

Teasing The Senses

*Kensington Mansion flat
by René Dekker Design Limited*





Set on one of Kensington's most exclusive garden squares, this listed mansion flat received a complete refurbishment from René Dekker Design – breathing new life into its tired interior. As recognition of its outstanding design, this Kensington-based property was a short listed project within the Interior Design Award – Residential £2.5-£5 Million at the international Design & Architecture Awards 2013.

Upon entering one is immediately struck by the textures and finishes which tease the senses. Exquisitely lacquered doors as smooth as glass, textured polished plaster expertly applied to expansive walls and delicate wall coverings abound throughout the interior, a common trait that runs through schemes commissioned to René Dekker.

Originally one very large home, the building was transformed and subdivided into apartments many years ago when space was not the premium it is now. The apartment has been sympathetically laid out across 3,000 square feet, it has a spacious entrance hall leading in one direction to the principle rooms and in the other to the bedrooms. At the front of the residence and facing the square is the reception room with an adjoining eat in kitchen and a further study. To the rear are three bedrooms all with en-suite bathrooms, a guest cloak room and a lobby.

The property was built in the 1850s and despite the subdivision, retains many of its period features. These include well-proportioned skirtings, deep elaborate cornices and the mahogany entrance door; but the key feature that gives this space such presence is undoubtedly the proportions. When René Dekker was engaged as the interior designer, the building works were well underway – the challenge was now for Dekker to add the magic, Dekker worked closely with the architect and project manager to ensure that the finished product exceeded the client's expectation yet kept English heritage agreeable. Furnishing included items from English Georgian from Chelsea Harbour who's pieces perfectly complemented this period home.

The entrance hall is warm and inviting, and although classical in its detailing, it is refreshingly contemporary in its use of finishes. It flows off in two directions, fluidly linking the bedroom wing with the reception room through the use of a seamless pitted plaster finish on the walls and the random width and length oak planks that make up the floor throughout the apartment. Over scaled skirtings and detailed comicing painted in crisp off white gloss are highlighted in blissful contrast to the cognac polished plaster.

The reception room is resplendent with its luxuriously finished walls, skilfully painted to look like aged silk. Dekker worked closely with renowned specialist decorators DKT to create this sumptuous blend of taupe, gold and pearl. The original sample was a small piece of water damaged silk that Dekker was determined to recreate on a large scale. "It's

never a problem getting exactly the right finish" says Dekker, "as long as you work with professional people who understand the value of the finished product." To ground the scheme and keep it in context, Dekker used heavily gilded lamps from Porta Romana which all sit squarely on a contemporary silk and wool rug.

Adjoining the reception room is the family eat-in-kitchen, separated when required, by full height oak and glass panelled doors. A far more modern affair, this room is the heart of the home, again with ample space, housing an eight seater table and chairs which do not encroach in any way on the flow of the room. The study is a modest but well-proportioned room just off the hall. Panelled in dark oak, this bespoke arrangement was designed with the client's every need in mind. An L-shaped desk with storage and file drawers runs along two sides of the room while full height narrow bookshelves occupy the third elevation.

The master suite made up of a generous bright bedroom, two walk in wardrobes and an en suite bathroom. The bed is centrally located opposite the fireplace and sits elegantly within an architectural folly that had to be kept due to the listing. In order to fit a padded headboard into the niche, a series of individual panels were created and upholstered in taupe nubuck, as was the client's original bed base. The colour palette is subtle but sophisticated in a symphony of taupes and accented with midnight blue. A beautiful linen wall covering has been hung here which softens the whole room and establishes a wonderfully calm repose. At the other end of the bedroom is the en suite bathroom which is bright and refreshing with its large window and marble cladding to the floor and walls. This is the ultimate escape with its large spa bath, walk in steam shower and double vanity.

When it comes to the children's bedrooms, Dekker is somewhat of a seasoned veteran these do not disappoint. Creating a bedroom for a young 16 year old girl, who is keen to study fashion design, was a challenge to avoid predictability. The bedroom is vibrant and fresh with its use of tangerine and off white. Refined elements such as the deep buttoned ottoman and the contemporary take on a classical French like Fratelli Boffi desk chair, and make a great alternative scheme for a young Vivian Westwood in training. The boy's room is also a dream blend of masculine 'Ralph Lauren' tones translated into a boyish scheme. Shades of charcoal, smoke and gun metal scatter cushions, not usually associated with a boy's room, combine well with the faux fur throw and dark linen headboard.

In an age of instant gratification, this home is a homage to subtlety. Delicate textures, restrained tones and luxurious finishes eagerly wait to be discovered, and woven into the very fabric of the design are the private treasures that make up the clients life. Understated elegance would not be a clichéd term when describing this home.

Dekker worked closely with the architect and project manager to ensure that the finished product exceeded the client's expectation yet kept English heritage agreeable."

