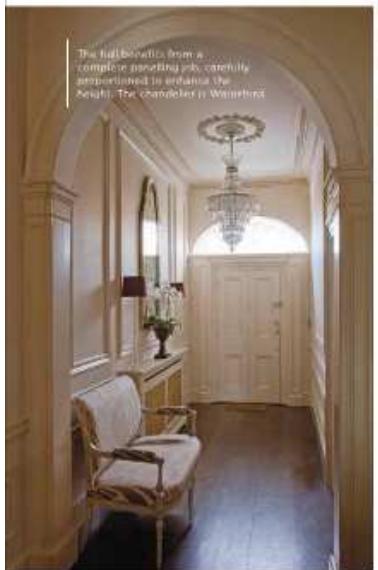


HOME

Shaded pieces like the oval ottoman and end tables in the strong shell of the custom-built English-style sofa. Helen's chandelier, mirrors and self-stitch piping add some definition to the neutral tones.

Baluster staircase with light frames, mirrors made to measure commissioned, then painted and stained.



The full balcony from a complete remodeling job, carefully proportioned to enhance the height. The chandelier is Wanstead.



Although based in the US, the owners of this Dublin townhouse return frequently to see family and friends. On a visit a couple of years ago, they decided to invest in a city centre period house they could call home on future trips. Used to living in big spaces, they were confident that with the help of an interior designer, they could adjust to the internally proportioned layout of this classic Victorian two-storey over basement. The brief: retain the interior's period character while addressing the needs of a family used to smart-casual American-style family living. When the services of Helen Roden and Joe Enslin of Merrion Square Interiors were engaged, plans to extend the basement level to accommodate a kitchen/living/dining area and redevelop a one-bed mews in the garden were already underway with the architect Daniel Coyle. "It was the ideal point to implement the plans already agreed with the client," according to Helen Roden. "The architect tweaked the layout to dovetail with the interior plans – where to create storage, how the seating arrangements would work, the positioning of electrics, plumbing and other services." The challenge to create a contemporary family living space downstairs and a more traditional arrangement upstairs which would work well for entertaining is familiar to Roden and Enslin. "So many families live in period houses in Ireland – the trick is to be able to combine day-to-day living with the classic layouts that to this day represent the best configuration for entertaining."

The outcome – a series of beautifully furnished interconnecting rooms at hall floor level, three comfortable bedrooms upstairs and a smart and practical living space at basement level – is a perfect example of an effective professional collaboration. Detailed mood boards and floor plans left nothing to chance – sample finishes were made up, fabric and flooring swatches and paint shades specified. "It helped that our clients were so decisive," says Roden. "Having been through this process before with an



Elements in the living/dining area include a glass-enclosed gas firebox, a strong curved sofa by Collection Prime and a chandelier by Louise Kennedy for Flanagan Crystals. The painted wooden cabinet conceals a television.



Opposite, top: One of the interconnecting reception rooms on the hall level with chenille upholstered modular seating, ottomans by Collection Prime and chandelier by Louise Kennedy for Flanagan Crystals. The painted wooden cabinet conceals a television. Opposite, bottom: The hall: the most improved space in the house, according to the designers, is painted in Colormix 8221W, a neutral shade used on woodwork throughout the house.

This page, clockwise from top: Elegant sliding doors in the hall level; the living room is identical to those in the mews across the courtyard; the dry bar with fridge below in the family sitting room; curtains are ceiling-mounted and the shadow-gas mirrored – both details enhance the illusion of height. The sofa and chair are by Roche Bobois; cushions covered in fabrics by Bimba & Lola and Pierre Frey add bright accents to the white modular seating.

Note: All joinery was commissioned from Irish suppliers by Merrion Square Interiors. Floors throughout the house are Travertine by MLG and wide plank walnut by Ebony & Co. Merrion Square Interiors, 82 Merrion Square, Dublin 2, D02 E6W7. www.merrionsquareinteriors.com



The enlong opening with gas fire and white marble bench are part of the custom-made chimney. The shadow gap at the top is recessed and sealed.

HOME

The guest bedroom has a French feel with freestanding armchairs and canopy bed. Pavilion Provencal wallpaper by Colefax and Fowler. The gilded beds are Indian; the sofa bedcovers are from Laines Astory.



COLEFAX AND FOWLER

American interior designer, they knew how to make the relationship work for everyone's benefit." Like any relationship, it is important for the client to be able to relinquish some control and for the designer to be able to compromise. "The key is not to get bogged down and to make the process a pleasant one. There should be no nasty surprises," says Ensko. "It's crucial that the client enjoys the experience. We see our role as supportive while taking over the burden of the nuts and bolts." Essentially problem-solvers, interior designers can often arrive at solutions faster and cheaper - where to find space for the three golf bags,

grand piano and a suite of luggage, how to fit wardrobes into impossibly small bedrooms, ways to work a utility room into an already spatially-compromised ground floor. Merrion Square Interiors charge an initial design fee which includes the proposed scheme, detailed budget and mood boards. Once the client decides to proceed, there is no further charge - all joinery, furniture and fabric includes the interior design change, making it a very transparent process. "This house is the result of just two meetings," says Roden. It just goes to show, success is all in the planning. ■

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