

IN THE CITY: OLD FLAT, NEW CHIC

CHRIS BRIFFA redesigned and decorated the interior of this flat in St Ursula Street, Valletta, retaining its original architectural elements and features like the cement tiles, while infusing it with 21st-century chic in a contrasting style.

Photography: DAVID PISANI

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Chris Briffa describes his client's brief as a focus on entertainment and celebration, "so we gave the space a formal dining area, large living-room and functional open kitchen". A table in solid oak, measuring 3.4 metres by 2.3 metres, is set at the centre of the space. It works as a food preparation counter, general work-top, something off which to serve food and eat it, a bar-counter for parties and inside, there's plenty of storage.

The flat, Chris explains, needed the minimum of structural change because it was a good size and plan to start with. "We created short-span openings to allow strong visual interaction between different rooms, while leaving the original spaces distinct and defined," he says. "This is the typical enfilade of rooms: entrance hall, dining-room, living-room and kitchen, one leading onto the other with the bedroom off a corridor.

We mixed that in with contemporary idioms like open plan space, diffused lighting and natural finishes."

However much entertaining you do, however much you love to be surrounded by friends and family, privacy is a necessity and not an option. A guest room doubles up as a secluded television room, on which you can just shut the door when the party begins. The bedroom is, of course, a proper bedroom, set to one side of the entrance hall as is the television room. *continues...*

THE FIREPLACE IN RAW FAIR-FACED CONCRETE WAS DESIGNED BY CHRIS BRIFFA ARCHITECTS AND BUILT BY STEVE ELLIS. THE PATTERNED CEMENT TILES ARE NEW IN THE TRADITIONAL STYLE, AND SUPPLIED BY HAL MANN VELLA. THE CHERRY WOOD SCULPTURE IS CALLED 'ELEPHANT' AND IS BY LORIS MOROSINI (SLOVENIA) FROM LILY AGIUS GALLERY.



The multipurpose island in the kitchen, designed by Chris Briffa Architects and built by Joinwell, sits on repolished 1950s cement tiles. It serves as a breakfast area, bar, place for informal dining, and storage. The stools by Xera from Core. The painting is acrylic on canvas and is by James Vella Clark, from Lily Agius Gallery.





LEFT THE SPARTAN BATHROOM WAS PLASTERED WITH TADELAKT – PLASTER RENDERED IN THE HIGH-SHEEN, SUPER-SMOOTH MOROCCAN MANNER - BY STEVE ELLIS AND CLAD WITH NERO MARQUINA MARBLE BY HAL MANN VELLA. THE FITTINGS ARE SANICO BY S&S BATHROOMS. THE ACQUA DI PARMA TOILETERIES ARE FROM CAMILLERI PARIS MODE. THE 'CIRCUS' PAINTING BY PAT SANDERSON (UK) IS FROM LILY AGIUS GALLERY.



ABOVE LEFT The Manhattan skyline dominates the tv/guest room wall. The 'Cord' sofa bed by Softline is from Dépôt design in Belgium. The red, Vitra 'La Fonda' chair by Charles & Ray Eames is from Joinwell. The triangular table is vintage G-Plan. **RIGHT** The Hallway Floor - A classic black-and-white chessboard layout - is symmetrically divided by the restored dining-room doorway and colourfully coupled with limited edition photography prints by Elisa Von Brockdorff, from Lily Agius Gallery.

LEFT THE BED IS FROM DÉPÔT DESIGN IN BELGIUM AND SITS ON A PLATFORM OF IROKO SOLID FLOORING FROM LINK PROJECTS/THE HOUSE SHOP INTERIORS, AND A FLOOR OF CARRARA MARBLE. DIFFUSED LIGHT FILTERS THROUGH A FREESTANDING PARTITION HOUSING A BEDSIDE SHELF. PARENTESI LIGHTING BY ACHILLE CASTIGLIONI FOR FLOS IS FROM LIGHT PROJECTS; THE PURE LINEN BEDDING IN 'PEPPER' AND 'PEBBLE' SHADES IS FROM CAMILLERI PARIS MODE. THE 'SHADOW DANCE' LIMITED EDITION SIGNED PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINT IS BY CHARLES ROFF AND FROM LILY AGIUS GALLERY. THE VITRA 'COCONUT CHAIR' IS BY GEORGE NELSON FROM JOINWELL.



Storage in the kitchen comes in the form of a wall-to-wall system made of brushed steel and opaque glass, which incorporates a balcony covering which is identical to the cupboard doors.

The opaque glass diffuses natural light as it enters the room through the balcony, which is set behind the three central doors of the shelving/cupboard system. When those doors are open, the balcony is brought into the room.

The original 1950s patterned cement tiles were retained and polished to bring back their sheen, in the kitchen and dining areas, but Carrara and Nero Marquina marbles were used elsewhere. In the bedroom, the bed stands raised on a pedestal of iroko wood parquet, which is itself set against a white marble floor. A low wall behind the bed reduces and diffuses light which comes in through a balcony.

Walls were plastered and given a light grey wash using the traditional methods in those areas where cement tiles were retained. The texture of the masonry is left visible beneath the plaster. Where the flooring is of marble or parquet, the walls are given a glass-smooth plaster finish. The living-room has been given a stark fireplace fashioned of rough, fair-faced concrete, which suits the texture of the walls.

The entrance hall is decorated with colourful photography and cages by Elisa von Brockdorff, lightening up the formality of the hall and creating a playful contrast with its symmetry and restored old windows and doors. The photography displayed in the dining-room is by Pat Kurs, and it builds an intimate and almost voyeuristic atmosphere, with a doll's eyes watching what is happening around the table. The hues suit the retro look of the furniture and flooring. Abstract paintings by James Vella Clark hang in the kitchen. In the living-room, there is also a triptych by Wendy De Moor, which gives a distant impression of city life and works well with the textures in the room, particularly the floor. ■

continues...



TOP

IN THE DINING-ROOM, THE 'FLAIR' CHAIRS AND 'TORONTO' TABLE CAME FROM DÉPÔT DESIGN IN BELGIUM. THE FLOS PENDANT LIGHT 'SKYGARDEN' IS BY MARCEL WANDERS AND IS FROM LIGHT PROJECTS. THE LIMITED EDITION PRINTS BY PAT KURS (NEW YORK) ARE FROM LILY AGIUS GALLERY.

BELOW

THE SEATING AND GLASS TABLE IN THE LIVING-ROOM ARE FROM DÉPÔT DESIGN IN BELGIUM. THE ICONIC VITRA 'LCW' PLYWOOD CHAIR IS BY CHARLES & RAY EAMES, FROM JOINWELL. THE WHITE KRISTALIA 'C U' TABLE IS FROM CORE. THE TRIPTYCH PAINTINGS ARE BY A BELGIAN ARTIST, WENDY DE MOOR, WHO IS A FRIEND OF THE FLAT'S OWNER.