

High definition

High-tech, industrial-style design meets indulgent luxury in this contemporary apartment

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The combination of backlit artwork and open shelving creates added interest on the large expanse of wall that runs almost the entire length of the apartment.

Above: Exposed brick is softened with a curtain that draws across the entire wall. It also keeps the busy shopping street below concealed.

Opposite page: Custom coloured glass frontals from Kessler and a mix of Evala cabinetry with Xylocleaf panel doors form the central island unit, finished with a 3.5m-long stainless-steel worktop.

Having rented their duplex Cardiff apartment out for six years and even completing two smaller redesigns of the property, Babette and Dorian Bowen finally felt ready to create the elaborate, open-plan, loft-style space they'd always craved. Fortunately, they brought a wealth of industry expertise to the project – the former is an interior architect, while the latter is a project developer, and together they run design business Project One.

"We had gutted and re-designed it on two previous occasions, but this time we came at it with a completely different perspective, opening the structures more, widening the hallway, removing all of the doors, architraves and skirting, and taking out three bedrooms along the hallway, which gave us adequate room to create a gym and spa," explains Babette. The Bowens also significantly upped their budget and spent an additional £150,000 on the alterations.

There are no internal doors once you get past the entrance hallway. That being so, the subtle separation

of spaces through the use of partition walls means the different rooms still have definition. In the living area the Bowens removed the upper floor, replacing it with the balcony, and it is from this mezzanine level that the couple run their business. The kitchen is positioned underneath the mezzanine and the overhang actually helps define the cooking and breakfast bar area within the open-plan living space.

The exposed brick wall in the living space and stainless-steel worktops in the kitchen are cleverly offset with a button-back armchair, rich velvet seating and even the pale mauve kitchen cabinetry. The 9m-high ceiling is a reminder of the industrial heritage of the building and a three-tier chainmail beaded chandelier adds the desired 'rough luxe' effect.

Babette relished the design challenge of whittling down her favourite products, chosen suppliers and dream colourways. "Even right up until the last minute we were designing the enormous mock-croc bench that runs the length of the stainless-steel kitchen worktop," she explains, also confessing ▶





Above: A custom-made 4mm-thick steel island worktop with inset hob, twin sinks, Quooker tap and waste disposal add the air of professional kitchen.

to having a huge moment of doubt when it was installed. "That lasted all of five minutes, though, when I realised it was absolutely perfect and gave the kitchen the added wow factor that sets it apart from an off-the-shelf design."

As well as looking great, Dorian was also determined that the apartment should have the finest audio and visual kit throughout, including a high-specification Sonos music system. "My side of the design process was to include miles of concealed CAT6 cable to help future-proof our dream home," he laughs. The couple also installed a sophisticated lighting scheme that brings the apartment alive at night with back-lit art and highlighted recesses. The kitchen drawers light up when you open them and the chandelier makes the most of the ceiling void in the living room. "This is precisely the quirky mix of modern, luxury and loft styling that we wanted," says Babette.

The master bedroom also blurs the boundaries between functionality and luxury. The down-lit curtain wall in particular gives a real boutique hotel feel. "The apartment is situated above a row of shops – it was originally the top floors of a department store – so we don't enjoy amazing views from the bedroom. The curtain wall makes a feature of a wall where there isn't a huge window, and also creates the feeling of space," explains Babette. "Without masses of natural daylight it has



that muted feel, which means the bedroom still feels soft and calming."

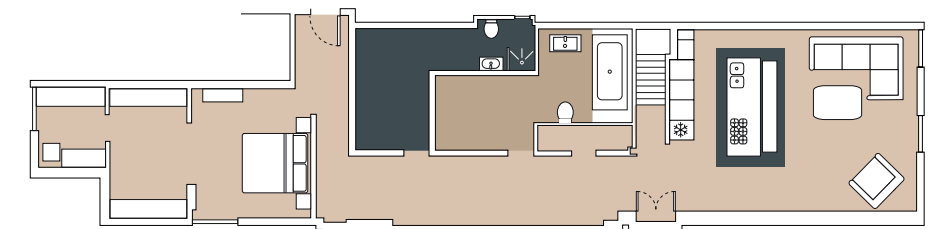
Babette also created a large walk-in wardrobe and dressing area with bevelled mirrors all around, with wall-to-wall storage on one side and dressing table area opposite. "The mirrors make it feel so much larger and give the illusion that there is double the space," she says. Babette chose a modern feature chandelier to add serious design impact, "because you see the bedroom from the hallway, so it has to wow!" she adds.

When it came to designing the bathrooms, Dorian and Babette have created two indulgent spaces that answer two separate design briefs: the first to install a walk-in shower with space for gym equipment and yoga practice; the second to provide a more calming, spa-like environment with Duravit Sundeck bath, ambient lighting and separate sauna.

Above: Black Emperador honed marble flooring clearly separates the kitchen from the carpeted living area and hallway. Meanwhile, the bench and worktop provide an ideal spot for client meetings during the day.

"We took out the three bedrooms located in this space and split them into two larger areas that better suited our lifestyle," says Dorian, who likes the added convenience of being able to work out at home whilst running their busy design practice. "The bathroom with the walk-in shower is great for practicality yet the second bathroom is the space to go and relax or use the sauna after a hard day's work."

It's clear that Dorian and Babette have created the open-plan living space they always had their designer eyes set on and, even if it took three full renovations to achieve, it's obviously been worth it. "We just had to keep going with it until it felt completely right," Dorian says. "It's such a versatile space, whether it's for a party or business meeting, and it ticks all of the boxes. It's safe to say there won't be a fourth phase of this design!" **[KBB]**



Below: Handleless pan drawers are just one of the storage solutions that help to keep this sleek kitchen clutter-free. Internal lighting is both useful and adds atmosphere.





Above: Divided by a half wall, the master bedroom and the dressing area together make a sumptuous suite.

Left: A walk-in wardrobe with pull-down rails keeps clothes practically stored away, while a bevelled mirror room with joinery storage provides the ultimate dressing area.

Right: The master bedroom has all of the modern luxuries that the living space has with a mini media wall complete with Sonos speakers. A curtain wall adds a boutique hotel feel as well as cosiness to the space.



"The curtain wall makes a feature of a wall where there isn't a huge window, and also creates the feeling of space."

Q&A

Designers and homeowners Babette and Dorian say...

What was the biggest expense?

The 4mm-thick steel kitchen island with seamless welds, and the crane to get it all into the building, were the most expensive items.

What was the biggest challenge?

Opening the space by removing the doors completely but still keeping the rooms private.

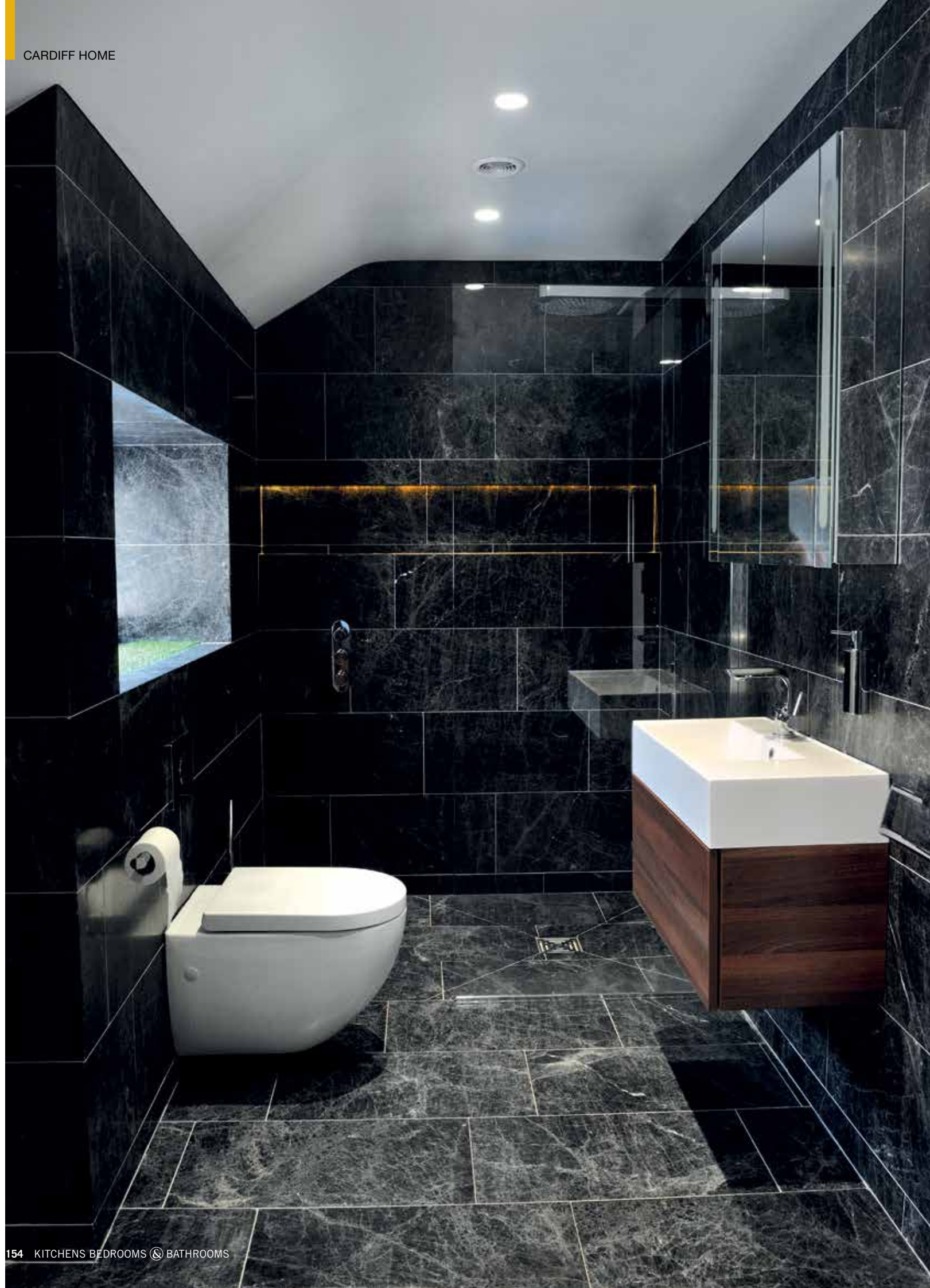
Is there anything you would do differently?

We left it until the last minute to add wireless control for all the electrics and Sonos hi-fi system, so I would put that in at the start next time.

Advice for someone embarking on a similar project?

Settle upon the design and schedule of goods perfect before you start. It will help the project run smoothly from costing to practical stages of installation and work being completed on time.





Opposite page: An open-plan shower room with back-lit recesses is conveniently located just next to Babette and Dorian's home gym.

Above: The couple created the spa bathroom in their previous refurbishment. "It's the only space we kept," they say.

SourceBook

DESIGN

Project design Project One (029 2140 6283 or www.projectonewales.co.uk)

KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM

Cabinetry Evala cabinetry with Xylocleaf doors, Kessler (01623 720900 or www.kessler.co.uk)

Worktop with integrated sink Bespoke 4mm stainless steel, Barazza (0845 338 1761 or www.barazza.co.uk)

Tap Quooker (0808 102 0677 or www.quooker.co.uk)

Bench Bespoke, Project One, as before

Appliances Oven, steam oven, coffee machine, fridge-freezer and hob, all Siemens (0344 892 8999 or www.siemens-home.co.uk); Extractor, for similar try Blanco by Gutmann (01923 635200 or www.blanco.co.uk)

Flooring Black Emperador honed marble from Mandarin Stone (01600 715444 or www.mandarinstone.com)

Pendant light For similar try Persora (01386 556161 or www.persora.com)

Armchair For similar try Loaf (0845 468 0698 or www.loaf.com)

Sofa and pouffe For similar try Molteni & Co at Chaplins (020 7631 2345 or www.molteni.it)

Curtain rail Silent Gliss (01843 863571 or www.silentgliss.co.uk)

BEDROOM/DRESSING AREA

Bed For similar try Loaf, as before

Curtain rail Silent Gliss, as before

Dressing room furniture Bespoke, Project One, as before

Pendant light Libra (01223 895800 or www.theibra.com)

Wall lights Astro (01279 427001 or www.astrolighting.co.uk)

Walls Painted in Crown Scrubbable in Project One Custom Blends, Vintage 1 and Vintage 2 (0330 024 0297 or www.crowntrade.co.uk)

Stool For a similar dressing table stool try the French Bedroom Company (01444 415430 or www.frenchbedroomcompany.co.uk)

Carpet Jewel in Fawn by 3D Flooring (029 2070 6706)

SPA BATHROOM

Bath and basin Duravit (0845 500 7787 or www.duravit.co.uk)

Sauna Tylo (+46 352990000 or www.tylo.com)

Basin tap Hansgrohe (01372 472001 or www.hansgrohe.co.uk)

WC Abacus Vessini (0845 850 5040 or www.abacusdirecttd.com)

Tiles Tundra limestone, Mandarin Stone, as before

Mirror, bath surround and joinery Project One, as before

SHOWER ROOM

Tiles Black Emperador honed marble, Mandarin Stone, as before

Brassware Crosswater (0345 873 8840 or www.crosswater.co.uk)

Wetroom system Abacus Elements, as before

WC Abacus Vessini, as before

Basin and vanity Bauhaus (0345 873 8840 or www.bauhaus-bathrooms.co.uk)

Mirror Project One, as before

COST

A similar-style kitchen would start from £60,000, a similar bedroom with walk-in wardrobe would start from £20,000 and similar bathrooms would start from £55,000