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Interior designer
**Niloufar Bakhtiar-
Bakhtiari** has
transformed an
archetypical Victorian
London townhouse into
a talking point

Words: Lucy Land

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ordinary

“When you open the door to this typical Chelsea townhouse, the first thing you see is a corridor and a staircase. So we took that as our starting point to ensure that we would make the family home look amazing,” says Niloufar Bakhtiar-Bakhtiari, head of design and founder of award-winning NBB Design.

The London home that Niloufar is referring to belongs to a young French couple. After having children, they wanted to update their house to create a warm and comfortable feel. The couple enjoy entertaining so the design project was aimed at reflecting their personalities while also creating a fun, elegant and functional space. “We had worked for this couple previously so the brief was to reuse some furniture from their previous house but to create a more family-like style, while also creating a less urban atmosphere than their previous property,” Niloufar explains.

Set over six floors, the Grade II-listed Victorian property located in Belgravia had previously been separated with two basement flats so Niloufar and her team reunited the building and added a window to the rear of the house to allow more light into it. “Getting permission to have the window installed proved quite a challenge with the council,” Niloufar admits. “But it was worth the effort.”

So how did Niloufar give the entrance a wow factor? “As the homeowner likes to hunt, an

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installation of white deer-head trophies in the corridor was created,” she enthuses. “The bright-red banister also attracts the eye and acts as a focal point throughout the house.” Indeed, colour is used in a playful yet sensitive way, with paintings and fabrics influencing the home’s palette. “The clients were already enthusiastic about the colour codes,” Niloufar says. “They even dared to have the living room walls painted in setting plaster, which gives a very mellow yet elegant effect that not everyone would have gone for.” Clever use of colour was also employed in the nursery. “The couple wanted a Peter Pan-themed nursery and it had to accommodate for a growing family.” To achieve this, Niloufar created a separate play area to the sleeping area and painted the floor in order to bring softness to the room.

“The inspiration for the home was to mix antique and contemporary furniture and classical and funky designs, which hide technology,” Niloufar says. This is, arguably, most apparent in the dining room, where two Asian art pieces owned by the couple became the starting point, while a classical glass chandelier was surrounded with contemporary transparent mirrors. For entertaining purposes, two tables can be joined as one, but are usually separated to make the space cosier for everyday life. Meanwhile, the kitchen was given a country-style makeover to create a charming, elegant space.

Niloufar and her team created a sophisticated, stylish drawing room with an en-suite family room by using a very subtle setting-plaster background and some pearl-grey paint, while the wall surrounding the second fireplace was lined with charcoal wallpaper, surrounded by four black bookshelves. The master bedroom and en-suite, which features an antique mirror wall surrounding the fireplace, also reflected the mix of contemporary and classic styles.

NBB Design added subtle touches of the French owners’ heritage by featuring their antique furniture pieces and artworks throughout the house. For example, the homeowners cherish a painting of Peter Sellers, so Niloufar placed it in the bathroom so they could enjoy it. “I always try to treat bathrooms as other rooms and to incorporate art into them,” she says.

Niloufar is expert at improving small, awkward spaces. The garden room is a perfect example of her skill in transforming such a spot. “We changed it quite dramatically, using the existing wall panelling, and painted the ceiling red,” she explains. The effect is dramatic yet refined. Another surprise can be found in the guest bathroom. “We made it a priority to make it stunning,” Niloufar reveals. She achieved this by treating classical moulding in a contemporary way with neon paint, which created a striking effect. “Even the very classical toile de jout blind is hand-painted with fluorescent colours,” Niloufar smiles. It’s a wonderful example of how Niloufar has transformed a space that’s usually considered quite ordinary into something that is quite extraordinary.

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