

HOMES & PROPERTY › INTERIORS

How a Work-From-Home design guru turned her Victorian home into the ultimate Zoom backdrop

Emma Morley overcame construction disasters and coronavirus disruption to transform her Victorian terraced home into a vibrant home office

As founder of interior design agency Trifle, Emma Morley creates stylish offices for clients such as Soho House and Moo. But in lockdown she realised she had to put her expertise to personal use and turn the Victorian terraced house she shares with her partner, Simon Goff, into a live-work space.

“Coronavirus threw us all,” she says, “suddenly the whole world was working from home. We were home-schooling our daughter, Bibi, who is 12, and my mum came back from Spain to live with us.”

Simon, who runs Floor Story in Shoreditch (which sells rug designs by [Zandra Rhodes](#), Sebastian Wrong and [Camille Walala](#)), had to close his showroom and turn their living room into his warehouse.

“It was carnage for a while,” he laughs. But fortunately the three-storey house is a great showcase for his vibrant collection of woven and hand-knotted rugs. Realising she also needed to set up camp within her home, Emma created an office space for herself in the spare bedroom.

When the couple bought the house in 2009, they added an L-shaped loft room (a king-sized double-bed fits in the “foot” of the L), which is now Bibi’s bedroom.

Not long afterwards their neighbours undertook the same project with the same builder. Later the two families decided to extend into the side return area of their gardens to make bigger living/kitchen areas.

“We saved space on the party wall and ensured the houses were kept similar — which is important in a conservation area.”

Work began in June 2019 but by Halloween that year they got a call that the builder was going into administration. “It was a heart-stopping moment, with no roof on the back, no floor (not even concrete), a garden that was a mud bath and a half-finished upstairs with wires protruding,” recalls Emma.

Fortunately, she is used to project managing. “We made a plan and, a week before lockdown in March, we finally had everything bar the outside finished.

“Once the cladding went on, the beauty of the alignment of the houses could be seen. While we retained the use of old bricks and added Crittall windows, the two houses internally are very different.



Eclectic: The family's open-plan kitchen with clay pink walls / Emma Morley

“Our neighbours have a warm Scandi vibe, ours is a little more eclectic.” Emma and Simon’s new open-plan kitchen has clay pink walls, a hanging swing and a window seat with concealed storage. In the living room there’s a cuckoo clock by German artist Stefan Strumbel and a Floor Story rug by ceramicist John Booth (based on one of his vases). An old haberdashery unit that used to be in Emma’s office now houses the family shoes.

The house is so startling in its colour contrasts — burnt orange, Moroccan red, turquoise with yellow — only a confident and instinctive decorator such as Emma could have pulled it off. It has provided a fun backdrop for Zoom meetings with clients, she laughs.

And a year of home working has inspired Emma’s latest business project. Trifle now offers stylish working-from-home set-ups, with four HomeWork packages for individuals that are each based on a quality task chair and also a desk.

“Even chief executives have been sitting on rickety kitchen chairs, and there are a lot of issues around back health. So we offer support on lighting and spatial design,” she says. Recommended accessories are sourced from Anglepoise, Floor Story and Mustard Made.

Floor tiles. We saved money by going for simple terracotta from [Solus](#).

Mirrors and plant pots. All of ours are from [Made.com](#), [Rose & Grey](#) and [Rockett St George](#).

Paint it black. We had to cut new wooden floors from our budget so painted them all black downstairs, and white upstairs, and saved a fortune!

Reuse, reuse. We reused old doors and windows everywhere, and also vintage furniture. Great suppliers of salvage include [Retrouvius](#), [Blackduke Vintage](#) and [Everything But the Dog](#) in Walthamstow.

Bathroom bargains. We splurged on the bath but then hunted for online bargains for the shower fittings, taps and loos at [VictoriaPlum](#).

Wardrobes. We bought [Ikea](#) wardrobes then got a friend to make rattan door fronts (classic Ikea hacking!)

Unique appliances. We wanted a 'pretty' extractor hood, so we got a decent extractor from [Appliances Direct](#) in the January sale and then had the kitchen maker create a surround for it, painted the same as the walls

Handles. [Ironmongery Direct](#) have a great selection of handles to meet most budgets.

Plants. They can be used in any home to add colour, texture and nature.

Don't scrimp on...

Metal windows. If you want the Crittal, get the Crittal.

Underfloor heating.

Work Surfaces. We worked with local concrete fabricator, Smith & Goat.

Bulbs. A good bulb like ones from Tala will last and not flicker.

Kitchen cabinetry. We worked with Kent and London.

floorstory.co.uk, *triflecreative.com*
