

IT'S PERSONAL

For the Mortons, their home is a sanctuary, an expression of their personalities and a source of creative inspiration that sparked off a career change for Rebecca...



When Rebecca and Richard Morton were searching for their first home together, they wanted to find a property by the Thames and close to London. Rebecca has fond childhood memories of visiting a riverside mansion apartment in Surbiton, Surrey, where three generations of her family lived. So, when a flat came up for sale in an almost identical Thirties block close by, Rebecca knew this was the home for her. 'The spacious, light rooms sold it to me,' she says. 'These flats have a grand, glamorous, luxurious feel and every window has an attractive view – I loved it from the moment I saw it.'

Rebecca and Richard have strong feelings about what 'home' means to them, as Rebecca explains: 'Home is the place you look forward to returning to, especially for Richard, who travels all over the country in his work as a stand-up comedian and musician, often spending nights in hotels. Your home should be the place that reflects your

personality, where you have fun, relax and be comfortable. We love coming back to a home that is an expression of our personal tastes and interests.'

When they first moved in, the flat was in good repair and didn't need major work. The only big projects they had to undertake were renovating some of the floors and putting in a new kitchen. Without the need to carry out extensive remedial work, Rebecca could spend time creating her dream home.

Her previous work as a television art director and scenic artist were an excellent grounding. Although she has strong ideas about interior design, there were seldom any clashes between her and Richard about how the flat should be decorated. 'When we first met we realised straight away that we had very similar tastes. For example, we are both passionate about Frank Sinatra, and Twentieth-Century retro collectables, which I also deal in and sell at antique ►

ABOVE & RIGHT: with its large window, Venetian blinds and 50s-style furniture, the dining room is remarkably evocative of a real American diner. Rebecca found the Pepsi lampshade, from an American bar, at a local collectors' fair. The cocktail bar is the ideal place for a Martini, resplendent in 50s drinks adverts



home truths

WHO LIVES HERE?

Rebecca and Richard Morton, with their two-year-old daughter Ruby

TYPE OF PROPERTY

Three-bedroom mansion flat overlooking the Thames, in Surbiton, Surrey

STYLE STATEMENT

'We take a fantasy, tongue-in-cheek approach to décor; there's lots of humour too – not surprising when the man of the house is a stand-up comedian'



markets and collectors' fairs. No-one else seemed to understand our fixation with Fifties Martini glasses, plaster dogs and Hollywood film posters!' she explains.

It was while Rebecca was taking a break from work, transforming the flat, that she discovered she had a real interest in interior design, which she is now pursuing professionally.

Her decorating style is unconventional and tongue-in-cheek, basing each room around a personal theme, which may be an interest, a quirky collection, or a holiday: 'Each room is a reflection of our life together so far. For example, the main bedroom was initially inspired by one of our first trips together, to Rome, although it developed into a Hollywood theme. The starting point for the Art Deco living room was my collection of plaster diva heads, and the hall is based around Richard's cartoon collection.'

While working on the flat, Rebecca also discovered that she had a talent for painting murals. She painted one in daughter Ruby's bedroom and, when friends and family saw it, she began to

get commissions, setting up a mural business called Wonderwalls.

The first thing you notice when you enter the flat is the size of the hall, which is large and long. This is Richard's cartoon gallery, where he displays his collection of Hannah Barbera cartoon cells. As the room receives little natural light, Rebecca chose a pale colour for the walls and plenty of light fittings.

A peppermint green Smeg fridge became the starting point for the style and colour scheme of the kitchen. Richard and Rebecca chose the slightly bow-fronted units as they echo the retro-styling of the fridge.

With its custom-made Thirties-style upholstery, fan-shaped mirror and a stunning display of plaster busts, the living room has a strong Art Deco theme. To transform the fireplace, Rebecca covered it with fifty pounds worth of Mirror-Flex tiles.

While most homes have a dining room, Rebecca and Richard have a Fifties American diner. Metal and leatherette dining furniture forms the ▶

“WE LOVE COMING BACK TO A HOME THAT IS AN EXPRESSION OF OUR PERSONAL TASTES”

LEFT & ABOVE: the chunky Art-Deco style sofa and armchairs set the scene for the Mortons' interesting, yet comfortable living room. Rebecca refurbished the floor and the fireplace, which, flanked by semi-circular display units, forms a fabulous focal point of the room, complete with period film posters and authentic light fittings

RIGHT & ABOVE: Magnet's Manhattan range kitchen units with their unusual, slightly bowed fronts, are topped with Fifties-style crazy paving work surfaces. A multi-coloured vinyl floor adds a practical, yet fun element





FAR RIGHT: chrome and mirrored accessories bring a touch of glitz and glamour to the bathroom, with its original Thirties Dutch wall tiles

RIGHT: movie posters, hat boxes and an Art Deco dressing table set a vintage Hollywood theme for the bedroom

BELOW: the hall makes a perfect gallery for Richard's collection of original Hannah Barbera cartoons. Scooby came from a local Warner Bros store

centrepiece and sets the style, with a cocktail bar, resplendent with 50s drinks adverts, gracing one corner of the room.

With two-year-old Ruby around, Rebecca made sure that the diner would be child-friendly. The walls, for example, are coated with Polyvine decorator's varnish, so sticky handprints can be easily wiped clean. All the collectables are displayed high on the wall, out of the reach of small fingers. Here, Rebecca chose black and white chequered ceramic tiles as a floor covering not just for their striking good looks, but for practicality too.

The bathroom still has its original Thirties Delft tiles, identical to the ones in the flat across the road where Rebecca's mother grew up. Where most people might be tempted to rip out old tiles and bathroom fittings, the Mortons, as you might expect, left them just where they were. 'Each picture on the tiles is different. My mother gave all her figures names when she was a child – there was no way those tiles were coming down!' Rebecca laughs.

Finally, at the end of a long day (and at the end of a long hallway!), Richard and Rebecca head for bed in their Hollywood hideaway. The ceiling, painted by Rebecca, is the first thing you notice, with its delightfully, romantic sky-effect, creating the illusion of soothing, puffy clouds. With a ceiling like that, every night in the Morton household can only be a peaceful one. IRH



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Smeg, 0870 990 9908
Warner Bros shop, www.wbshop.com