

REAL HOMES

THE owners

Nick and Mila Hirschhorn, a film producer and a homemaker, live in their five-bedroom semi-detached home with their sons Josh, 12, and Louis, nine. Built in the Arts & Crafts style, the brick-built house is within the Conservation Area of Hampstead Garden Suburb.

The property's original kitchen was much smaller; knocking through into the adjacent garage gave the Hirschhorns a much larger footprint for their open-plan kitchen, diner, and living space.

With just one original window in the space, a skylight was added between the island and the range cooker. A lighting designer was engaged to create a layered lighting scheme, to ensure the space looked just as glamorous after dark.

PERIOD DRAMA

Glamorous 20th century style influences present a contemporary ambience in this 19th century home, while staying true to the values of the property's Arts & Crafts heritage



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hen Nick and Mila Hirschhorn started looking for a company to bring their kitchen project into fruition, they had already been planning their home's redesign for some time. "Our old kitchen was not only very dated, it was very small. But we held off for several years, because we knew that the high-end design we had in mind would get easily damaged by young children," explains Nick. "We waited until our youngest son was seven before putting the wheels in motion – by which time we also really started to need the space!"

Knocking through into the former morning room, utility room and garage gave the Hirschhorns the space they needed to create separate kitchen, dining and living zones; the aim was to achieve a multi-functional room which would make daily family life more relaxed and inclusive.

"We had decided to do all the design work ourselves, which meant finding a kitchen company with both the design and build capability and a collaborative approach," recalls Nick. "Higham Furniture were able to provide us with really good drawings and 3D visualisations of the cabinets, and this in turn led to the development of new ideas – such as the incorporation of the curves, when it became clear from the plans that these would soften the transition between kitchen and living space."

Nick and Mila already had a clear idea of what they wanted before they began working with the team at Higham Furniture – open-plan, a modern-classic aesthetic, and a central island unit were three fundamental requirements. The design process was organic, and through it new ideas were introduced, such as the curved cabinetry (spotted at the company's showroom), as well as the finishes and materials.



"Don't be scared to try something daring. You don't need to have every detail worked out in the plans up front; to achieve a truly great design you have to be prepared to experiment."

Nick Hirschhorn, homeowner

As part of the design evolution process, the initial plan for a separate hob and ovens gave way to a range cooker, while two windows originally designed into this elevation were removed.



The rich depth of the blue-black painted cabinetry is dramatically offset by the burnished brass handles, while the gold-toned travertine splashback, eye-catching Fusion Blue granite worktop and striking wallpaper layer decadent finish upon decadent finish. "None of the colours and materials were decided up front," explains Nick. "We took things step by step, and did a lot of visits to suppliers and interiors shops, and discovered new ideas along the way."

THE designer

"Many people would opt for a light paint colour on the cabinetry in a darker room – but don't be afraid to go for bold colours if they're your preference, and add interest with the use of colourful splashbacks and other accessories." **Sonja Dibaja, Designer, Higham Furniture**

"We've both travelled internationally for work, witnessed the development of the design hotel movement, and admired the creations of designers such as Philippe Starck and Kelly Wearstler. We wanted to bring an element of this glamour and sophistication into our home." **Nick Hirschhorn**

Colour has been used to create a sense of coherence between the dining and kitchen zones – with gold tones picked out in the dining chairs' frames, the large painting, and the statement chandelier. The aesthetic ties can be seen in shapes, too; the curves of the cabinetry echo the roundness of the tub chairs.



While the basic concept was clear in the Hirschkomrs' minds before they began working with Sonja Dibaja at Higham Furniture, the overall look was still up for debate. "We liked the idea of an eclectic mix of 20th century influences, with an emphasis on glamour and quality craftsmanship," Nick explains. "In this way we could honour the property's Arts & Crafts heritage, while still creating a very contemporary interior." The couple spent a lot of time researching materials and surfaces, spotting the striking granite on a trip to a stone yard, and finding the travertine splashback tiles in a store on the Fulham Road.

"The remodel has changed everything; it's now the most used space in the house," smiles Nick. "But what we are most proud of is that it's now where the family naturally congregate and enjoy eating meals together, and it allows whoever is doing the cooking to remain involved as opposed to being shut away in a separate room. This aspect really comes into its own when we are entertaining."

THE details

Kitchen design by Sonja Dibaja, designer at Higham Furniture, including bespoke tulipwood and maple kitchen painted in the Little Greene Paint Company's 'Basalt', worktops in Fusion Blue polished granite, and travertine splashbacks higham.co.uk

Fisher & Paykel RF540ADUSX4 American fridge freezer in stainless steel fisherpaykel.com

Westin Cache 1100 integrated extractor in stainless steel westin.co.uk

Bosch SMV40C10GB integrated dishwasher bosch-home.co.uk

Franke Kubus KBX 160-45/20 undermounted sink in stainless steel. Arena pull-out spray tap in brushed chrome franke.com

Quooker Nordic Round hot water tap in brushed chrome quooker.co.uk