





KITCHEN
'The old scheme lacked storage, so I
picked extra-tall units,' says Stephanie.
Cabinetry, price on application, Leicht.
Green splashback, from £142, Ace Glass



SITTING ROOM
An original fireplace was removed to provide
a dramatic area for displaying items.
Storm 1950s red cocktail chair, £480, Kiki Voltaire.
Moooi Random white light, £405, Houseology



OFFICE
Reclaimed floorboards and antique
furniture create a stylish lived-in feel.
Art by Cécile Colombo. Bridge chair, £790 for
two; noticeboard, £235, both Kiki Voltaire

move to the coast had long been on the cards for Stephanie Leclere and her partner Paul. 'We had been living in London for the past 12 years, and I was working in a bank and stuck inside an office every day,' says Stephanie. 'For the last few years, Paul and I had hankered to live in the seaside resort of Brighton because it's quieter but still has the energy of a small city.'

After 18 months of house hunting, the couple, who have a son, Arthur, 6, spotted this Victorian terrace. 'We had a long wish list that included a garden, large living space and to be close to the centre of town,' explains Stephanie. 'I had planned to start a new career as an upholsterer, so I also wanted a spare bedroom for me to work in. Paul saw this place and put an offer in before I had even been to view it, as he knew it ticked all of our boxes.'

The previous owners had done little work to the place since the 1980s, as the tiny pink bathroom, faux-wooden kitchen, dated decor and fake fireplaces confirmed. 'The rooms were small and dark, too,' says Stephanie. 'But we loved the high ceilings and generous garden, plus the fact that the house was spread over three floors.'

Once Stephanie and Paul had got a feel for the place and saved up en\*ough money for the structural work, they called in a team of local builders to knock down walls and make rooms larger. The first thing they tackled was removing the chimney breasts. 'There was a fireplace in every room, including the bathroom, which just ate up space,' says Stephanie. 'Taking them out gave us so much more room to play with.' Then the opening between the kitchen and sitting room was made wider. 'The property was also replastered, insulated and decorated, and new windows and a bathroom suite were installed.'

To furnish the house, the pair would drive over to Stephanie's native France and pick up pieces that she would then restore. 'I wanted a calm, neutral space with a shabby-chic look and a modern design for the kitchen,' she says. Stephanie chose sleek white cabinetry with lots of storage, and the new window and glazed back door make this basement area brighter.

While Paul worked on the outside of the house, Stephanie filled the interior with vintage furnishings, vibrant textiles and colourful art. 'I like to dress the house with my finished work,' she says. 'Then I might sell a chair and in it's place another one appears. As pieces come in and out, I can try new ideas and layouts so our home is always changing for the better.'

Relocating to the south coast has been life-changing for the Lecleres, and Stephanie in particular. 'I now spend my days out shopping for furniture, instead of sitting at a desk,' she says. 'I'm so happy we finally made the move.'



### INSPIRATION

'Our home reflects the trends I have loved over the years, and the vintage French look upstairs is dedicated to my childhood in Provence and Sundays spent at Les Puces de Saint-Ouen flea market in Paris'



ARTHUR'S BEDROOM
A large vintage map of France is the main
feature in the couple's son's room.
For a framed map like this try Retromaps, £560. See
Stompa Curve chest of drawers, £299, John Lewis



BATHROOM
This previously pink scheme is now calm, neutral and contemporary.
Expresso marble mosaic wall tiles, £110.83q m, Topps Tiles, have this look

# Insight

## CLEVER STORAGE FOR SMALL SPACES

Utilise every inch of space to streamline your home in style, like Stephanie Leclere has done

Il homes benefit from adequate storage. Start with a thorough clear out and get rid of anything you don't use. Marie Kondo's book *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying* suggests that grouping belongings by type and designating one place for each helps with organisation.

Opting for tailor made

Bespoke furniture comes into its own in small spaces. You can fill every niche and alcove, get the best from awkward crevices and build around architectural features. Slim units are ideal for narrow areas, and cupboards can be extended all the way to the ceiling. A specialist furniture company should offer a full design service including site visits, drawings and internal fittings, but it's worth considering a joiner, too, especially if they come recommended.

Most homes suffer from bottlenecks, so think laterally about freeing up space. Can a small bedroom have its wardrobe outside? Or if you've got a compact kitchen, can the washing machine be relocated

to the bathroom or the fridge freezer moved under the stairs? Challenge your preconceptions, but be sure any solution is practical. Also make use of under-bed drawers, bench seating with storage, dual-purpose furniture and hooks, hangers and dividers that keep cupboards ordered.

Compact solutions

For the bathroom, choose a small bath and fit the shower over it, swap a full-size basin for a cloakroom version and go for a corner WC. In the kitchen, if your budget doesn't stretch to a bespoke design, look for ones with a range of units. Higher worktops, and deeper or shallower cabinets will help get maximum storage and workspace, while folding furniture can be used in a dining area. A mix of closed cupboards and shelves will make the space feel airy.

For all rooms, mirror, glass and any reflective surface will keep the look feeling open, while movable panels, screens and furniture bring versatility. And remember, a bright scheme with clever lighting never fails to enhance the sense of space.





**EXPERT EYE** 'Assessing how you use a space is vital – is it a multi-functional zone where work, rest and play are combined? Either way, think about every element of your routine, right down

to how you hang up your coat.'

BARBARA GENDA, BARBARA GENDA BESPOKE FURNITURE



### PROFESSIONAL ADVICE



'In open-plan living, you lose storage potential along with the walls. A good solution is long, low-level units to house a television, speakers and other electrical items in the sitting

room, continuing as a sideboard to store the childrens' toys or important files.

It's vital to think about what you'll be storing but also who's going to use it.

Drawers are great for keeping things ordered and accessible but for children, big cupboards with tough plastic containers that can be pulled out are preferable.

The hall is often a dumping ground for shoes, coats, prams and bikes, which doesn't make a great first impression. A run of tall units looks neat and we often suggest that clients push back a wall to accommodate this, as long as the adjoining room is big enough. And a pull-down bike rack is a great space-saver.

Where possible, create a separate utility area for an open-plan kitchen. You can stack a washing machine and tumble dryer in little more than a cupboard.

There are all kinds of storage ideas online but, for me, the most clever designs give people the space they need to live comfortably. Get it right, and you barely notice it's there.'

PAUL BRIVATI, TEDDY EDWARDS

#### ADDRESS BOOK

- **Ikea 020 3645 0000, ikea.com** Affordable flat-pack solutions, plus helpful videos
- The Guild of Mastercraftsmen 01273 478449, guildmc.com Professional body representing more than 400 different crafts, trades and professions
- Smart Storage 020 3468 8056, smart storagesolutions.co.uk Clever ideas for tricky spaces such as under the stairs and attic eaves
- Store 0844 414 2885, aplaceforeverything. co.uk Online shop with off-the-peg storage