

**W**HEN Ruth Demarelle and her husband Rik found this four-floor Victorian terrace in Fulham, it didn't so much grow on them as around them. 'There was a vineyard in the back garden and some DIY winemaking equipment,' she explains. 'The grape vines were growing all over the house and in some places into the house. It was completely dilapidated. It had been divided into flats, there were rats and the wallpaper was about 50 years old.'

Demarelle's family had all built their own houses and this was her chance to also create something herself. 'My husband declared me crazy, but I saw the potential in the house and, thankfully, he went along with it. The house had been owned by an architect 50 years ago – we even found some plans under the floorboards – and I saw straight away he had given it a soul.'

The £1.35 million price tag was certainly befitting of one of London's most desirable locations – this included bargaining 10 per cent off the asking price – and the Demarelles had £500,000 for a complete renovation. But while there was serious money to be made with the right improvements (the value of the house has now increased by 50 per cent), it was still important to stay strictly within budget.

The first step to keeping costs reined in was for Demarelle to take on the role of project manager, thanks in part to two months she had in-between jobs which usually meant working 60 hours in the City. 'Project managing your own house renovation

**'I don't like clutter... this house has a Zen-like feel'**

isn't for the fainthearted,' she warns. 'It's spreadsheets all the way.'

The couple rented a flat on the same street ('we put on a stone eating takeaways') and Demarelle set about managing up to 25 people in the house at one time. The hardest thing was keeping on top of the fast-moving renovation, she explains, and often having to be one step ahead of the

Roof-top views: Reinforcing the ceiling allowed for a stylish roof terrace



# Keeping it simple isn't always easy

Oliver Stallwood finds out how a rat-infested wreck in Fulham was transformed into this stunning home

builders. 'They would say, "what do you want to do with this corner?" and I'd give them some drawings I'd scribbled the night before and they would just work from those. It was great and a cheap way of doing it.'

Specialist Cue & Co of London (cueandco.com) was brought in to help with aspects of the interior design, such as lighting plans, ways of retaining certain existing features – the drawing room wall panelling and the wrought iron balustrades – and how best to integrate these with the proposed layouts and finishes she had chosen. 'The client was heavily involved in the overall project, was very organised and loved her spreadsheets,' says Cue & Co founder and owner Charlie Borthwick. Extra

space in the house was created by digging into the basement and adding a side and rear extension, forming a large open-plan kitchen and dining room leading out on to the rear garden. A lot of walk on glass was used, as the house is south facing and Demarelle wanted to draw more sunlight into the hallways.

The majority of walls and floors throughout were replaced and the top floor ceiling joists were reinforced to allow for a stylish roof terrace with amazing views. The units in the kitchen came from a chance visit to Umbermaster, a small family company in Broadstairs, on the way to Folkstone to catch a ferry to Belgium. 'They weren't fitted and weren't very expensive,' says

Demarelle. 'The last thing you put in with a project like this is the kitchen, so often you don't have too much money left in the budget.' The sliding doors were bought off the internet and then came the day when everything would hopefully fit. 'It was nerve-racking when it all got here. People said it wouldn't match the island but we made everything work'

The marble in the bathroom is another statement, yet this, too, was a money-saving exercise. A friend suggested MGLW marble warehouse in south-west London and here they found four slabs of marble that were cheap because they were almost impossible to bookmatch (the process of matching the marble so that adjoining slabs mirror each other). But the inconsistency in the grain adds its own drama. 'I was really keen. They only had these four slabs, so we bought them and just decided to make it work and they look great.'

There is a common language in the décor, celebrating the restrained and sticking to an almost obsessively monochrome pallet that is a nod to the Sixties. 'I don't like clutter,' says Demarelle, 'and I like to come home to peace and quiet, with everything tucked away. This house has a Zen-like feel.' The dining chairs are all from Belgium and the statement lampshades were sourced from The Lighting Store (lightingstoredirect.co.uk). The blade lights on the stairs and all other lighting in the house are from Mr Resistor Lighting in Fulham (mr-resistor.co.uk).

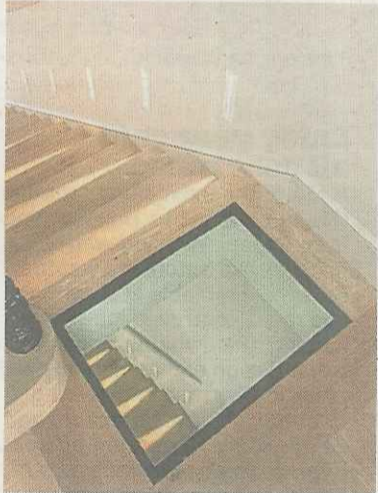
So would she put herself forward to run such a large project again? 'Well, we've just completed on another property and I'm planning to do that one as well,' she says. 'I enjoyed it, but whether or not it is possible to put as much time and energy into a project that is not going to be my home, we shall have to wait and see.'



Grand entrance: The mirrored hallway looks spectacular



Victorian feature: The original wrought iron balustrades



Bright idea: The landing's walk-on glass draws light on to the stairs



Clean lines: The monochrome pallet is a nod to the Sixties

## 'Potential was obvious'



Impressed: Charlie Borthwick of Cue & Co of London

'THE house was in a dire state when we first saw it,' says Charlie Borthwick, founder and owner of Cue & Co of London. 'But I could see it was a lovely building, the ceilings were nice and high and I was impressed by the sheer volume, it felt really big.' Charlie and his company were brought on board because Demarelle was impressed by the work they had done

on her friend's house. Borthwick says the biggest problem was keeping as many of the original features as possible, while fully renovating it. 'It's always nice to keep the body of what was there, like a quirky ceiling in the double reception and original balustrades. We even managed to keep the stained glass in one of the windows. You can still see the building that was there.'



Outdoor space: The previously over-grown rear garden, once used for wine-making, is now a decked haven

