

# 25 BEAUTIFUL HOMES

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# Perfect planning

With their organised and meticulous approach, Mirella Appelman and her partner Paul Huft have updated a tired traditional Dutch house, preserving the original features and adding a colourful twist

FEATURE KAREN JENSEN-JONES | PHOTOGRAPHY MUK VAN LIL/COCO FEATURES





## HOME TRUTHS

### THE PROPERTY

A traditional Dutch home, built in 1900

**LOCATION** Haarlem, near Amsterdam

**ROOMS** Hallway, sitting room, kitchen-diner, cloakroom, three bedrooms, one bathroom, rooftop terrace

**PURCHASED** 2016

### PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'Before moving here, we lived in a modern house in Amsterdam,' says Mirella.



## SITTING ROOM

High ceilings and ornate windows add grandeur to this space.

Teresa's Green estate emulsion, £47.95 for 2.5ltr, Farrow & Ball, is a similar wall colour. Try Loaf's Strudel sofa, from £1,295. The Neptune chenille rug, £125, French Connection Home, is a good alternative. Mica Decorations Salomo floor lamp, €99, Sfeer voor Jou







**F**inding a property with atmosphere was the starting point for Mirella Appelman and her partner Paul Huft when they began their search for a more spacious home. 'We loved living in Amsterdam but couldn't find a bigger period property we could afford,' explains Mirella, an interior designer and owner of Huiswerk vastgoedstyling (Homework styling).

'When we extended our search to the medieval city of Haarlem on the outskirts of Amsterdam, we couldn't believe we'd found such a beautiful old property so full of character,' she continues. 'The location was initially a compromise but now we're here we love it as it's so close to the city and the beach is a 20-minute bike ride away.'

Along with her partner Paul, a furniture maker and owner of PH Meubels op Maat (PH Custom Furniture), Mirella completely renovated the tired, traditional Dutch house, bringing it back to life with light, colour and natural

materials. 'The house hadn't been touched for many years and was very old-fashioned so we changed the layout and opened up the living space while respecting the tradition of the house,' she explains. 'The high ceilings and big windows initially attracted us to the property, then as the work was underway we discovered hidden panelling and beautiful doors, which was really exciting.'

Having only renovated single rooms in the past, this was the first major project the couple had taken on. 'We thought it would take about three months to make the changes and move in but that was very naïve and it actually took just over a year,' says Mirella. 'We did most of the work ourselves in the evenings, but this became too much and then we just came at the weekends. It was hard but very worthwhile.'

Knocking through the four small downstairs rooms to create a large, light-filled space was key to the couple's plan for more spacious living. Having an open-plan kitchen with

#### KITCHEN

**The couple's love of natural materials is evident in this room with oak units and concrete worktops, all designed and handmade by Paul.**

Cabinets, counter and shelves, price on request, PH Meubels op Maat. Ikea's Norrabyd bar stool with backrest, £85, is similar. Blackboard paint, £22 for 0.5ltr, Green Monkey AV. Try the sleek Edison pendant light in Pewter, £29, Industville





#### DINING AREA

Mirella created the unusual wall of plates using flea market finds and handmade pottery.

Dining table, £2,000, PH Meubels op Maat. Abigail Ahern's ballroom chandelier, £950, is similar. The Aston spindleback chair in Off Black, £99 for a pair, The Cotswold Company, is a match. Try Nordic House's mini porcelain vases, £16.50 for a set of four.

an island as an integral part of their home was a priority. Luckily, Paul was able to make the kitchen to their exact specifications using oak, which he covered in a whitewash oil. 'We chose a concrete counter top, which is incredibly hard-wearing and adds an industrial feel,' says Mirella. Paul also made the kitchen table and the shelving to fit the space. 'I saw the idea for the pendant lights in a bar,' explains Mirella. 'I often find inspiration in places I visit.'

Good preparation is an essential part of any refurbishment and is something Mirella and Paul always practise in their work. 'Planning takes longer than you think if it's done properly but it's the most worthwhile thing you can do,' advises Mirella. The couple made a plan of every room and worked out the layout so that it was clear from the start what

needed to be done. 'It's so much harder to change things once you're already living in a house but inevitably there's always something you wish you'd done differently,' she says.

Light and colour are also important factors in Mirella's scrupulous planning. Sea green is a shade she has always been drawn to; it's used in the ground floor rooms and looks quite different at various times of the day. Accessorising with tones of yellow helps to give the rooms good balance.

With a pink master bedroom and flashes of bright colour throughout, Mirella and Paul have lifted the atmosphere of the whole house. 'We both love to be creative and are not afraid to try out new ideas as we prefer things to be unique,' explains Mirella. The result is a beautiful, much-loved home that reflects their personalities perfectly. **S**

#### BATHROOM

**The oak unit has been given a whitewashed finish for a contemporary look.** Sink, mirror and vanity unit, price on request, PH Meubels op Maat. Try the Pablo crosshead chrome wall-mounted basin mixer tap, £99.95, Victorian Plumbing

#### MASTER BEDROOM

**Warm pink walls create a soothing, cocooning atmosphere.**

Little Greene's Angie absolute matt emulsion, £47 for 2.5ltr, is a similar wall colour. The Grove cotton stonewashed waffle bedspread in Dusky Pink, £49, Made, is identical. Dwell's floral black cushion, £34.95, would also look good here

