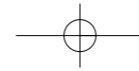




Tailored Elegance

Patience, they say, is a virtue. When it comes to deconstructing a property down to the basics and bringing it back to life in a new era, patience is just one of the virtues required. For Tom and Kate, they have worked in tandem with an interior designer to prove the best things come to those who wait.

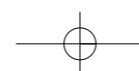


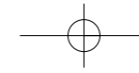


When the couple discovered this exceptional property overlooking the harbour, it was a million miles away from being the thing of beauty it is today. From the outside, prior to redeveloping, it was perhaps easy to see past its decrepidness and imagine that this was once a vast family home of epic proportions. However, contemporary life had grabbed hold of its open, sprawling nature and it had succumbed to being a collection of self contained flats in a state of rotten disrepair. So it was now up to Tom and Kate to relight the home's fire and bring it back to its former glory.

To assist them in their mammoth quest, they enlisted the help of Sinead at Upstage, the Dublin based interior design company. Upstage were able to embark on the entire process with them, not simply decoration. Tom and Kate had a vision, but to get there was going to take expertise in not only the interior design, but also the building phase. Sinead had experience working on projects from square one which meant she could enrol builders, painters, gardeners, furniture manufacturers... the list goes on. In essence, Upstage became the project manager for the task, working together with the couple to help achieve their dream.

Sinead had the knowledge of products and materials in the building and furniture industry, and worked with architect Frank Cowley and builders Jaf Construction, but it needed Tom and Kate's input to put her expertise into action, as Kate explains, 'We had an overall look that we wanted to achieve with the house. Obviously that was a long way away when we actually purchased the house. It was in a terrible state and the original soul of the home had completely gone. It was extremely important to us that everything that could be restored, should be restored. We definitely wanted a contemporary home, but in keeping with the classical features of the house.' It was then up to Upstage to make sure this happened, as Sinead describes, 'The place was essentially taken back to nothing and totally rebuilt. They wanted everything to be contemporary modern but within keeping with the house. What they wanted was to show you could have a really modern home in a really old house.'

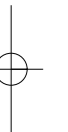


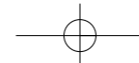


'I designed the layout and worked with the kitchen company to come up with what they have now. It's a brilliant entertaining house the way it's laid out.'

The restoration period was when the patience had to really take centre stage. There was one guy in charge of this and he spent more than six months on site, meticulously bringing back features that were destined to be trailed down and forgotten about, forever in the hands of the wrong people. But for Tom and Kate, preservation was paramount. You could spend hours gazing up at what a fantastic job has been done in painstakingly rebuilding the cornicing. It adds a tremendous amount of elegance to each room and gels the past with the present superbly.

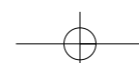
The main living space is in the basement. Here are the living room and kitchen with a view out into the rear garden. The kitchen from BC Kitchens is a cream lacquer design, as Sinead explains, 'They really wanted a high spec house from top to bottom so, for instance, we have all the essential gadgets in the kitchen with the coffee maker, American fridge and wine cooler. The worktop is marble. I designed the layout and worked with the kitchen company to come up with what they have now. It's a brilliant entertaining house the way it's laid out. Then, for the garden, the plan was to be able to look out through the kitchen and see the water feature from the kitchen, so it all flows into one space.'

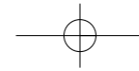




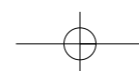
Entertaining does seem to be at the home's core in many ways and Kate agrees. 'It was a major consideration from the start really. On the one hand we have the open plan layout of the basement for daily living, and then upstairs we have the formal rooms with a dining and living space, also open plan. So really, you can't avoid the party anywhere!' Any party in this home would be one not to miss. Although, if you did want to slip off to a different room at any stage, no problem. The music system from Avnet Technologies, is completely integrated throughout the house so you can play a different album or radio station in each room if you so desire.

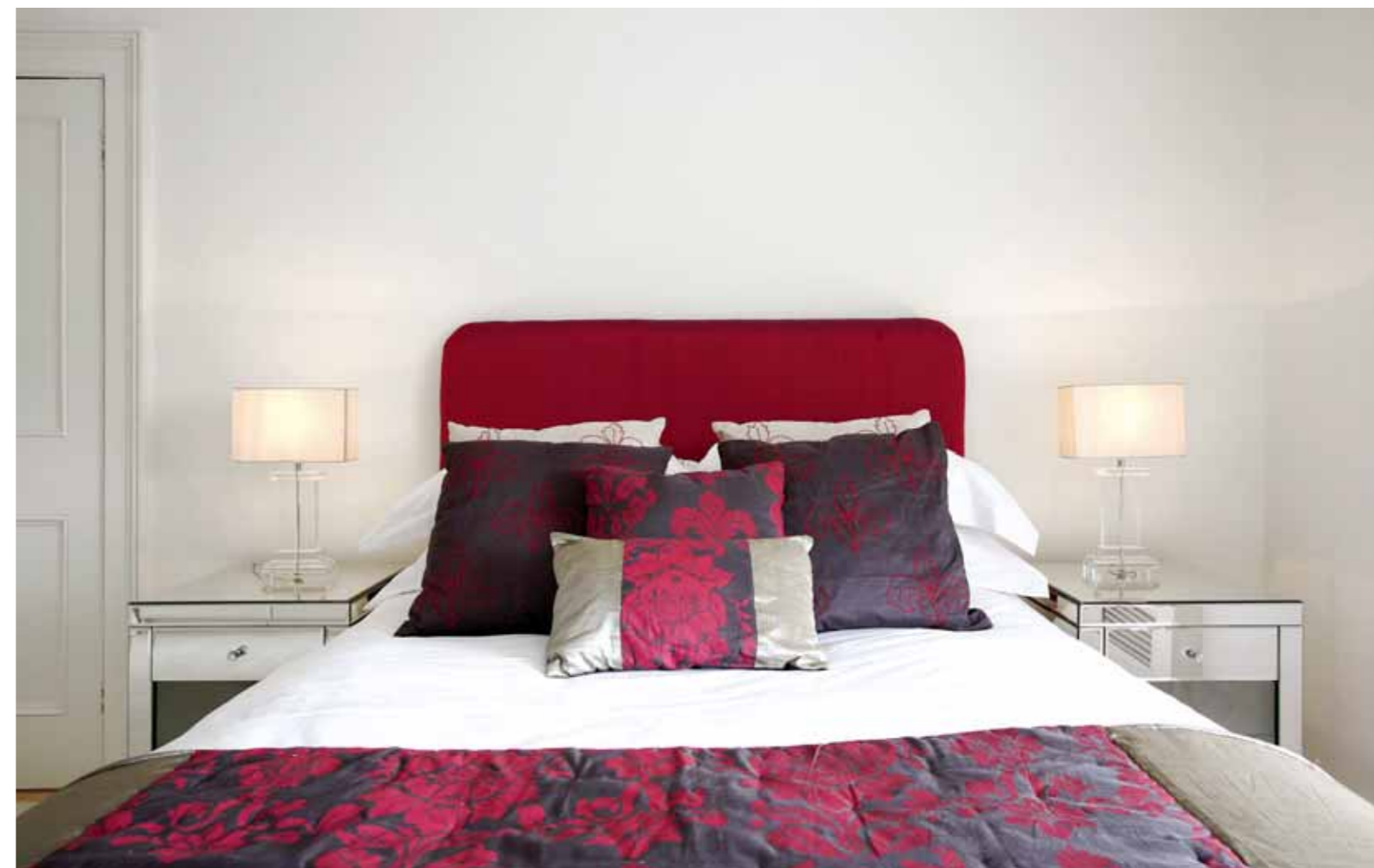
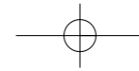
Moving upstairs to the main formal rooms, the restoration and grandeur takes centre stage. Magnificent is the only word for this space. The landing itself on the approach is just a wonderfully grand part of the house. 'We love these rooms,' says Kate. 'They are huge and have extremely high ceilings, but they always seem cosy and warm. The design and the furniture take care of that.' Sinead had every piece of furniture individually made for each room, so it is built for a specific space and purpose in mind, both in terms of aesthetics and practicality. This is what adds to the glow of the home, as Kate explains, 'With some homes that have lost their original features, I think you also lose a bit of that warmth. Here we have the mix of old and new which works well.' The chandelier is from Hicken Lighting and is another nod to the past. Through into the dining space, the theme flows perfectly with some aspects such as the lighting being echoed along with the tailor made dining furniture.





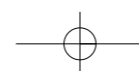
Up another flight and you come to the bathroom. Not the main bathroom, that comes later. This bathroom is eloquently designed. As with all the bathrooms, sanitary ware is from Waterloo Bathrooms. The earthy colourway is perfect and the unique intricate, sectional tiling by Surface Tiles is brilliantly different. The luxury continues with a steam room and the music system too. Then comes the master bedroom. And never has the word master been so apt. Originally two rooms, this huge bedroom is a beast of a size. The restored detailing and the fireplace harks back to the old school, and Sinead's styling brings it all bang up to date. The sheer size is almost overwhelming, but again, it feels very personal. 'The main bedroom and bathroom reflect the overall luxury of the house,' explains Kate. 'The floor area of these rooms is in proportion to the total size of the house and don't compromise other rooms.' It's very much an extravagant, plush boutique hotel vibe that so many aspire to. Until, that is, you step into the bathroom.





This is more of a bath area than a bathroom. For many, the bathroom is the room we spend least time in in our homes. For that reason, some tend not to spend as much money on it as, say, the kitchen. That has gradually changed over the years and Kate has pushed a different way of thinking. 'Bathrooms are now getting the attention that kitchens have always received. Therefore, the features included in the main bathroom reflect the overall standards and quality that apply to other rooms in the house.' Sinead has taken Kate's thoughts on board and created a vast, fascinating bathroom which has to be seen to be believed. The shower room is a room within a room. A glass haven with a shower rose big enough to shower an entire family in one sitting. 'We really wanted to do something special in here,' says Sinead, 'so everything is Philippe Starck and we made a huge statement with the light, again from Hicken Lighting, and the luxurious wooden panels. It really is a bathroom that befits this home and what it's about.'

The remaining bedrooms and bathrooms continue the theme. The ensembles all take their inspiration from the smaller, but no less impressive, earth toned designs. All the bedrooms continue the boutique feel of the master. The bedding and fabrics take care of the colour splashes in each room. The wall tones, painted by Brush Strokes, are subtle throughout, as the delicate corning and muscular fireplaces make all the statements the bricks and mortar need to make. Art makes its own contribution from Bad Art Gallery, with a delightful Deborah Donnelly cow piece and a couple by Sinead herself in the main living area down below.





Outside, the back garden may look, at first glance, that it was perhaps not as much as an upheaval as inside was. But it wasn't simply a case of digging out a couple of skips worth of earth. 'Over 100 tonnes were excavated to drop the level of the garden to where we wanted it. We also had to build up the wall, so it was a huge job.' The result is an intelligent use of space and a fantastic retreat which illuminates the entire ground floor by night as the flow from inside to out excels.

The end result is a masterpiece in preservation and one Kate cannot fault. 'We had a vision of what we wanted when we first saw this house. We worked with Sinead and told her exactly what we wanted, and the result is beyond what we imagined possible. She was able to manage the whole thing and to take what we pictured in our minds and develop this home, bringing it back to how it was supposed to be but in line with modern living. We have to pinch ourselves at times and remember how it was when we first saw it. From a nightmare to a dream within a year! It's been incredible to see it come along and we are delighted they were able to salvage all of the original features we love. We can't thank Sinead enough.'

Kate is rightly proud of her breathtaking home that exudes a regal elegance, even from the exterior. Once inside is when it really takes your breath away. By entering through the basement you experience the primarily contemporary element. Upstairs, that contemporary element fuses with the classical and the result is nothing short of a design statement. By working with Upstage, Kate and Tom were able to impart their ideas of what they envisaged to Sinead, who was able to make that vision a reality. With the tailor-made furniture and fine attention to detail throughout, this is a project of perfection and a wonderful example of luxurious living. 🏠