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Restored *with love*



It was a race against the clock – and the stork – to find a large family house ripe for a revamp. Now Sam Kennedy's home is light and airy and full of life...

THIS PAGE The copper beech tree outside the window was the inspiration for the wall colour in the sitting room, Hopsack, from Paint & Paper Library (paint-library.co.uk), and it ties in with the colours of the Aboriginal art. A cream sofa by Flexform is set off by a luxurious bespoke silk and wool rug from The Rug Company, and the oak floor is by FPS Flooring. **LEFT** As extra space for guests who come round for coffee, Sam created a window seat, covered in a striped Marimekko fabric (marimekko.com) for a Scandi look



CLOCKWISE FROM BELOW: Sam found this 1960s rosewood table and chairs at Alfies Antique Market in London's Marylebone. A comfortable, child-friendly zone at the living room end of the kitchen/diner centres on a large sofa from B&B Italia. The cowskin rug and red leather club chair add to the masculine feel in the library, and the picture above the mantel is by Emma Alcock. While designing the kitchen, Sam was careful to add in plenty of shelving, with space for glasses



When it comes to finding a new home, nothing concentrates the mind more than the imminent

arrival of a baby. So it's just as well that when a heavily pregnant Sam Kennedy first saw a neglected four-storey Victorian semi in north west London, she fell instantly in love.

The house is Grade II listed and was divided into three tired flats, so turning it into a family home was always going to be a major challenge. But Sam and her financier husband Iain were undaunted.

'We were living in a flat, which very definitely wasn't suitable for a baby,' says Sam. 'We'd looked at lots of houses that weren't right because I knew I wanted a project to get my teeth into. I've always been interested in interior design and I didn't want to take on a finished house full of someone else's ideas.'

The house looked quite unprepossessing on paper, but as soon as Sam and Iain saw

it in the flesh, they fell for it hook, line and sinker. 'The rooms were enormous, it had lovely windows, a gorgeous stone staircase, and plenty of room for us to expand into,' says Sam. 'I could see how the four storeys could be rearranged, even though as an Australian, a tall house was not something I'd ever experienced. In the end we exchanged two weeks before Rory was born in December 2009. We just about made it!'

The new family moved into a rented flat nearby for the duration of the build and it was to be a full year before they were able to move into their home - just days before Rory's first birthday.

'We knew we had an enormous task ahead but we didn't anticipate one almighty hiccup that was the low point of the build,' says Sam. 'We were told that the lath and plaster on the ground floor would need to come off because sections were rotten. We realised we'd have to start replastering the walls again from scratch - it was a real shock, both for the budget and for the timescale.'

Sam scoured the country for specialist builders who could practise the ancient art.

'I tracked down this fantastic firm in Hertfordshire, Milestone Lime Plastering. It's a family concern and the skills have been handed down from father to son. It was fascinating to watch them work,' she says.

With Sam project-managing, often with baby in tow, the bones of the house started to take shape. 'On the ground floor we wanted the main reception rooms, the study and the sitting room. The lower ground floor would house a large kitchen/diner, which I designed, and an informal



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: The top bathroom, used by the children, has vibrant orange tiles. Aiming for an Asian look in the master bedroom, Sam chose a delicate light fitting and teamed it with a monochrome scheme. An old propeller, left over from Iain's flat, has been incorporated into a mural in Rory's room, and the car fabric and rug add to the fun

living area. The upper floors would be bedrooms and bathrooms,' she says.

'We've also got a basement, which is where my husband wanted a gym. His other two wishes were a steam shower and an outdoor BBQ that could be used all the time, which we managed to fit in.'

Sam was determined to restore the property's magnificent staircase to its former glory. 'When it was made into flats, the builders had chopped off the staircase at the bottom step and painted the lovely banisters in thick white paint. One of the building team painstakingly rebuilt the step and the section of banister and all the white paint was taken off to reveal the original black railing.'

With the interior of the house taking shape by the Winter of 2011, Sam found she was

expecting son number two. Finlay was born the following Summer, just as the finishing touches such as lighting and original artwork were being made.

'I found all my own lighting,' says Sam. 'I just love antique chandeliers, and I got these from Crystal Corner in Marlowe, Buckinghamshire (crystal-corner.co.uk). Then I found an artist, Emma Alcock (emmaalcock.com), whose work is stunning, so I've bought several of her atmospheric paintings to hang in the library, main bedroom and hall. We also have a large Aboriginal artwork in the sitting room. It's an aerial view of sacred sites, painted by an Aboriginal elder.'

With the exhausting renovation work now a distant memory, Sam, Iain, Rory and Finlay really can enjoy their home at last. □



Dante footstool in teal (dark feet), £480, Debenhams



Clock, £130, Habitat (habitat.co.uk)



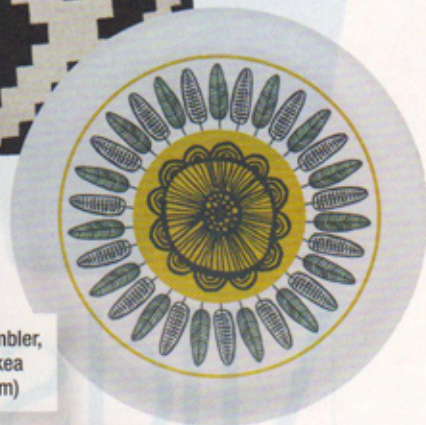
Arianna chandelier, £150, BHS (bhs.co.uk)

SHOP THE look

Lappljunga Ruta cushion cover, £9, Ikea (ikea.com)



Freda tray, £18, Habitat (habitat.co.uk)



Diod tumbler, £2.25, Ikea (ikea.com)



Chester armchair, £1,100, Habitat (habitat.co.uk)



Bottle, £12, Sainsbury's (sainsburys.co.uk)