

**FACT FILE**

**THE OWNER**

Bettina Schmid, an interior design consultant, and her husband Georg, who works in finance, have lived here for over three years

**THE PROPERTY**

A two-bedroom garden flat within a converted Grade II-listed Georgian terraced house

**THE LOCATION**

Islington, north London

**WHAT THEY SPENT**

The property was bought in November 2005 for £425,000 and the couple have spent £80,000 on it. It was most recently valued last year at £680,000



# ‘We completely redesigned a garden flat to create our perfect dream home’

Bettina and Georg Schmid fell in love with their two-bedroom flat, and spent six months improving it before they moved in

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**Right** A listed Regency-era townhouse; the ground and lower-ground floors comprise the Schmid's flat

**H**aving left behind their native Switzerland to work in London, Bettina and Georg Schmid settled in an apartment in Canary Wharf so as to be close to the City. Later, they moved to their Regency-style garden flat inside a converted Georgian terrace in north London. ‘Although Docklands was a practical option for us – to be near the City for Georg’s work and the airport for travelling back and forth to Zurich – we grew tired of living there



and wanted to be able to step out of the house without having to take the tube to get anywhere more central,' says Bettina. 'I love the fact that Islington is a lively, multicultural area and I have always loved Georgian houses. As soon as we saw this flat, with its light-filled double reception room, we knew instantly it was the place for us – and that we'd be able to transform it into our perfect home.'

Although the interior was dated and in need of work, most of the original features remained, including

round-arched sash windows, fireplaces and cornicing, plus cast-iron railings outside. The property had been extended to accommodate a new kitchen eight years previously, but this extension had been built using the same type of bricks as the house, in accordance with listed-building consent. 'It looks as though its been here forever,' says Bettina.

The couple continued to rent while the work was carried out, hiring a contractor and a project-manager to oversee the build in their absence. They had in mind ↗

**Above** In the living room, contemporary sofas from Loungin and a zebra-look rug from Mufti contrast with Asian art and statement wallpaper – Birdcage by Nina Campbell



**Great idea!**

Where a conventional sideboard would take up too much space in a narrow dining room, a tall console table or one intended for the end of a bed is ideal. The Schmidts use an 18th-century lacquered long-altar table from Hong Kong

**Above** Made bespoke in Switzerland from metal sheeting, the table contrasts with reproduction 19th-century dining chairs. Also antique, the Murano glass chandelier is from a local shop, Fandango

a significant remodelling to bring their purchased property up to scratch. Upgrading the plumbing and wiring were the first jobs to be completed. This was followed by restoration of the original fireplaces and mouldings on the ceilings, and all the interior and exterior woodwork. 'We then redesigned the U-shaped kitchen to make it easier for more than one person to be in there at the same time,' explains Bettina. 'Moving the sink helps to open up the room and it freed up space for a small radiator, which we really needed.'

The original bright colour scheme has gone, making way for white units, white tiles, walnut worktops and a replacement floor of reclaimed boards. One wall has been decorated with a blue-striped wallpaper, as Bettina wanted to introduce a subtle nautical theme. As storage was limited previously, a chunky chrome rail was fitted above the hob for hanging pans and utensils.

The bathroom was the next project. 'We wanted to increase the space in here by utilising one of three vault areas adjoining the room – by knocking through. But



For the stairs, Bettina chose a traditional sisal carpet runner from Roger Oates Design. A framed collection of family portrait photographs is displayed on the stairway

‘As soon as we saw this flat, with its light-filled double reception room, we knew it was the place for us’



Right Although not original to the Georgian house, the rear kitchen extension was constructed almost a decade ago using matching bricks when the building was first converted into flats

unfortunately we weren't granted permission by the authorities,' explains Bettina, who says she had been made aware of the strict rules on listed properties in England and Wales ahead of the purchase. 'So instead, the vault has been dry-lined so that we could use the space as a laundry and storage room. This has actually worked out really well, as it hides away the washing machine and a lot of clutter.'

Bettina chose a traditional-style suite and shower for the bathroom, soft-graphite tiles for the cubicle, the



**PROJECT TIP**

If you're planning work on a listed building, you must first seek approval – ahead of Building Regs and, most likely, planning permission – so it is wise to establish a constructive dialogue with an officer of your local district council's conservation and planning department

floor and round the bath, plus a bold feature wall to one side. 'I sourced the Fornasetti wallpaper for a client and Georg fell in love with it. The only problem is that you can't escape from the constant glares on the faces,' she laughs. Here, as throughout the rest of the flat, old radiators were replaced, floorboards repaired and stained old light switches and sockets updated.

'We also had extra storage built under the staircase, fitted wardrobes put in upstairs and built-in shelving

added wherever we could. Every room was completely redecorated and we had new carpets laid. I work from home, so I also wanted to create a practical office space packed with storage,' continues Bettina. 'We've used the second bedroom for this and continued the theme of neutral walls and reclaimed floorboards. The focal point of the room is an antique desk that I inherited.'

The couple's collection of Asian art is on display throughout the house and has influenced the décor.



**Left** Southwold cabinets have been teamed with walnut worktops in the kitchen, all from Plain English. The stainless-steel flush-fit gas hob is from Kitchen Aid; the integrated extractor hood is from Bosch



**Right** The blue striped kitchen wallpaper is by Designers Guild. The units have been painted in All White from Farrow & Ball

**‘We have created an eclectic space. I love to mix antiques with contemporary or design classics’**



‘We have used lots of contrasting elements and created a very eclectic space. I love to mix antiques with contemporary or design classics and have also added some quirky touches,’ says Bettina. A good example of this is the dining room, furnished with a bespoke metal dining table teamed with reproduction 19th-century antique chairs and a birdcage-print wallpaper.

‘I love experimenting with colour, shapes, patterns and materials. I’m not afraid of using bold dark tones to

create warm, inviting interiors, and am fond of mixing unusual fabrics,’ she adds. Bettina prefers interiors to be timeless rather than too fashionable. ‘Georg and I have an agreement that we must both love every single item we bring into the home – which can make me want to pull out my hair sometimes!’

The renovations lasted for six months and, for the last few weeks of this, Bettina and Georg were living under one roof with the builders, having moved at last ↪

**Above** Alongside an inherited antique desk is modern office furniture from USM. The walls are painted in Dulux 50YY 43 103 medium; the floorboards are reclaimed oak



from their rented place in the Docklands. 'It was a stressful time, but worth it in the end,' says Bettina of the half a year they spent between buying and readying their dream home.

As finishing touches were carried out inside, the garden was also given an update. An old tree stump was removed and the patio re-laid, and the Asian theme was continued with jasmine, blossom and acer trees. 'I see the outdoors as an extension of the interior,' explains Bettina, 'We've added outdoor lighting so we can be out here late into the night and we've highlighted focal points, like the Buddha, with directional spotlights.'

'We couldn't be happier with what we've achieved. We love to spend time here relaxing after work or entertaining friends at the weekend. With the shutters closed, the dining room's atmosphere is very romantic, perfect for intimate dinner parties. We see our home as a haven amid the hectic London lifestyle.' 🏠

**'I love experimenting with colour, using bold dark tones to create warm, inviting interiors'**

**Above** The bedroom wallpaper is from Ralph Lauren while the rosewood French bed is from La Maison



**Above** A white bathroom suite, from Lefroy Brooks, has been complemented with traditional fixtures and fittings, and soft-graphite porcelain tiles from Bibliotheque



**Left** Period wall lights and a carved, gilded George IV mirror were both found in local antiques shops. For the feature wall, the couple chose a striking Fornasetti wallpaper from Cole & Son

## PLANS

The entire flat was redecorated to restore its Georgian splendour. The listed house cannot be structurally altered, but the kitchen has been remodelled and a second bedroom has been converted into an office

### Lower ground floor



### Ground floor

