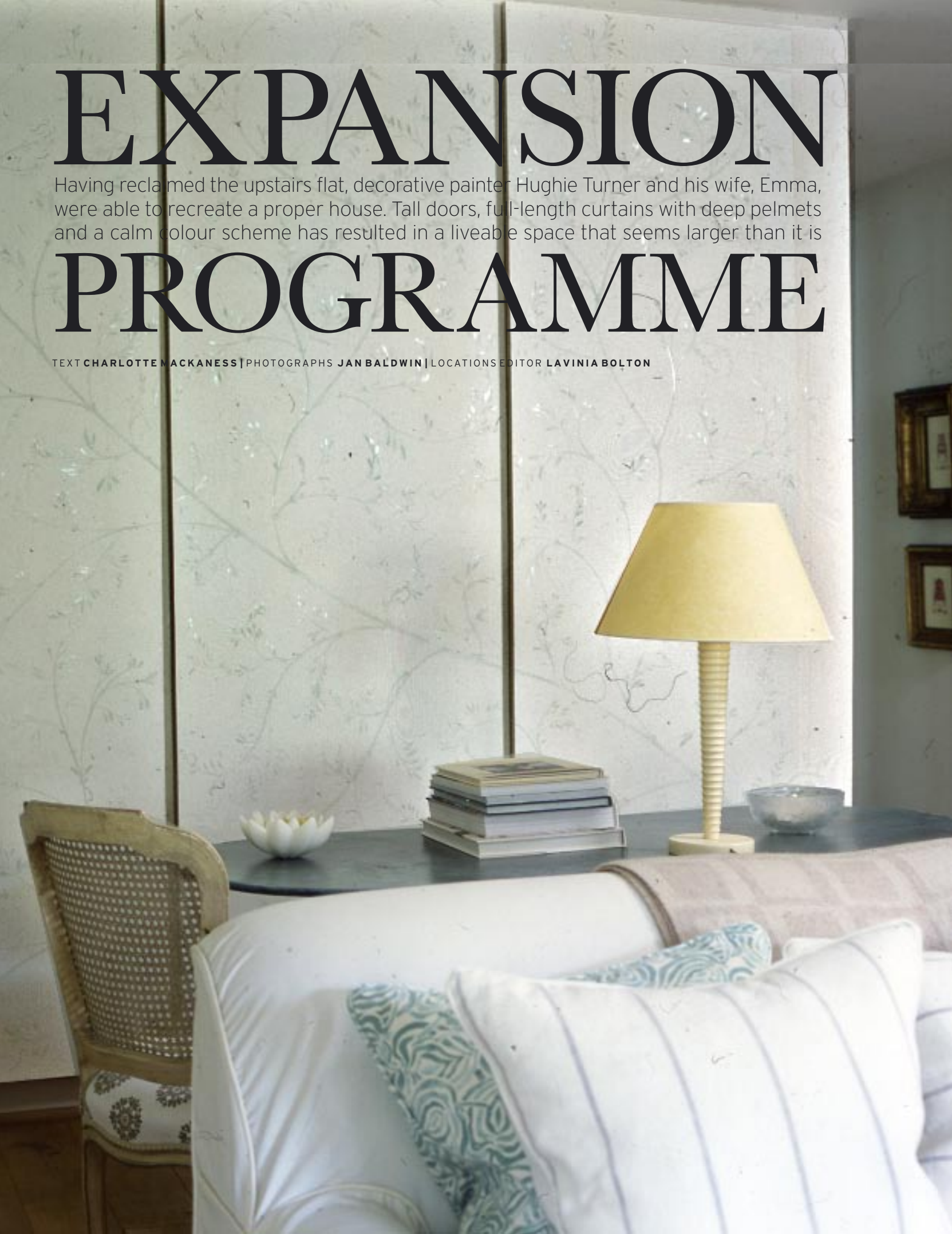


EXPANSION

Having reclaimed the upstairs flat, decorative painter Hughie Turner and his wife, Emma, were able to recreate a proper house. Tall doors, full-length curtains with deep pelmets and a calm colour scheme has resulted in a liveable space that seems larger than it is

PROGRAMME

TEXT CHARLOTTE MACKANESS | PHOTOGRAPHS JAN BALDWIN | LOCATIONS EDITOR LAVINIA BOLTON



The garden room (all pictures) - originally the main bedroom - is a restful space, with walls in 'Nest Egg' by Nina Campbell. Hughie painted the willow pattern on the large cupboards (opposite).

The chairs are covered in fabric from Lewis & Wood; the pouffe was designed by Hughie from old carpet remnants (left). The oak floor is decorated with trompe-l'oeil leaves

A

decorative artist, Hughie Turner is no stranger to illusion. Combining his skills with a passion for, and the clever use of, simple and free-flowing lines, Hughie and his wife Emma have transformed a Victorian terrace house in North Kensington into a spacious home with the generous proportions and high ceilings more often seen in Notting Hill town houses.

The work to turn what Hughie describes as a 'poky little ground-floor flat' into an airy two-bedroom house came in two waves. Eight years ago the couple moved into and overhauled the ground floor. Three years later they bought the flat upstairs as well. 'It was really grotty and an absolute mess but I love a project,' Hughie enthuses.

Height and space is apparent as soon as you enter the front door, as light streams down the stairs from a skylight at the very top of the house. On the right is a large drawing room. A corridor runs the length of the house, past a modest-size kitchen and cloakroom, to a garden room. This layout is mirrored upstairs: the main bedroom and en suite dressing room and bathroom occupy the front of the house, while you pass a study and bathroom to reach another bedroom at the rear.

'When we bought the ground-floor flat, the aim was to open things up. On the whole, it was terribly dark and dingy,' explains Hughie.

'We knocked a small kitchen and loo into one larger kitchen. By taking out the redundant door and wall, and gently curving the corridor, we eliminated nasty corners and allowed everything to flow.' Extra-tall doors, designed by Hughie, aid the passage of light.

Before the Turners acquired the upstairs flat, the garden room-cum-dining room had been their bedroom. None of the calming qualities of its previous incarnation have been lost. 'We've kept it simple with greys, umbers and greens. It's very restful and clean,' Hughie says. Three huge fitted cupboards are masked by panels exquisitely painted by Hughie in a willowy, olive pattern with iridescent touches.

A colourful mixture of art, including William Brooker pencil drawings and a vibrant Marcel Burtin oil, adorns the walls. 'There's no theme except that we like them. The artwork is here for us – not to impress,' states Hughie. Such is the case throughout, and is charmingly illustrated by the modest hanging of splendid Andy Warhol shoe pictures in the dressing room and downstairs loo.

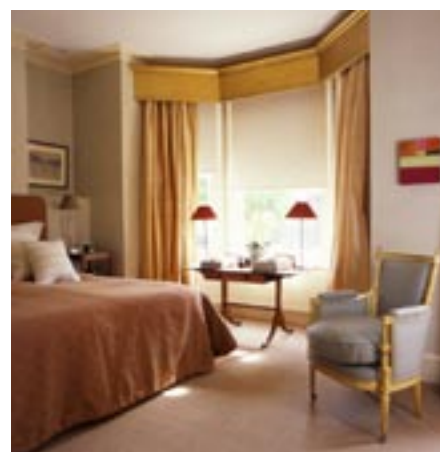
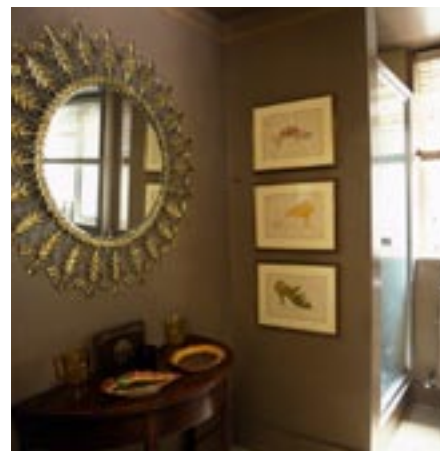
The only changes to the drawing room were superficial. Windows at either end, plus subtle, vertical-striped wallpaper, ensure it feels light and airy. 'Having bookshelves going up to the ceiling, and hanging large mirrors high up, also draws the eye,' explains Hughie. 'Although it's a proper, grown-up drawing room, we've tried to create softness. Whatever your sense of style or colour, it is important that a house also looks lived in and that it's done your own way.'

Accordingly, the Turners employed neither architects nor interior designers. The only serious help came from builder Andrew Coulter, who made the necessary alterations upstairs in just three months. The most drastic change involved reorganising the sitting room and surplus bedroom into a capacious dressing room, bathroom and bedroom.

Here, Hughie and Emma's ingenuity is also evident. 'We made the deep, giltwood pelmets, which again draw the eye upwards to create height. I mixed the eau-de-Nil wall colour. It's incredibly peaceful, and I'm delighted with how it works with our furniture, particularly the spoon-back chairs we covered in a beautiful Warris Vianni silk,' says Hughie.

While the structural work took mere months, only recently did the couple consider the house 'finished': 'We do things very slowly and wait until we find exactly the right pieces.' These have been discovered in a variety of locations, including antiques markets, junk shops and skips. 'There is nothing more thrilling than finally finding exactly what you've been looking for, especially if it hasn't cost much,' says Hughie with a characteristic chuckle □

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In the drawing room (top), large mirrors and striped wallpaper emphasise the sense of space. A tapestry chair complements the Bernard Thorp curtain fabric (above). The mirror in the cloakroom (centre) was found in a junk shop; the shoe

pictures are by Andy Warhol. The main bedroom (right and opposite) is painted eau-de-Nil; Hughie made the giltwood pelmets. The motif on the low spoon-back chairs (opposite) was hidden under layers of white gloss paint

