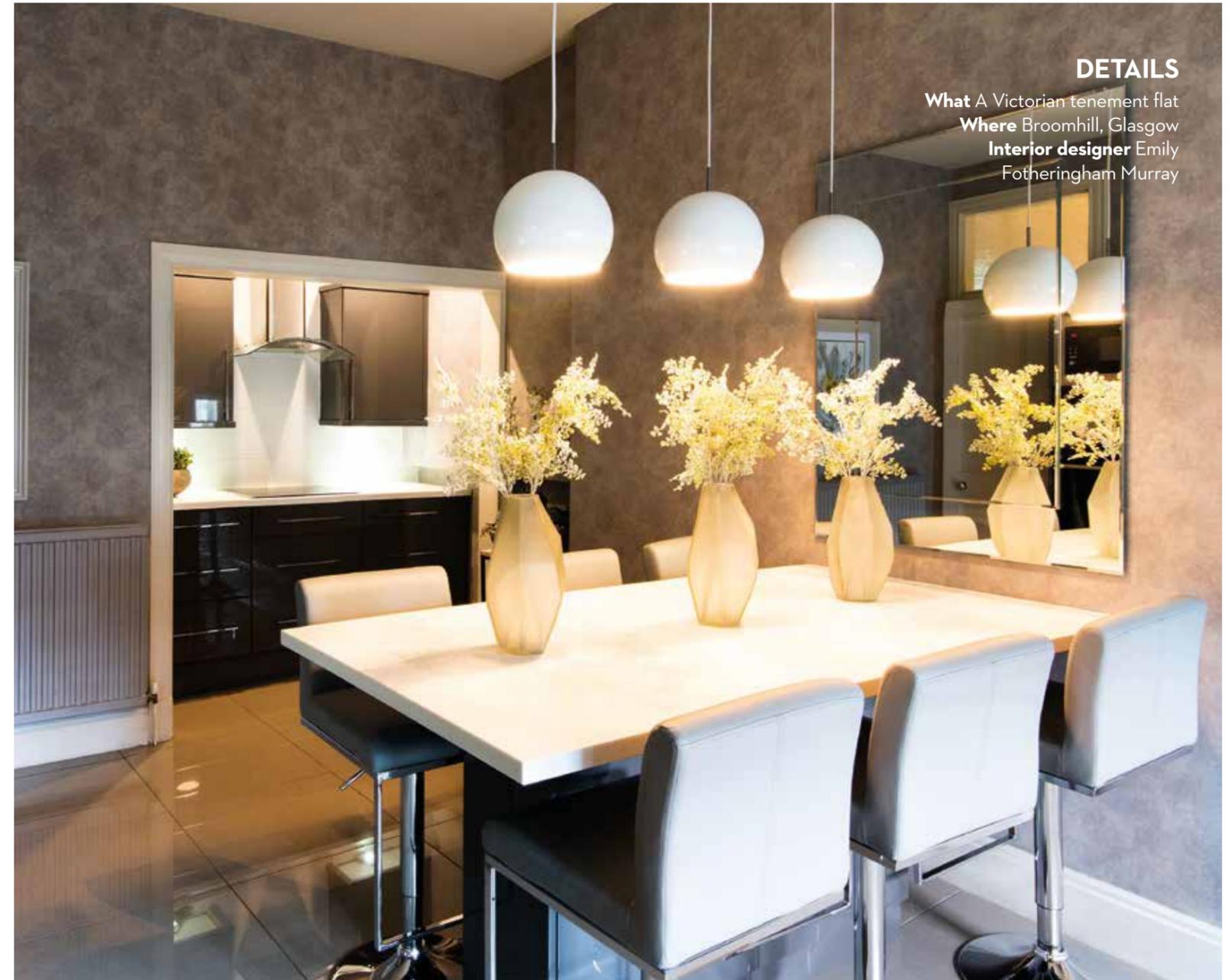


GOING FOR GOLD

Shimmering metallics glowing against a dark palette give this Glasgow flat a winning edge

Photography Ian Arthur Words Judy Diamond



DETAILS

What A Victorian tenement flat
Where Broomhill, Glasgow
Interior designer Emily Fotheringham Murray

Leafing through this magazine, all that can be seen are the 'after' photos. Pristine rooms, artfully placed furniture, gleaming paintwork, polished wood. It's impossible to imagine the dust and the crumbling plaster, the ripped-up floorboards, the rubble and the sheer horrible mess of the 'during' pics, never

mind the shag-pile carpets, the botched DIY jobs and the battered skirting boards that so often figure in the 'before's'.

This carefully put-together top-floor apartment in Glasgow's west end certainly shows no signs of what it has been through over the past year. The traditional red-sandstone tenement, built around 1900, was a bit of a wreck when Emily Fotheringham Murray bought it in 2016. She was not fazed by the water damage from a long-term leak in the roof nor by ▶

the lumpy woodchip that covered most of the ceilings – in fact, she was secretly delighted by these and the rest of its flaws. “It hadn’t been touched for 40 years,” she says. “But that made it perfect for me – I was looking for a project that would need to be completely gutted.”

As an interior designer, she was in the enviable position of being able to call upon a roster of trusted specialists to help reshape the property and make it a much more appealing place to live. The likes of James Harkin Electrical and Russell Aitken Decorators made important contributions to the success of the remodeling, but Murray’s overall vision was what really made the difference. “Designing from scratch is always my favourite type of project as it allows me to have complete control over everything,” she explains. “I like to be able to consider the whole space cohesively, without any unnecessary restrictions. For this house, it was also pretty exciting to be the client for a change – it meant I could come up with a brief to suit myself.”

That brief was centred around making the most of the period features and the late-Victorian architecture, highlighting and complementing these with modern additions. Harnessing the wonderful natural light that fills the rooms so that it would enhance her chosen colour palette was another motivation. Right from the start, Murray was picturing rich, dark tones that would glow in the south-facing rooms.

Before thoughts could turn to decorating, however, there was a lot of work to be done. Although the flat had a generous formal lounge and three bedrooms, the kitchen was not particularly spacious and the bathroom was frustratingly skinny in the way that is typical of many Scottish tenements of the era. Resolving this was something of a leap of faith: she decided to sacrifice the single bedroom between the kitchen and bathroom and allocate a portion to each. It meant a building warrant had to be sought to bring down the two walls in question, and help was required from architects Honeyman Jack & Robertson and engineers The Structural Partnership. Even then, there were issues with drainage to overcome. “We couldn’t run the pipes horizontally through the depth of the floor because cutting into the joists was not an option,” recalls Murray. “In the end, we came up with a design where the kitchen and bathroom units sat back to back, meaning all plumbing connections could be made above floor level.”

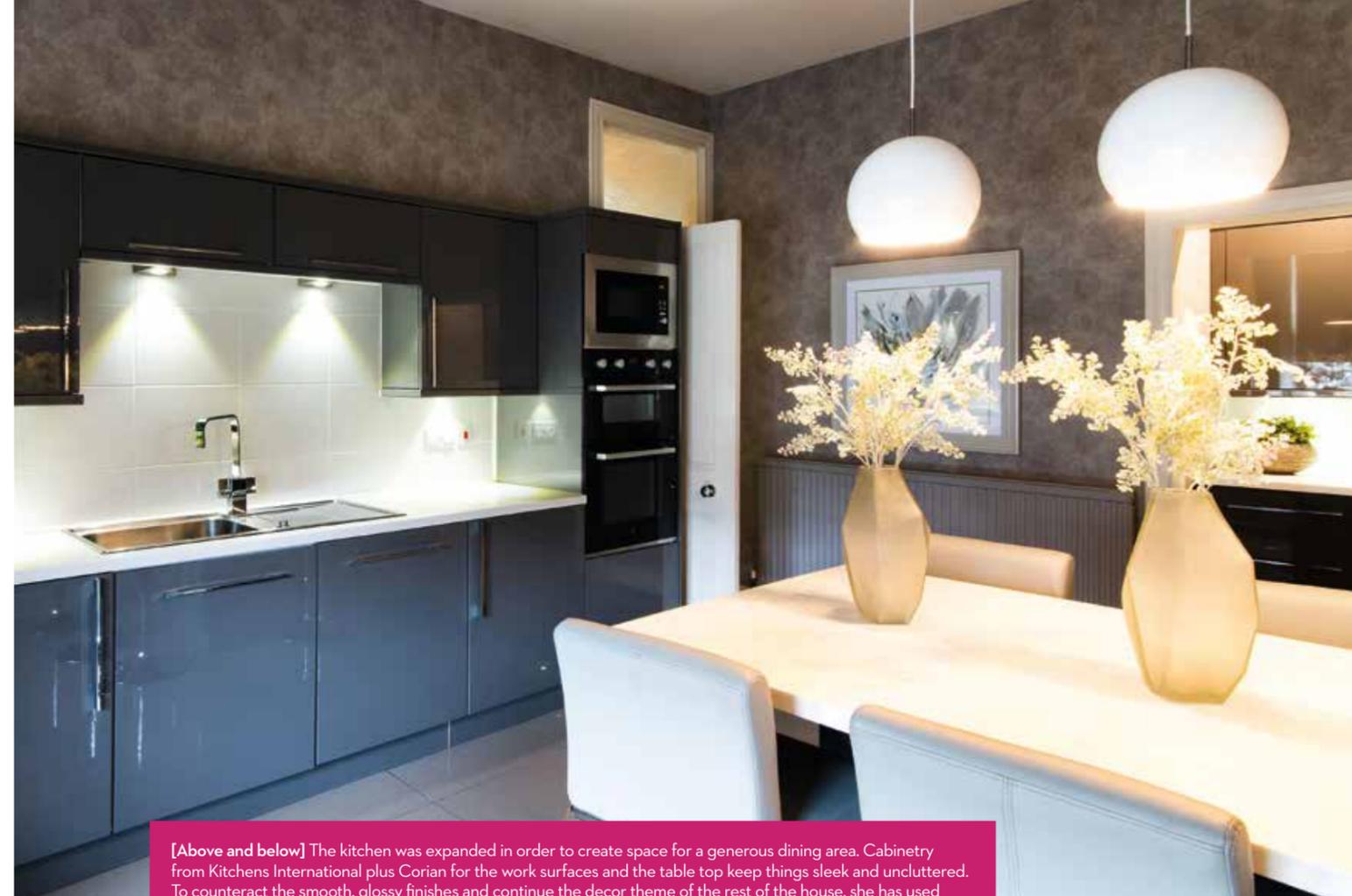
Maximising the floor plan in this way has created a large dining-kitchen and a four-piece bathroom. The designer is particularly pleased with the latter. “It’s very unusual to get something like this in a traditional tenement. It improves the whole property, because it makes the floor plan feel more balanced.”

This part of the project ate up a large part of the budget as well as a significant amount of time, but Murray is convinced it was the right move. She had scouted out similar flats in the area, paying close attention to any renovations that had been made to them before she’d embarked on her own changes. “Seeing the mistakes that had been made by other people was actually really helpful,” she smiles. “It made the key decisions in my own property much easier.”

The kitchen and bathroom weren’t the only rooms needing improving. Water penetration had damaged the 3m-high lath and plaster ceilings in the lounge and one of the bedrooms, and when the old woodchip wallpaper was peeled off these, both ceilings fell in. Repairing them was a major headache, with scaffolding needing to be hired so the plasterers could get close enough to work. “The ceilings collapsing was horrible – I really wasn’t expecting it, and I certainly hadn’t budgeted for it,” says Murray. “It took two weeks to fix, which put extra pressure on the schedule of works, and the tradesmen had to work overtime to get us back on track. You just have to accept that there are always going to be unpredictable elements on a job – I have learned to expect the unexpected! Having a contingency fund is essential.”

One thing she had predicted was that the whole house would need rewiring – and she was right. Many new sockets had to be fitted for low-level lighting and uplighters; that in turn meant more plastering was required, which also added to the costs. There were further expenses too as a consequence of being three flights up. “A lot of mess and debris was generated during the building work, which all had to be carted downstairs. The tradesmen were exhausted going up and down constantly. There was a hefty time cost as a result. And disposing of the rubbish was expensive too.”

There was so much mess, in fact, that Murray could not consider living in the flat during the renovations. Being able to base herself nearby in the west end so she could manage the project was a huge benefit. Finally, four months after they’d started, the last of the workmen ►



[Above and below] The kitchen was expanded in order to create space for a generous dining area. Cabinetry from Kitchens International plus Corian for the work surfaces and the table top keep things sleek and uncluttered. To counteract the smooth, glossy finishes and continue the decor theme of the rest of the house, she has used Casamance’s Mystere wallpaper and Zoffany’s Half Quartz paint, with Designers Guild cushions and a blind by Clarke & Clarke. The pendants are by Franklite. The designer admits one of her choices has given her a headache: “The floor is a bit of a nightmare. I fell in love with these beautiful high-gloss tiles and was determined to use them. Unfortunately, keeping them clean is difficult – they have to be steamed constantly. I would actually choose the same tiles again as they work so well in the kitchen; it just takes a bit of effort to make them look their best.”



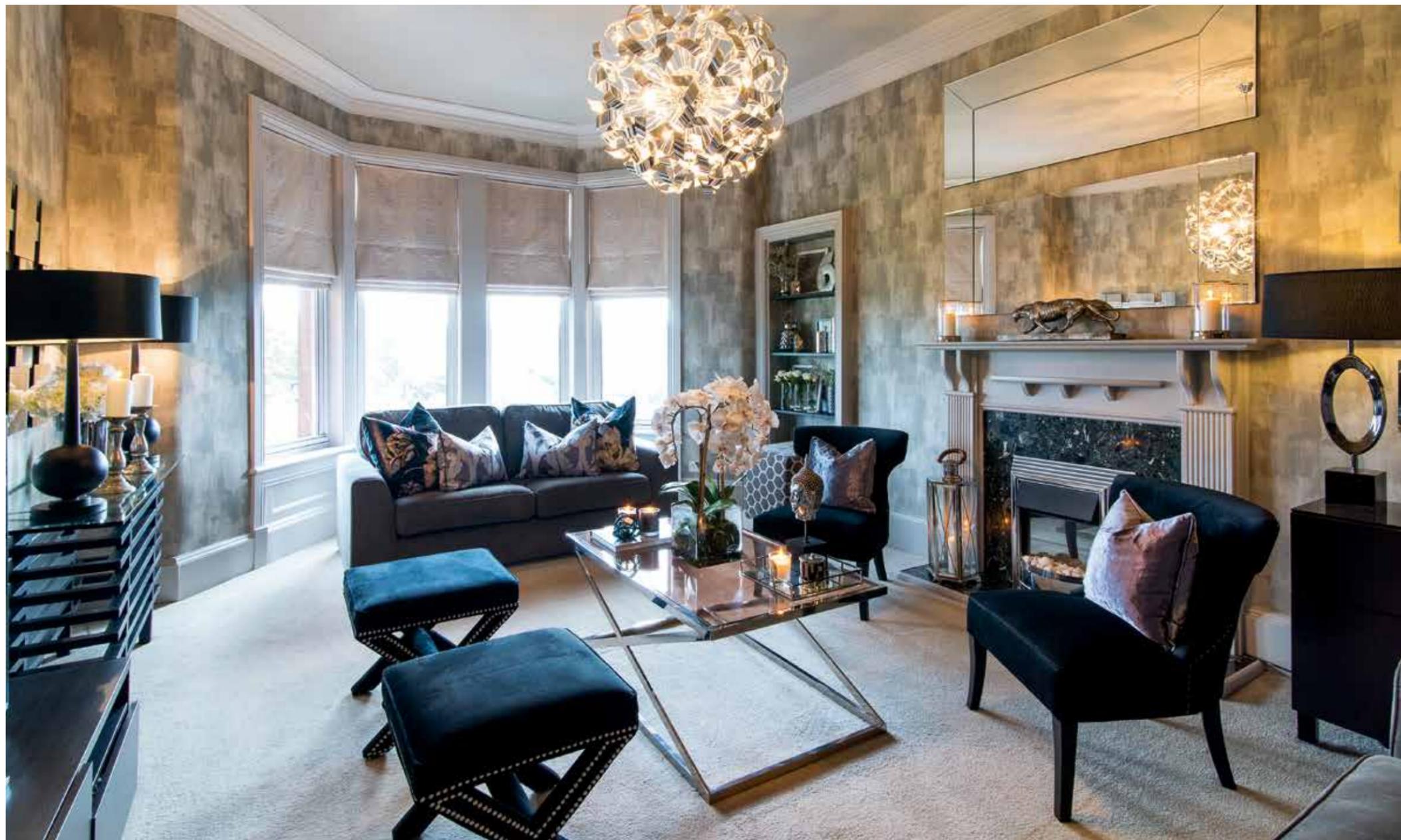
departed and the designer could turn her attention fully to the decor. The property had been massively improved but it retained a few quirks – not surprisingly, considering the building is well over a hundred years old. For example, the walls in the lounge had been very uneven when the old wallpaper was removed; even though they'd been replastered and carefully lined, they still weren't completely perfect. It meant she couldn't hang her first choice of wallcovering as a heavier paper was required

to get a good finish. Nevertheless, she is delighted with the transformation. She wanted the apartment to have a distinctive style full of texture and pattern with everything complementing the Victorian architecture and period features. It works, because the character of the property has been sympathetically exploited. "I worked with the original features and the flaws and I didn't try to hide them," she points out.

It was a balancing act: to make the most of the

generous proportions, she had to choose larger-scale furniture, patterns and flooring that would match the space without dominating it. The wallpaper in the main bedroom, for example, has a large abstract floral design. "I couldn't have used this if the ceiling wasn't over 3m high, as the design wouldn't have had such an impact," she says. "And it also let me have statement pendant lighting – and I wasn't missing an opportunity to make a statement!"

In fact, she puts the success of her scheme down to getting the lighting right. Wall sconces, accent spots, table lamps and those statement pendants have all been used, creating layers of illumination that mean the mood can be tailored to suit. And it's not all down to electric lights: "The amount of natural light the flat gets is incredible, and as a designer I wanted to play with this," she explains. "It let me create sumptuous, dark-grey palettes and moody spaces, knowing they wouldn't be too dark ▶



[Left] The living room shows off all the elements of Emily Fotheringham Murray's design scheme: there's the gold and metallic finishes in the Designers Guild Marmorino wallpaper and the Firstlight pendant; the reflective surfaces, such as the RV Astley coffee table and the custom-made mirrors from Forsyth Glazing; the luxurious textiles – the Tapi rug and the window treatments (all the blinds were made to order by the Curtain Workshop); and there's her determination to highlight the room's Victorian features, tweaking them if necessary: "I loved the original mantelpiece but I replaced the surround and hearth with new marble and added the feature fire," she says.

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[This page] Silver and gold tones bring the bedroom to life. The Gatsby console and cabinets are by CIMC, the mirror is by RV Astley and the wallpaper is by Designers Guild. A Kelly Hoppen quilt covers the bed. [Opposite] Details from the lounge, including the RV Astley lamps and console, a cushion made from Designers Guild's Delft Noir velvet, and an Edinburgh press fitted out with shelves to display favourite pieces. Local firm Russell Aitken took care of all the decorating

when lit naturally. The lounge is a great example of this – I love the way it feels. It has a beautiful balance where dark meets light in the most sympathetic, artistic way.”

The open, green outlook across Naseby Park and Broomhill Church and over the rooftops of the west end contributes to the bright, airy atmosphere, something that Murray is quick to acknowledge: “The feeling of a space is what inspires me. Whenever I start any concept design, the first thing I write down is how the space has to feel.”

The decoration in every room has been designed with this in mind. That’s one reason why there are so many mirrors and reflective surfaces – they allow her to magnify yet control both the light and the space. It’s the same with her widespread use of gold and other metallic finishes; integrated into a dark backdrop, these give specific parts ▶





of each room a gilded focal point. The reflective surfaces of the mirrored dressing table and bedside cabinets in the main bedroom, both from CIMC's Gatsby range, work with the shimmering Designers Guild wallpaper and Como Pewter cushions from Voyage Maison Couture.

It's a similar story in the lounge – another wallpaper by Designers Guild, Marmorino Steel, is paired with Zoffany's Half Silver paint and lit by Firstlight's distinctive, sculptural Ribbon chandelier. The scheme is anchored by dark, moody furniture, such as the stools and occasional chairs, both by Liang & Eimil, and the dark wood RV Astley console table. Cushions – in Designers Guild's subtly patterned Delft Noir velvet – add layers of luxurious texture.

"I would say it feels luxurious in a very contemporary way," agrees Murray. "I wanted to merge modern pieces, wallcoverings and fabrics with the building's heritage to create a home that would be a pleasure to spend time in. Well-designed spaces always make you feel good, satisfying you and enhancing your mood. This is a great place to live." ■



The enlarged bathroom now has space for a separate walk-in shower. The tiles are by CDT and Forsyth Glazing made the screen. The shower is from Soakology. Clarke & Clarke's Lagoon fabric was used for the blinds. The wall sconce was found at Glasgow Architectural Salvage