

Helping hand

By fitting out each room with luxurious, handcrafted furniture, the look and quality of this entire home have been completely revolutionised

Report: Anna Tobin

When they first moved into their Edwardian townhouse in a smart corner of London's Belgravia, Mimi Amin and her husband thought that all it needed was a lick of paint to transform it from a house that had been 'done up to sell' into a truly individual family home. However, after living there a while, they realised that, although it needed no structural alterations, it certainly required a bit of money to be spent on it.

"The whole house had basically been tarted up for sale, but the couple quickly discovered that, despite it all looking good, everything had been built to quite a low standard and was not at all long-lasting," elaborates furniture designer Barbara Genda, who was brought in early on in the refurbishment.

Mimi was pregnant with the couple's third child at the time so she was keen to get everything shipshape before the imminent new arrival. It was her builder who put her in touch with Barbara, a bespoke furniture designer who ended up working on nearly every room in the house. "My builder knew we were looking to have several fitted units installed around the home and he suggested I come and have a look at some work done by a furniture designer in another property he had been working on; and that's how I came to find Barbara," explains Mimi.

She was looking for a designer that would provide imaginative storage solutions that both functioned well and looked great, and as soon as she met Barbara she knew she would deliver. "We got on very well from the start," says Barbara. "I could see it was a very high-end house and it clearly needed a bespoke approach. I put ▶





Above: The wall of smart, solid oak, wenge-stained, floor-to-ceiling wardrobes provides plenty of space for hanging and folded clothes and shoes.



Above: The contemporary Sanderson wallpaper running behind the bed ensures that the striking king-size bed is the focal point of the luxurious master bedroom suite.

Opposite page: Having the luxury of space, Barbara designed the chests of drawers to match the wardrobes and bed.

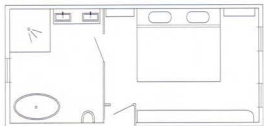


together a package of furniture that I could provide for the family and I've gone on to help Mimi with the interior design of the whole house. We've been a great team!"

Barbara began with the master bedroom on the first floor where the aim was to create a tranquil feel with an air of understated luxury. She designed a simple but elegant bank of wardrobes that was subtly cut around the corning, which couldn't be touched as the property is listed. "It was a challenge to finish the wardrobes in such a way so that they wouldn't interfere with the windows and allow access for the curtains. However, to overcome this difficulty I came up with the idea of curving the wardrobe at the end and adding curved drawer units to balance the scheme," she explains.

Barbara approaches all her storage designs very methodically. Hence she asked to see all the clothes that would need to be stored in the master bedroom so that she could accurately calculate how much hanging space was needed and how many drawers and shelves would be required. "When it came to the look of the units, Mimi initially asked for them to be white, but she was very open to suggestions. I thought that such a large room filled with natural light could take a darker colour, which would make more of a statement, so we went for a wenge colour."

Barbara also accompanied Mimi to fabric shops and helped her to pick out the colour scheme for the room and the paper for the feature wall. "I knew that she wanted the room to be a calm inner sanctuary away from the hustle and bustle of the rest of the house, and once ►





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Above: So as not to detract from, or obstruct, the lovely period windows and their dramatic window dressings, the edge of the wardrobe has been artfully curved.

Right: A wenge-coloured vanity unit links the ensuite with the adjoining bedroom.





Above: The unobtrusive bedside tables have been designed without handles, making them easy for little fingers to grab safely. They have also been measured to guarantee that they can fit around a small double bed in the same room, ensuring that the nursery will grow with the child.

we had the colour scheme in place I went through some subdued fabrics for the headboard with Mimi and then I had it upholstered in a lovely warm and restful shade," reveals Barbara.

The adjoining bathroom continues this feel with a similar palette of calm, neutral shades. Soft, creamy brown tiles flow across the floor and walls, while a vanity unit made from dark timber echoes the bedroom and kitchen design. A frameless shower enclosure and sleek, simple brassware and sanitaryware complete the effect.

Barbara then set to work creating a nursery that would take the baby from birth into its teenage years. "I created two bedside tables in there, spaced in such a way so that they could balance the cot between them, and as the child grows this space will fit a small double bed." The main colour scheme was kept neutral in here, so that the child can inject their personality into the room as they mature.

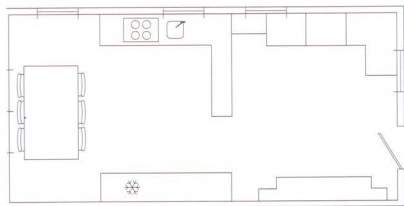
The couple had no plans to change the kitchen initially, but, having seen the other property that Barbara had worked on, Mimi knew she wanted something similar in her house to replace the cheap high-street units it came with. So, once the master bedroom suite was complete and Barbara had created some wardrobes for the children's rooms, she was commissioned to take on the kitchen on the lower ground floor.

"My brief was to create a workable, attractive kitchen with lots of storage, whilst keeping costs down, as the kitchen was a treat rather than a necessity. So we kept all the utilities in the same place and opted for a run of white, full-height storage along the inside wall, with a run for food preparation and serving along the window," explains Barbara. With the walnut veneer handleless units smartly framed in black granite, Barbara then suggested bringing some colour into the room, prompting Mimi to opt for this striking apple green splashback.

The kitchen leads onto the family living space so it was important that these two areas flow into each other. Thus, walnut flooring runs throughout and Barbara designed an impressive wall-hung unit, also in walnut, to fit under the TV. And, after searching in vain for the perfect sofa, Mimi asked Barbara to design this for her too.

"Barbara has done everything in the house absolutely brilliantly. There is nothing I would change about it now; we love it here," enthuses Mimi. Barbara was equally delighted with the final result and is continuing to help Mimi with various design projects within the home. "What greater testament could I ask for?" she concludes.

KBB





Top: The zesty green splashback helps to link the kitchen to the garden beyond and adds a sense of fun to the scheme.

Above: Designer Barbara Genda had the floating console unit made in walnut to match the kitchen units and provide an extra link between the two adjoining spaces. The feature wall of wallpaper provides a warm backdrop to the family living space, whilst the wall-hung unit ensures that the room is easy to clean and maintain.

Above left: The bright white door fronts conceal a range of useful storage options.



Above: When Mini couldn't find a sofa to fit the living room, she commissioned Barbara to create a bespoke one for her. The side table provides additional storage for general family clutter.

SourceBook

DESIGN

Kitchen and furniture design Barbara Genda Bespoke Furniture (020 7978 2349 or www.barbara-genda.com)

KITCHEN

Appliances Integrated double fridge and freezer, dishwasher, built-in ovens and hob, all Siemens (0844 892 9044 or www.siemens-home.co.uk)

Flooring Walnut. For similar try Ecora (020 7148 5265 or www.ecora.co.uk)

Worktop Granite. For similar try Domo (01753 554621 or www.domostone.com)

Splashback For similar try Domo, as before
Cabinetry Mix of walnut veneer and melamine Milano units and white satin lacquer units with routed handles, Barbara Genda Bespoke Furniture, as before

Dining furniture For similar try Dwell (0845 675 9090 or www.dwell.co.uk)

LIVING ROOM

Sofa Barbara Genda Bespoke Furniture, as before

Storage Side table and wall-hung unit by Barbara Genda Bespoke Furniture, as before

Wallpaper For similar try Designers Guild (020 7351 5775 or www.designersguild.com)

MASTER BEDROOM

Storage and headboard Bespoke designs by Barbara Genda Bespoke Furniture, as before

Bed For similar try And So To Bed (0808 144 4343 or www.andstobed.co.uk)

Bed linen and curtains John Lewis (0845 604 9049 or www.johnlewis.com)

Wallpaper Early Tulips, Sanderson (0844 543 9500 or www.sanderson-uk.com)

Table lamps For similar try Home Lighting Store (01202 835002 or www.homelightingstore.co.uk)

BATHROOM

Basin and vanity unit For similar try Ripples (0800 107 0700 or www.ripples.ltd.uk)

Shower For similar try Matki (01454 322888 or www.matki.co.uk)

Brassware For similar try Hansgrohe (01372 472001 or www.hansgrohe.com)

Walls and flooring Ceramic tiles. For similar try Bibliotheque (020 8883 3715 or www.bibliotheque.co.uk)

NURSERY

Cot For similar try John Lewis, as before
Blind Fabric available from Kidz Collection (0113 391 0468 or www.kidzcollection.co.uk)

Chair For similar try a Goldlocks Armchair for Kids from Great Little Trading Company (0844 848 6000 or www.gltc.co.uk), upholstered in fabric from Kidz Collection, as before

Storage Bespoke by Barbara Genda Bespoke Furniture, as before

COST

A similar kitchen would cost around £20,000 (including appliances), a similar master bedroom around £12,000 and a similar nursery scheme around £5000.

GET THE LOOK



Above: Clarendon cushions from The White Company, priced £50 for small and £60 for large. (0844 736 4222 or www.thewhitecompany.com)



Right: Goldlocks Armchair for Kids from Great Little Trading Company, priced £125. (0844 848 6000 or www.gltc.co.uk)

Below: Early Tulips wallpaper in Silver/Yellow by Sanderson, priced £49 per roll. (0844 543 9500 or www.sanderson-uk.com)

