

REAL HOMES

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'The floor has a terrazzo-style look, which we created using standard, ready-mix concrete and buff-coloured aggregate, then ground back to expose the stone,' says Ross.

Dining table, designed by Emma and Ross, built by Jonathan Read. **Dining chairs**, vintage and Stokke Tripp Trapp. **Sliding doors**, Jonathan Read



VICTORIAN RENOVATION

Bespoke touch

Designing their own home gave architects Emma and Ross Perkin a license to get creative – and the result is a quirky space that's tailor-made for their family

Profile

THE OWNERS

Emma and Ross Perkin, who own architectural practice Emil Eve (emileve.co.uk), and their children Jess, six, and Tom, three

THE PROPERTY

A four-bed Victorian terrace in Stoke Newington

PROJECT COST

£130,000 (excl. architects' fees)



Apart from the kitchen and doors, the joinery in this space was designed by Emma and Ross.

Shelving and skirting. Valchromat. **Pendant light.** Viabizzuno. **Bulletin board.** Forbo



Below 'A bright blue kitchen might seem bold, but it's the right feel for us,' Emma says. 'We look to the building for clues about the palette.'

Unit doors. Valchromat. **Worktop.** GEC Anderson. **Pendant lights.** Tala. **Bar stools.** vintage. **Splashback.** Grestec Egerton tiles

We've featured a handful of architects' homes in *Real Homes*, and the insight they give into the design of their own spaces is always invaluable. Emma and Ross Perkin of London-based practice Emil Eve Architects are no exception. Their quirky Victorian terrace is a result of their combined expertise and creative vision, and it's fascinating to hear about the thought process behind some of the details and special touches dotted around their home – from the two-tone walls of the bathroom to the stunning joinery they made themselves.

The couple inherited a nonsensical layout when they moved in, so they were keen to get started. 'The house had been rented out as bedsits so it didn't work as a family home,' says Emma. 'The kitchen was in the basement with no connection to the garden – in fact, the only access to the outside was through one of the bedrooms. There was also a strange outdoor loo block. The whole layout was a bit of a muddle.'

Stoke Newington was Emma and Ross's target area when they were house hunting, so they were prepared to compromise when they found this property – especially on the small courtyard garden. 'Every time we take on a project, we're looking for opportunities to connect to outdoor spaces, and this house was no different,' says Ross. 'The garden was unloved, but there was potential for an integrated courtyard. With young kids to think about, we decided to design pockets of space where we could cluster together, and that would integrate the garden into the design. That's why the garden and the kitchen-diner are two L-shaped spaces that interlock.'

Large sliding doors were key to smoothing the transition between indoors and out. 'Dissolving the boundary between the internal and external was key to opening up the kitchen, dining and outside spaces into one big room,' says Emma. 'Open or closed, the glazing makes the garden feel like part of the house.'

The doors are a great example of how Emma and Ross were able to achieve a bespoke finish on a budget. 'We wanted to avoid using standard, off-the-peg systems where we could, opting for a crafted look instead,' says Ross. 'We designed the doors ourselves, and they cost far less than a high-end specialist would charge.'

'Any project is about prioritising, especially financially,' adds Emma. 'We were happy to spend more money on the brick and the stainless steel worktop, for example, while using Ikea carcasses and cheaper tiles in the bathroom.'

With its bright blue and warm wood palette, the kitchen is the star of the home. 'We put a lot of thought into how the kitchen shape would work,' says Emma. 'Spaces with corners and pockets work a lot harder, and you can designate different activities in different areas.' In the end, the couple opted for an L-shaped layout with kitchen, dining and window seat areas. 'We knew we wanted an island in the middle and decided to avoid placing

any appliances there,' Emma adds. 'Instead, it's a multipurpose area. It's common for the kids to be sitting drawing on one side while we're prepping food on the other.'

After designing homes for other people, the couple admitted they found it harder to make decisions for themselves. 'Luckily, we've worked together for so many years that we know where each other's passions and specialisms lie – we're good at deferring to each other,' says Emma. Ross agrees: 'We're a partnership practice – we both get involved in projects, and I think our clients like that dual perspective. When we're working with clients, who they are plays a massive part in the design: who cooks, how often they entertain, what their hobbies are, and so on. It's a collaboration, and we brought that line of thinking to our own project as well.'



WORDS ELLEN FINCH PHOTOGRAPHS JULIET MURPHY



Right The courtyard outside the picture window is compact but filled with colourful plants.

Bricks, Petersen Tegl

Below and opposite The living room has a classic feel with neutral walls, exposed wood floors and more artwork. Emma and Ross had the original plaster coving restored, using a neighbour's to measure it up.

Art over sideboard and fireplace, Ben Crawford and David Nash. **Sideboard,** inherited. **Sofa,** Ikea (recovered). **Armchair,** inherited. **Floor lamps** and **rug,** Ikea. **Coffee table,** vintage. Walls **Painted** in Cornforth White, Farrow & Ball



Costs & contacts

Build work (excl. VAT and professional fees) £95,000
Kitchen £10,000
Furniture and decoration £9,000
Bathroom £8,000
Joinery £8,000

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