

# A FINE BALANCE

Beautiful raw materials and clever splashes of colour aptly merge the past with the present in this charming Belgian home

Words: Jacky Parker Photography: Luc Roymans/Chilli Media

## “F

inding this house was a happy coincidence,” begins Yves Gregoor, an estate agent and home stager. “We’d come to Sint-Truiden to view another property but then parked near this house and noticed it was for sale.” Known in Belgium as a Heren House, what Yves and his wife, Veerle, a child protection advisor, loved about the five-storey townhouse was its sense of grandeur and what remained of its early 20th-century architectural features. “It was exactly the type of home we wanted except that it looked tired and worn out,” says Yves. “So we decided to buy it and put the soul back into it.”

The couple, who share the home with their daughter, Ella, 13, and son, Josse, 11, took a year to renovate the property and did much of the work themselves, travelling every weekend from their previous home in Amsterdam to Sint-Truiden in Belgium. “We worked until around two or three in the morning and were up again at around five or six,” says Yves. “We had to have some professionals in, but we did as much as we could ourselves as materials don’t cost too much; it’s the work that’s expensive.” Here, Yves reveals more about the project.

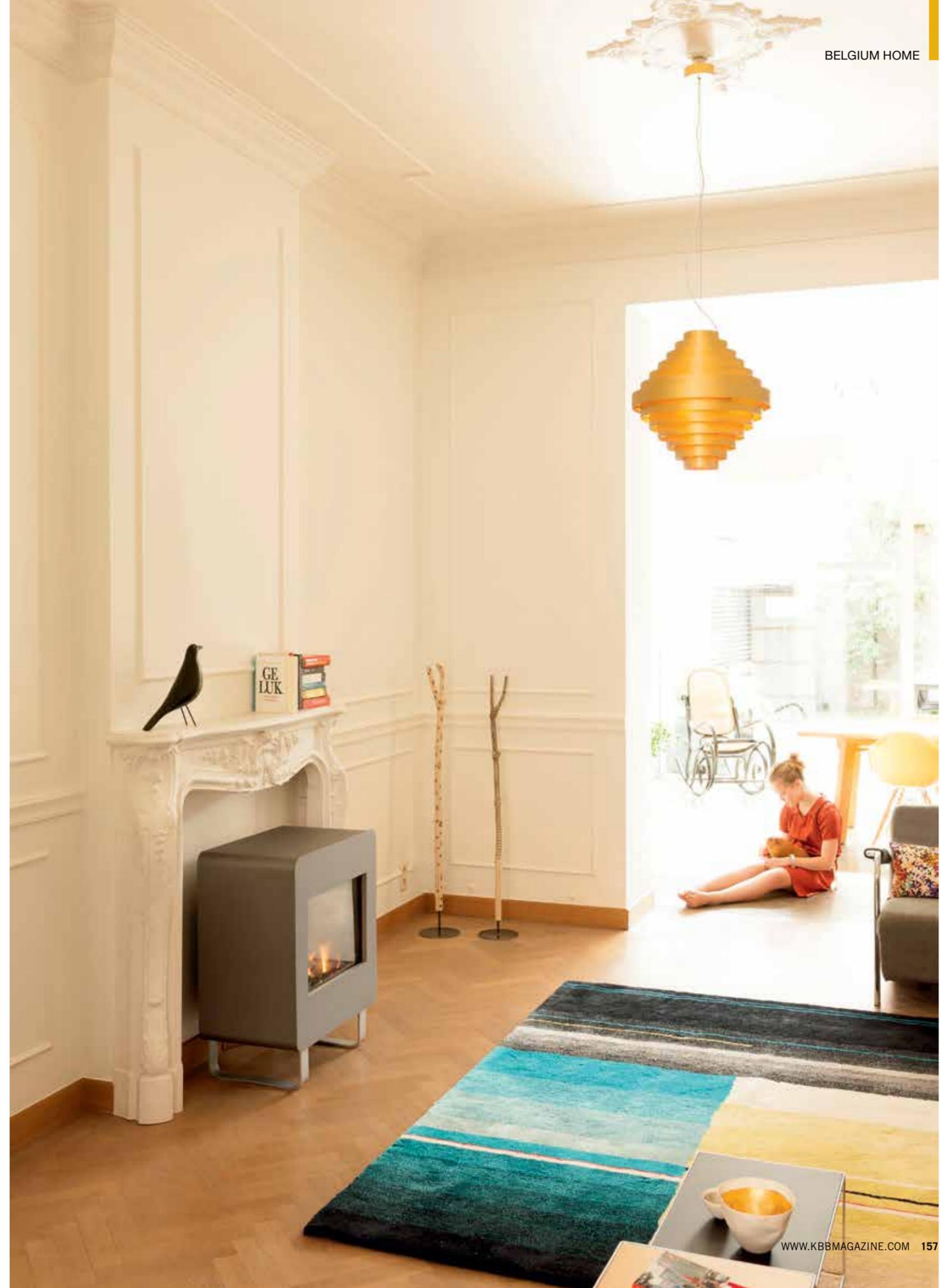
### What was your overall vision for the kitchen space?

We’d had the plasterwork, cornicing, fireplaces and other period features put back at the front of the house, but we wanted the back, where the kitchen is, to be modern and in our style. So we raised the ceiling and added the glass doors to bring in as much light as possible and we wanted to use raw materials to show that they can be beautiful just as they are without embellishment.

### How did you decide on materials?

We didn’t want any paint or colour. Instead we wanted just basic materials. The black tiles are Moroccan zellige – they’re made by hand and each is slightly different which gives them their charm. They were a gamble as we were unsure about making such a huge area so dark, but it paid off. The concrete ▶

**Opposite page:** Yves and Veerle Gregoor wanted a restful feel in the sitting room so opted for plain white walls, while the oak parquet flooring was chosen because it is typical of what would have originally been here. The light is by Belgian design company Wever & Ducre.



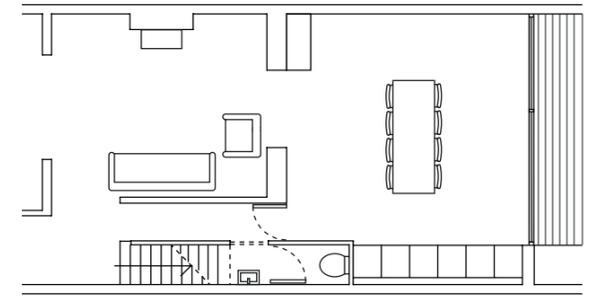


**Above:** Black zellige tiles cover the entire kitchen wall to dramatic effect. Yves had the stainless-steel shelving unit made to give the look and feel of a professional kitchen.

**Above right:** The ceiling was raised and a glass panel installed on the landing to allow even more light into the kitchen. Behind the black cupboard is a utility area and stairs down to the basement, which the family uses for storage.

**Below:** An Ikea shelf above the worktop provides a convenient space for ingredients and adds to the professional kitchen look.

“I love cooking and wanted it to feel like a professional chef’s kitchen where everything is easily and instantly accessible.”



floor and steel units are also materials that look great in their raw state.

**Why did you opt for open shelving alongside the oven?**  
I love cooking and wanted it to feel like a professional chef’s kitchen where everything is easily and instantly accessible. I drew what I wanted and then found someone to make it.

**What inspired the colour scheme in the master bathroom?**  
Our budget for the bathroom was small so we looked for a solution that wasn’t expensive. We had sanded all the original wooden floorboards upstairs and varnished them, so I bought a tabletop and sawed it in half for the shelves. We also invested in a good bath, basin and taps, and the soft blue was a colour that pulled it all together. The light I made myself out of some fabric cable and a lamp.

**What look were you aiming for in the bedrooms and how have you achieved this?**  
In the master bedroom we wanted it to feel peaceful and uncluttered. We didn’t want a TV or any techy stuff, as the aim was just to keep it simple and quiet. The emerald green was the colour of the year here when we decorated and both Veerle and I loved it, as it’s bright and cheerful. Our son is a scout and he’s into nature so he chose a natural palette of greens and browns and then we added the bamboo stencil in his bedroom. [KBB](#)

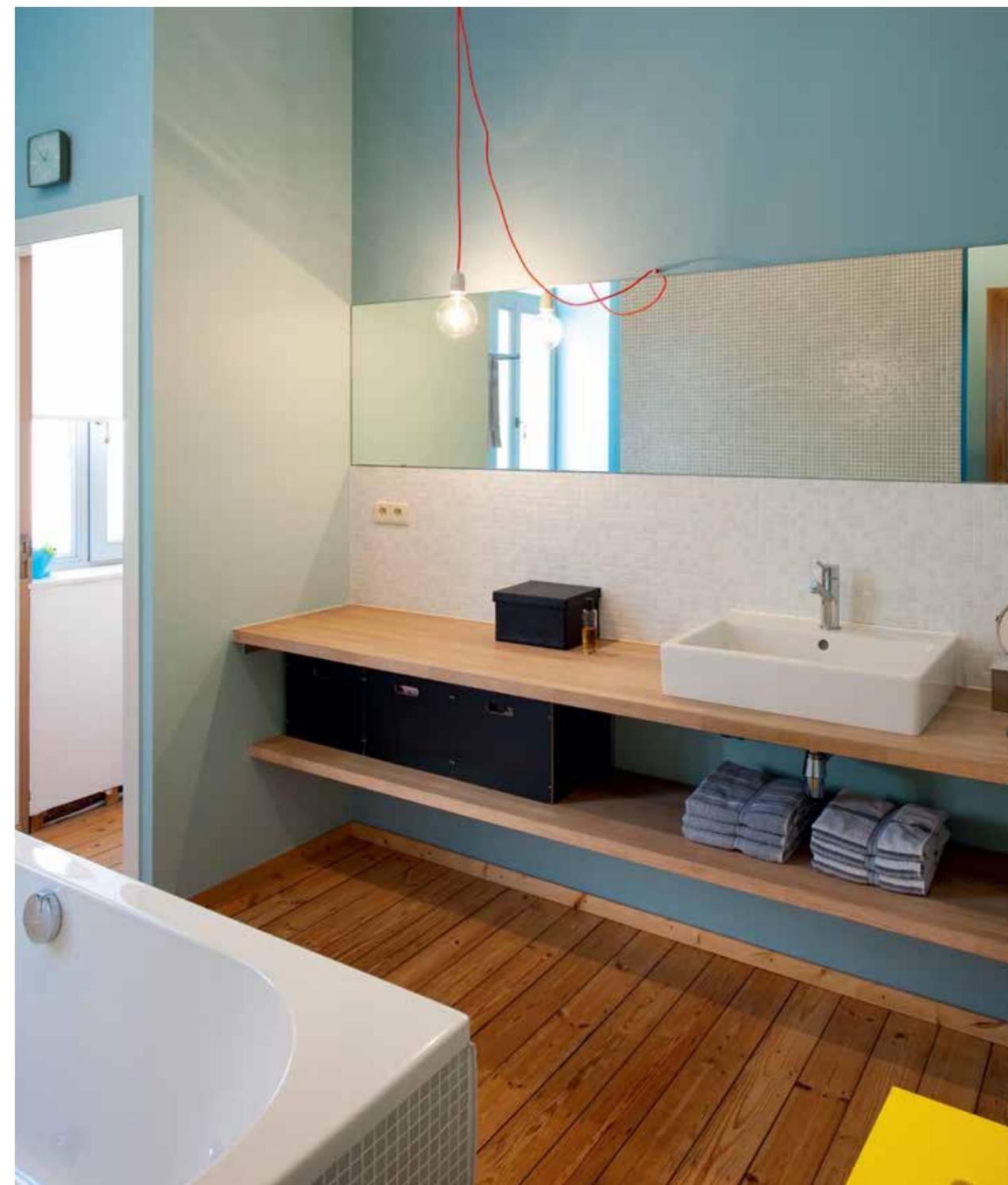


**Below:** The family spends most of their time in the kitchen around the dining table. "Everything happens here," says Yves. "We eat, play games and help with homework; it's the centre of the home."

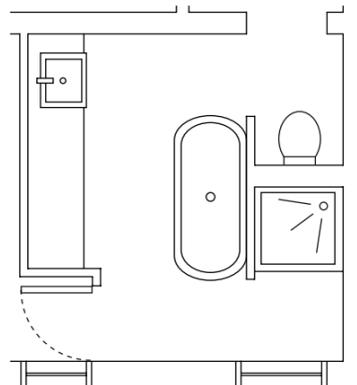


**Right:** The raised ceiling is slightly higher than the glass wall to catch more light and give a glimpse of the sky outside, while the poured concrete floor creates an industrial feel.

**Opposite page:** The couple turned two small rooms next to the bedroom into an ensuite bathroom and a walk-in dressing room. Yves created the shelf unit in the bathroom and made the pendant light. The basin and bath are by Duravit.



**Below:** The colourful artwork on the wall was a gift from an artist friend, Charly van Zwijgenhoven, and the yellow steps were from Ikea.



**Left:** Josse's bedroom is on the second floor where the ceilings are lower and a swing hangs from the beams.



**Above:** A vintage wardrobe and mirrors are also a nod to the property's origins.



**Left:** The master bedroom is on the first floor where the original floorboards and doors were stripped back and sealed. You can find a similar emerald green paint shade at Dulux.

## GET THE LOOK

Black zellige tiles (10 x 10cm) from Habibi Interiors, priced £108 per sq m. (020 7610 9944 or www.habibi-interiors.com)

**Right:** Hive pendant lamp in ash from Holloways of Ludlow, priced from £295. (020 7602 5757 or www.hollowaysofludlow.com)

**Right:** Q Line 90cm single induction range cooker from Britannia, priced £2699. (0844 463 9705 or www.britannialiving.co.uk)



**Left:** DAW Eames plastic armchair from Aram, priced £405. (020 7557 7557 or www.aram.co.uk)



**Above:** Stride extending dining table from John Lewis, priced £399. (0345 604 9049 or www.johnlewis.com)

**Right:** Colour carpet rug by Scholten & Baijings for Hay from Nest, priced £773. (0114 243 3000 or www.nest.co.uk)



## SourceBook

### DESIGN

Yves Gregoor of Voorbinnen (www.voorbinnen.be)

### KITCHEN

**Cabinetry** Stainless steel, for similar try Cavendish Equipment (01992 767105 or www.cavendishequipment.co.uk); and painted timber, Kewlox (www.kewlox.be), for similar try Interior ID (020 7952 2141 or www.interior-id.com)

**Appliances** Range cooker, extractor and fridge, all Smeg (0844 557 9907 or smeguk.com)

**Flooring** Concrete. For similar try Poured Floors (0845 373 0103 or www.pouredfloor.co.uk)

**Splashback** Moroccan zellige tiles. For similar try Habibi Interiors (020 7610 9944 or www.habibi-interiors.com)

**Glass walls and door** For similar try Apropos (0800 328 0033 or www.aproposconservatories.co.uk)

**Dining table** For similar try John Lewis (0345 604 9049 or www.johnlewis.com)

**Pendant light** For similar try Philips (0800 331 6015 or www.philips.co.uk)

**Chairs** Eames chairs. For similar try Aram (020 7557 7557 or www.aram.co.uk)

### LIVING ROOM

**Rug** For similar try WovenGround (020 7731 7704 or www.wovenground.com)

**Light** For similar try Holloways of Ludlow (020 7602 5757 or www.hollowaysofludlow.com)

**Gas fire** For similar try Jøtul (01527 506010 or www.jotul.com)

**Chairs** For similar try Go Modern (020 7731 9540 or www.gomodern.co.uk)

**Coffee table** For similar try Wharfside (020 7253 3206 or www.wharfside.co.uk)

**Flooring** Oak parquet. For similar try Russwood (01540 673648 or www.russwood.co.uk)

### MASTER BEDROOM

**Bed and stools** For similar try Ikea, as before

**Quilt** For similar try House of Fraser (0845 602 1073 or www.houseoffraser.co.uk)

**Floor lamp** For similar try B&Q (0845 609 6688 or www.diy.com)

**Ceiling light** Ikea (020 3645 0000 or www.ikea.com/gb)

**Fireplace** For similar try Chesney's (020 7627 1410 or www.chesneys.co.uk)

**Feature wall** For similar try Dulux (0844 481 7817 or www.dulux.co.uk)

**Mirrors** For similar try House of Fraser, as before

**Flooring** Oak. For similar try The Natural Wood Floor Company (020 8871 9771 or www.naturalwoodfloor.co.uk)

**Wardrobe** For similar try Woodstock (020 7371 8484 or www.woodstockpine.co.uk)

### SON'S BEDROOM

**Bed** For similar try Dreams (0844 225 9259 or www.dreams.co.uk)

**Chair** For similar try the Little Nobody chair, available from Haus (020 8533 8024 or www.hauslondon.com)

**Rug** Oak. For similar try The Natural Wood Floor Company, as before

**Carpet** For similar try the Lime Sumptuous rug from BHS (0844 411 6000 or www.bhs.co.uk)

### MASTER BATHROOM

**Bath and basin** Duravit (0845 500 7787 or www.duravit.co.uk)

**Brassware** Grohe (0871 200 3414 or www.grohe.com/uk)

**Artwork** Charly van Zwijgenhoven (www.charlyvanzwijgenhoven.be)

**Step stool** Ikea, as before

**Light** For similar try Plumen (020 7650 7882 or www.plumen.com)

**Walls** For similar try Dulux, as before

**Flooring** For similar try The Natural Wood Floor Company, as before

### COSTS

A similar kitchen-diner would cost around £16,000, a similar master bedroom would cost around £1200, and a similar bathroom around £3200