

25 BEAUTIFUL HOMES

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RECALL 29/015

SHAPE shifters

Alja and Tom Kramberger thoughtfully modified and extended their period home, turning it from impractical to just perfect

FEATURE & PHOTOGRAPHY
BARBARA EGAN/REPORTAGE



REPLANNED
HOME TRUTHS
THE PROPERTY Edwardian red-brick terrace
LOCATION Dublin
ROOMS Hall, sitting room, kitchen-diner, TV room, study, cloakroom, four bedrooms (one en suite), family bathroom
PURCHASED 2012
PREVIOUS PROPERTY 'We owned a similar but smaller house nearby before buying this place,' says Alja.

SITTING ROOM
The trench heating system with floor vents was an idea we saw used extensively in Holland,' says Alja. 'It's unobtrusive and very efficient.' Raffles sofa, £2,700, DePadova. Ercol Studio couch, £3,040, Nest.co.uk. Robert Alley Bling chandelier, £1,200, Third Coast Reps. Lightyears Caravaggio floor lamp by Cecilie Manz, £668, Skandium



HALL
Original features impress from the moment you step through the front door. Walls painted in Down Pipe estate emulsion, £38 for 2.5 litres. Farrow & Ball



TV ROOM
Designer pieces create a modern feel. Metropolitan sofa, £2,500, Poliform. Origami coffee table, £349, West Elm. Sous Mon Arbre wall lamp, £500, Ligne Roset. Bespoke rug from Rug Art

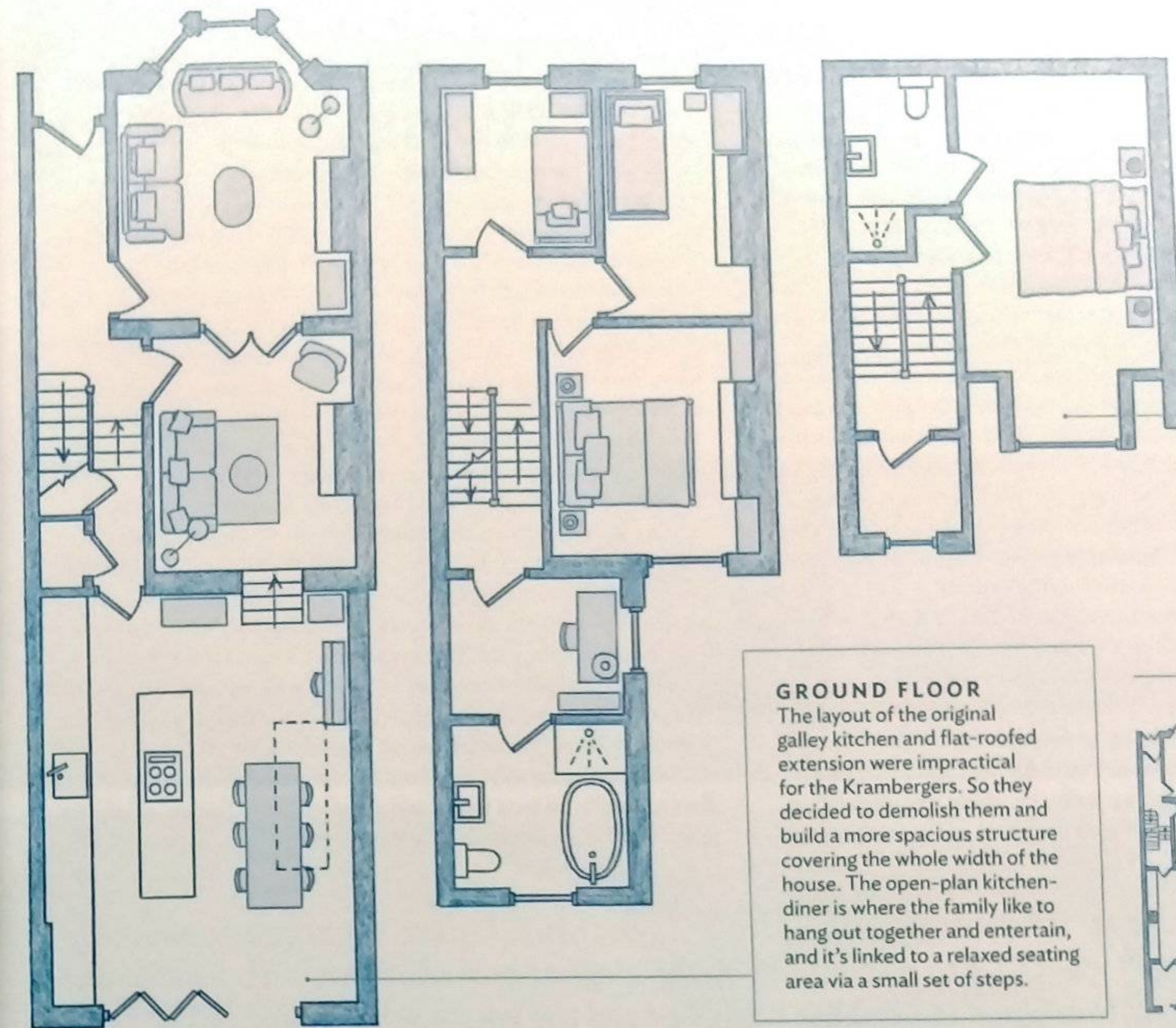


DESIGN TIP 'In a large kitchen-diner, fitting units on a single wall with a bench in front instead of a solid island will open up a space. And putting the hob on the workbench means you can face the dining area while cooking'



KITCHEN-DINER
The couple loved Bulthaup's stainless steel bench so much they bought two and placed them side by side to provide ample work space. Bulthaup B2 kitchen workbench and Leicht cabinetry, price on application, both McNally. Kitchen extension designed by Ambient Architecture. Globe clear ceiling light, £99, West Elm

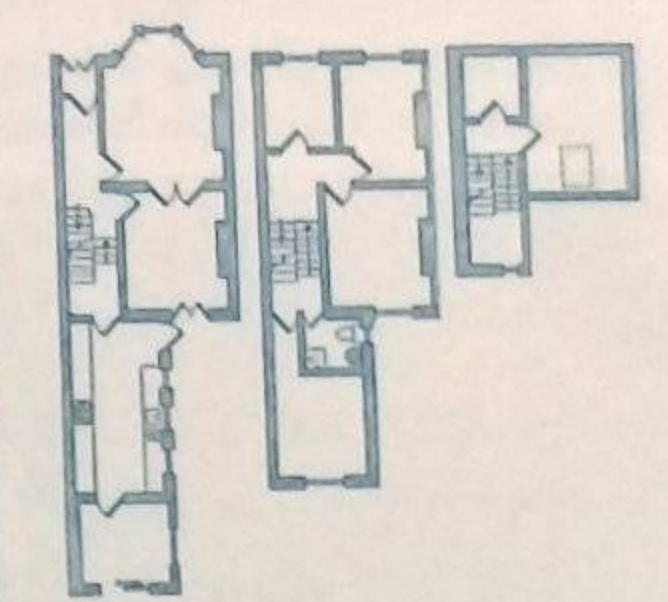
AFTER



ATTIC AREA
The existing bedroom and bathroom was reconfigured into a large guest room with a spacious en suite. The dormer window was enlarged to introduce more light into the space and to take advantage of the great views of the mountains.

GROUND FLOOR
The layout of the original galley kitchen and flat-roofed extension were impractical for the Krambergers. So they decided to demolish them and build a more spacious structure covering the whole width of the house. The open-plan kitchen-diner is where the family like to hang out together and entertain, and it's linked to a relaxed seating area via a small set of steps.

BEFORE



As soon as Alja Kramberger and husband Tom found out the house next door was up for sale they put in an offer. 'We had grown out of our smaller Victorian home and sold it, but with the housing market uncertain at that time, we decided to rent for a year and see what would happen next,' explains Alja. 'We really liked this neighbourhood and the Edwardian red-brick architecture, so we it was the perfect place for us.'

Once the sale was complete, the couple stood in the empty rooms and could imagine their new home taking shape around them. The two large feature-filled reception areas on the ground floor just needed decorating, but the tiny galley kitchen with an extension of indeterminate use tacked on the end required a complete rethink. Alja had a big, bright, open-plan kitchen-diner that connected with the garden and living areas in mind. 'I envisaged a very contemporary kitchen for modern living, but I love the original features of the house, so it was a case of carefully blending the new with the existing,' she says. 'It was important for us to preserve the history and period atmosphere, yet bring the house into a modern era.'

Alja and Tom, who have two daughters Cait, 11, and Mia, 6, knew all about the perils of single-glazed windows and lack of insulation through their experience living in a period property during the cold Irish winters. 'We love old houses, but they need careful planning to bring them up to modern comfort levels,' explains Alja. The couple hired architect Stefan Hoeckenreiner of Ambient Architecture to come up with a complete reconfiguration of the house. 'We'd collaborated with Stefan on a previous project

and were impressed with his ideas and creativity. Tom and I also both found him extremely easy to work with, and he was very receptive to our ideas and family's needs.'

Stefan's master plan featured a light and spacious kitchen extension with dining area added to the back of the property, opening onto the garden through a wall of folding glass doors. 'Now we have an outdoor room on warm days, and lovely uninterrupted views of the garden from the whole ground-floor level,' adds Alja. The middle reception area has become a TV room, which connects to the sunken kitchen via a set of steel stairs. As it no longer has a window to the exterior, it was important to fill it with as much light as possible borrowed from elsewhere. This was achieved by installing large roof lights and clerestory lighting in the new extension, and replacing solid timber panels in the doors between the two living areas with glass.

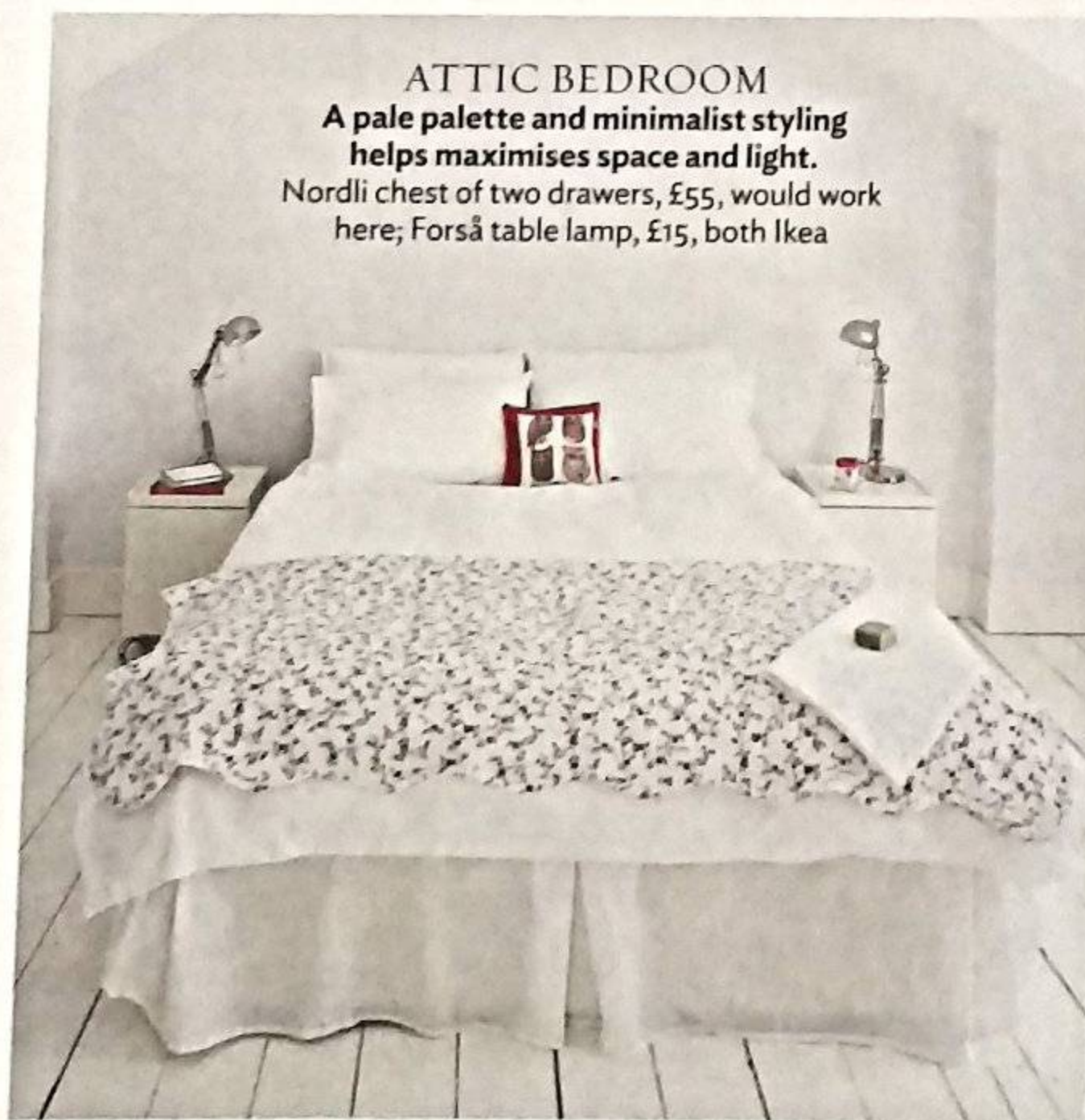
On the floor above, the layout of the three family bedrooms remained unchanged. However, the couple decided to extend and relocate the bathroom to take advantage of the half-level's sunny southwest-facing orientation, and also add a study and laundry room. And by remodelling the attic area, Stefan created enough space for a bright and generous-sized bedroom with en-suite bathroom. 'We needed a comfortable guest room for our friends and family visiting from my native Germany,' explains Alja.

'We planned everything very carefully so that the house would flow naturally, be easy to use and comfortable to live in,' concludes Alja. 'But I have to admit, it surpassed even our expectations.'



BATHROOM
The freestanding statement bathtub is the standout star of this luxurious, pared-back scheme. Vieques bath by Patricia Urquiola, £4,500, Agape. Tin Carrera polished marble tiles, from £57.94sq m, Mandarin Stone

FAVOURITE ITEM 'I love the Patricia Urquiola bathtub. I spent a lot of time planning this room because I wanted it to be contemporary, elegant and calm but with an element of quirkiness, too. Once I found the bath, I based the whole scheme around it'



ATTIC BEDROOM
A pale palette and minimalist styling helps maximise space and light. Nordli chest of two drawers, £55, would work here; Forså table lamp, £15, both Ikea



STUDY
This offers a tranquil place for Tom and Alja to work. Billy/Oxberg bookcase, £170, Ikea, has this look



MASTER BEDROOM
Thanks to the southwest-facing window, Alja could indulge herself in her favourite shade of grey. Industrial Task table lamp, £79, West Elm. Henley bedstead, £475, Feather & Black, would suit this scheme