

MODERN MASTER

Think children and contemporary art can't mix? It's all about being creative with the décor, say Simone and Rob, as their family home demonstrates rather nicely

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HOME PROFILE

The owners Simone Suss, an interior designer, her husband, Rob, who works in finance, and their children, Isabella, six, Charlie, four, and Oliver, two.

The property A newly built detached four-storey house in north London. The ground floor has an entrance hall, living room, dining room, kitchen, family room and WC. In the basement are two offices, a playroom, home cinema, gym, two bathrooms, a WC and utility room. The master suite is on the first floor, along with three children's bedrooms, an en-suite bathroom and a family bathroom. On the top floor there are two bedrooms, two bathrooms, a games room and utility room.



HALLWAY

The hallway brilliantly mixes the traditional, modern and quirky. The timeless black and white flooring was Rob's must-have item after seeing something similar in a magazine, while the staircase was designed to allow light from a skylight to flow all the way down through the floors.

GET THE LOOK

Source black and white marble tiles for a chequerboard floor from Stone Collection. Excel Stairs builds traditional staircases. Buy a Magis Paradise Tree coat stand by Oiva Toikka at Nest. The paintings are by British artist Charlie Billingham; contact the Saatchi Gallery for selected works. The satchel is from Pedlars and the yellow hat is from House Of Fraser.

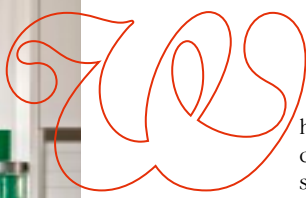


KITCHEN

Although Simone wanted the kitchen to feel open and spacious, an all-white scheme would have been too stark. So she teamed sleek white units and worktops with splashbacks in a warm, rich green to bring a sense of vitality to the space.

GET THE LOOK

The Corian worktops and green colour-matched glass splashbacks are from Neil Lerner. Find the Bestlite pendant by Robert Dudley Best at The Conran Shop.



When a house has a giant cactus in the family room, a ceramic 'pet' dog in the living room, and a light shade studded with dolls in the kitchen, it's a good bet the owners don't take themselves too seriously. 'I'm not sure if the pieces reflect our personalities,' says Simone Suss. 'But with us, what you see is not necessarily what you get!' She's not kidding. This Georgian-style new build may look conventional from the outside, but inside it's a one-off fusion of family home, contemporary art gallery and work space. There are classic décor details, such as the chequerboard floor in the hallway and a sweeping banister, paired with a luxury-hotel-style marble bathroom and a minimalist white kitchen. It's a testament to Simone's interior design skills that the whole look hangs together. 'I'm really happy with the house and how it works for us,' she says, 'although the build was so stressful, I wasn't sure we'd ever get to this point.'

Simone and Rob bought the plot in 2007. 'The house that originally stood here was literally the ugliest in the neighbourhood,' recalls Simone. 'Fortunately, the local conservation committee agreed with us, so we were given approval to knock it down and build from scratch.' Planning permission was quickly secured but the financial crash of 2008, followed by problems with the builders, meant work was delayed and they didn't move into their new home until August 2011. 'I used to watch house-build programmes on TV and be thankful they weren't following our project as it would have taken too long,' laughs Simone. On the plus side, this gave her plenty of time to plan each element of the design. 'However, being my own client and working with my husband was a baptism of fire,' she says. 'It was a large-scale project and, as a new build, the possibilities were endless. We agonised over every tiny detail, from door frames to handles to light fittings, because we didn't want it to shout "brand spanking new". Plus, it's

'Although this is a new house I didn't want it to declare "built in the Noughties". I wanted beautiful, traditional features, as well as the here and now.'



FAMILY ROOM

Charlie stands near a giant cactus artwork. 'Kids love it,' says Simone. She has kept this room simple, with built-in cupboards and shelves to hold a computer, books, photos and paperwork.

GET THE LOOK

Cactus by Guido Drocco and Franco Mellow for Gufram is available at Chaplins. Buy a set of three Amazonas tables by Eero Koivisto for Offecct at Scandinavian Design Center. Domus can custom-build storage. Flexform sofas are stocked by Mac&Mac. The painting is Speedster by Kristian Ryokan; MK Gallery sells a book of his works.

so much more emotional when it's your own house, as opposed to designing for a client. Rob and I had some heated debates before it was finished.'

They needed the house to be a showcase for Simone's interior design business, a gallery for their personal artworks, as well as pieces from The Franks-Suss Collection (which supports emerging artists and is run by Rob and a friend), and, most importantly, a family home. 'We're a busy household with three young children. We can't be precious about any of the rooms,' says Simone. She achieved all that by keeping to a monochrome scheme to work as a neutral backdrop, then using subtle changes in flooring and furnishings to create different moods throughout the house.

The living room and dining room have a glamorous feel, with parquet flooring, ornate fireplaces and velvet sofas. In the kitchen and connecting family room, the vibe is more relaxed, with bright, white spaces shot through with colour. The green splashbacks were inspired by daughter Isabella's T-shirt. 'I took one look at it and thought, "That's it! I've found the perfect colour,"' says Simone. Upstairs, the couple's bedroom is calm and quiet, and is the one place where they decided not to hang artworks. 'This is our chill-out territory – a place to read, to talk, to be together. I wanted the walls to breathe, so rather than focusing on specific pieces, we went for a textural wallpaper,' says Simone. Their stunning bathroom is all about the marble. 'It's book-matched, so it's like a butterfly's wings – both sides identical,' Simone says. 'Finding it was a labour of love; I viewed over 100 slabs of marble at various suppliers. I wanted it to look like a work of art.'

'Whether it's a natural material like marble or a contemporary painting, I just love pieces that are interesting and different,' says Simone. 'They excite your curiosity so you want to take a closer look.' In this home, it certainly looks like art really does reflect life.

To contact Simone, visit studiosuss.com. See more of Rob's artworks at franks-suss.com.



KITCHEN

Simone chose the white wooden flooring after seeing similar at the Saatchi Gallery, so it's no surprise the kitchen also showcases contemporary art, including a pendant light with protruding glass replicas of Brazilian dolls. 'I lined up the table and light so they could be seen from the front door; it means visitors immediately feel invited into the heart of our home,' says Simone.

GET THE LOOK

Douglas fir wide floor planks are available from Dinesen. Find an oval Saarinen table with arabescato marble top for Knoll and the DSW chair by Eames for Vitra at The Conran Shop. The Esperança lamp is by Brazilian design duo The Campana Brothers for Venini. The wall art is from the Broken Things collection by Livia Marin.

LIVING ROOM

Simone created a modern take on a traditional living room with parquet flooring, classic upholstered furniture, ceiling mouldings and a period fireplace. It's more formal than the family room, and provides a place where adults can socialise and relax.

GET THE LOOK

The Chesterfield sofa in grey velvet is from George Smith. The Herringbone cushions are from The Conran Shop. The glass and steel coffee table filled with pink pigment is a Sixties design by Yves Klein; source his pieces via artnet.com. The Balloon Dog was designed by Jeff Koons; see more of his work at jeffkoons.com. The rug was made to order by Crucial Trading.

HOME TRUTHS

Fish and chips or champagne and canapés? It depends on the time of day and where. Fish and chips for a yummy dinner with the kids; champagne and canapés on an evening out.

Outer space or under the sea? Outer space – I love the mystery of space and looking up at the dark sky. The children's bedrooms have twinkling stars on the ceilings at night.

Your idea of a fabulous day out is... If the sun is shining, I love to get the family out for a walk in the grounds of Kenwood House, followed by lunch and an amble round Hampstead Heath.

What's the most glamorous item of clothing in your wardrobe?

A red Antonio Berardi dress; the colour and cut are so flattering. **Where's your favourite place to buy clothes?** I seldom have time to shop, so I rely on Net-A-Porter and a dash round Selfridges.

Valentine's Day is coming up. What's the most romantic thing Rob has ever done? After Isabella was born, I was desperate for sushi but I didn't feel up to leaving the house. Rob arranged for a sushi chef and waitress to come over and serve us a sushi feast. It was delicious and such an amazing treat.

What's on your iPod? An eclectic mix of anything from Amy Winehouse to Stevie Wonder to Café Del Mar and Hôtel Costes compilations, and some old-school hip-hop and house. It all depends on my mood.

Any more artworks on your wish list? A thousand things! But if pushed, I'd love something by Grayson Perry.



LIVING ROOM ↑

The fireplace provides a focal point for artworks and first-edition James Bond books. 'The painting above the fireplace, by Chinese artist Chen Ke, gets mixed reviews, but it always starts people talking, which is great,' says Simone. The pink YSL sculpture was brought home years ago from a Serpentine Summer Party.

GET THE LOOK

Chesney's stocks marble fireplaces such as this. The Miss Ko2 sculpture is by Takashi Murakami; source similar anime figurines at Eye On Asia. Buy prints of Kiss by Andy Warhol from EasyArt. The Puppy porcelain vase is by Jeff Koons; see his work at jeffkoons.com.

'People say you should have the same flooring throughout to maintain a sense of flow. I just thought, "Why? Whose rule is that?"'

MASTER BEDROOM →

'I love our bedroom suite; I like to think it's on a par with any hotel room we've stayed in,' says Simone. The elegant wall lights and tall headboard create a sense of luxury and the blue-stained shagreen bedside tables were designed by Simone to fit the space.

GET THE LOOK

For a bed with a headboard like this, see the Thurman from Meridiani at Staffan Tollgård. You can buy a Stream wall light by Terzani at Chaplins. The Glen plaid duvet and pillow covers are by Ralph Lauren. The dog-print cushion is from The Conran Shop.

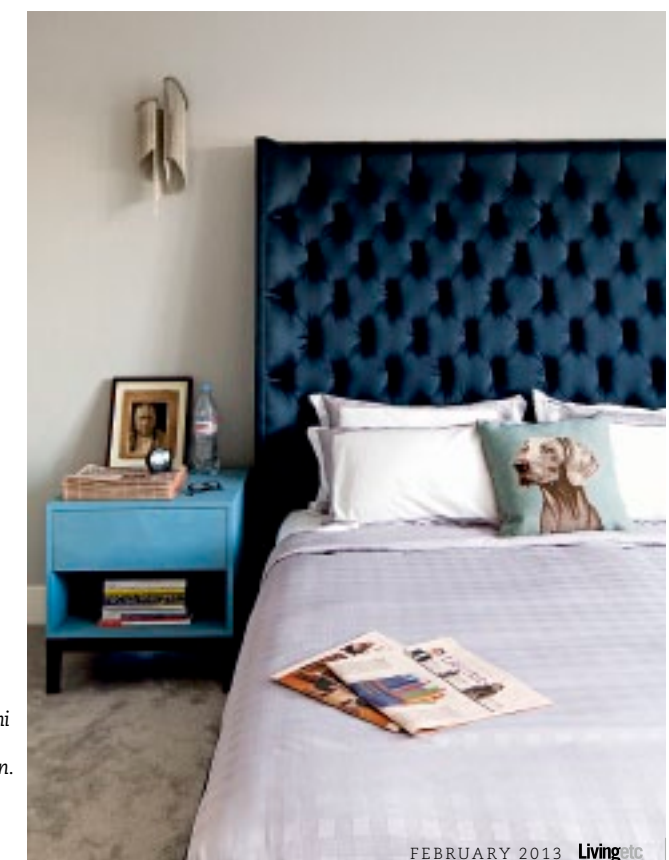


TOP-FLOOR LANDING

The top floor of the house is set aside for guests and has a bedroom with en suite. The painting is *Goings On About Town* by Nicholas Hatfull. The neon sign on the shelf was commissioned by Rob as a gift for Simone and says, 'You Make My Heart Go Boom Boom'.

GET THE LOOK

The Coast Beach Hut carpet at Crucial Trading is similar to this. Find Marilyn Monroe prints by Milton H Greene at art.co.uk. You can commission a neon sign from Creative Neon.





← **MASTER BATHROOM** ↑

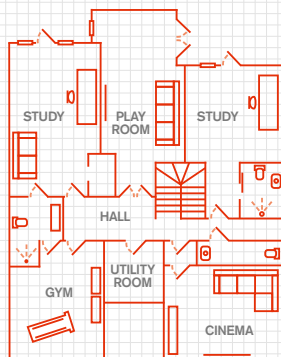
Simone has used marble throughout the house, but the bathroom is a class apart. She visited stone yards around the country to get the right slab, then had it book-matched – a process that splits the marble down the centre to produce two identical grains in mirror image.

GET THE LOOK

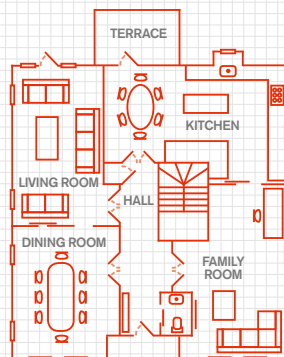
The book-matched marble is from Gormley. Victorian Plumbing sells minimalist mirror cabinets similar to this. The Mashiko wall light from Astro is a good match. The bath is from West One Bathrooms.

For more classic designs, visit housetohome.co.uk/houses

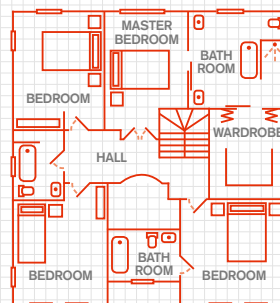
THE BLUEPRINT



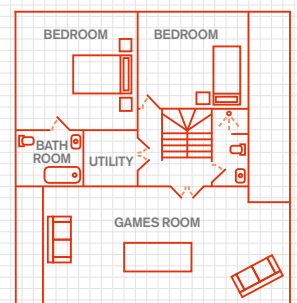
BASEMENT



GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR