

A VISION IN WHITE

Thoughtful alterations and a serene palette have restored Chris and Laura Dobbs' villa to the grand home it once was

FEATURE MELANIE WHITEHOUSE | PHOTOGRAPHY PATRICK WILLIAMSON



HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY Regency-style house built 1850
LOCATION Surrey
ROOMS Hallway, sitting room, family room, kitchen-diner, orangery, utility room, study, cloakroom, four bedrooms (all en suite), self-contained flat
PURCHASED 2005
PREVIOUS PROPERTY 'We were living in Germany in an old house near Frankfurt,' says Laura.



SITTING ROOM
A statement light fitting adds drama to this space. Try Hartfield sofa, from £1,306, Arlo & Jacob. Laura Ashley Oversize lantern, £70, is similar

ORANGERY
Modern, antique and bespoke pieces combine beautifully here. Tracery rug, from £3,572, Kelly Wearstler at The Rug Company



KITCHEN-DINER
 Classic cream Shaker-style cabinetry is complemented by generous linen curtains with a muted leaf pattern. Curtains in Tea Leaf, printed to order by Kit Kemp for Christopher Farr. Old School electric cylinder pendant, from £130, Holloways of Ludlow



MASTER BEDROOM
 Texture and subtle pattern enhance the neutral tones of this tranquil space. Slowcoach armchair, £795, Loaf, is similar. Wayfair Berwick throw, £70, is a good match



STAIRWAY
 Modern art and an original painted panel bring drama to the graceful staircase. For a good selection of art prints, try FY!

With their older daughters grown up and moving out of the family home, Chris and Laura Dobbs decided the time was ripe for a much-needed update of their three-storey Regency-style home. With its floor-to-ceiling windows and light-filled rooms, the property was already architecturally stunning. 'We had structural work done when we first moved in and that was quite a major project,' says Laura. But now the decor needed renovating to suit the next stage of their lives.

The Dobbs called in Chelsea-based interior designer Juliette Byrne, who has a reputation for blending the classic with the contemporary. Top of the list was to ensure the property kept its family feel but reflected the Dobbs' love of entertaining. This meant opening up spaces on the ground floor to make it a more suitable area for guests and parties.

The brief included redecoration of the rest of the property as well as adding an extra dining area to the kitchen. Juliette needed to work with the existing structure of the house and retain the period feel, but to enhance what was already there by using clever solutions that blended with the period features, such as adding panelling in the sitting room. 'These details created a warmer feel to the room,' explains Juliette. 'We also added antique mirrors either side of the fireplace to reflect the garden outside into the room.'

In the hallway and on the landing are striking painted

wall panels, original to the house. 'We thought about removing them but felt it would be a shame as they are a very good way of combining the old and new,' says Laura.

The walls throughout the house were painted a soft shade of white which brings continuity and enhances the high ceilings, ornate cornicing and ceiling roses.

New curtains were added throughout, in neutral shades with muted patterns on slubby linens. This choice is reflected in the soft furnishings, in taupes, creams and white. Tactile sheepskin throws, squidgy cushions and accessories add cosiness and warmth – key in a space dominated by white.

Statement light fittings bring interest, with floor and desk lamps in sculptural shapes continuing the idea of lighting as art. 'We also added artwork and decorative lighting to the hallway and other areas of the house, re-carpeted throughout and commissioned rugs and bespoke furniture,' says Juliette.

The project took a total of six months and involved a range of specialist tradesmen, including stonemasons, joiners and even an artwork company that brought in pictures to complement the new look of the house.

The result of the extensive renovation was a fresher, more contemporary feel that enhances the period features. The villa is now a calm, peaceful retreat from the world outside, with plenty of space at last for entertaining. 'It's exactly what we wanted,' says Laura. 'And we're not moving – ever!' 25



BATHROOM
 Sophisticated floor-to-ceiling marble is boosted with statement lighting. Ikea's Grimsas pendant, £75, would work here. Find Breccia Sarda marble tiles from £102sq m, Indigenus