I managed to incorporate the essence of them. After that I had very little contact with the clients, and I was left to my own devices.'

After six months, the project was ready for unveiling and Kimberley's clients arrived on 23 December 2020. 'I had done a food shop for them, but I didn't hear anything until the 27 December and by this time I was beginning to think they didn't like it. Then I received a phone call saying it had taken this long to get in touch as my client couldn't stop crying; she was so overwhelmed by how incredible it was and it was way beyond her expectations.

'As a designer this was my dream project. I'm known as Mrs Monochrome in the office, but monochrome doesn't only mean black and white, it's a contrast of dark and light and this house suited myself and my style really well. It worked so well for me and for Jeffreys. It was daunting at the start but now the majority of my work is turnkey projects and I love it.'



FIELD FACTS

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