

Star letter 

Renovation Project

Hi Mike,

Really enjoyed the series you did in Livingetc. It was a great companion during my first project.

Having left the UK in search of sun and warmth, the last Delhi winter proved to be a soul shattering experience, so when back in February a friend offered respite by handing the keys to her flat in South Goa, I grabbed the opportunity. Whilst I found the interiors of her flat rather dull and drab (don't read ungrateful!), the general vibe of the gated development and surrounding village felt extremely positive and I immediately felt elevated. In my 3 days there, I started imagining how I would have decorated the flat, had it been mine. On my return to Delhi, I began convincing my husband to plough our savings in the UK that was giving us a minimal return sat in a bank, into a flat in Goa that we could rent out to holiday makers as well as use for our family. It helped that I could show him other flats on the estate that were on tripadvisor to convince him of my business plan. Since he was going to Mumbai for work, so he went onto Goa to see the flat. He too felt the good energies.

His only condition was that I had to decorate the flat to a high standard....on a fairly limited budget. My kinda challenge! I asked him to take photos and some measurements. It was a brand new one bedroom flat on the 2nd floor, north/east facing that looked onto a farm with palm trees, chicken, pigs and a buffalo and dogs. Initially I thought pool facing would be better (for rental purposes) but since it was going to be our holiday apartment, complete privacy won the toss. I'm fascinated with small but well organised spaces and I love the challenge of working to a small budget so in short it was a dream project. I had over the years been tearing out/cutting up pictures I liked into a scrap book and the time had finally come to use it all. And around this time your series started in Livingetc.

This flat was going to have people from all over the world visiting. I was sure that I wanted it to be everything Indian- from workmanship to fabrics, art etc. Yet it had to be functional with all mod cons and no compromise on comfort and fittings. I was limited by the black granite top in the kitchen and the patterned tiles in the bathroom. I could have changed it but didn't have the heart to break/waste someone's hard work. I printed out the photographs of the flat and with the help of the floor plan provided by the builder, started planning the kitchen, drawing in the cupboards, drawers, chimney, hob, fridge etc. onto the photos. The black granite gave me the license to choose a bright colour for the kitchen cabinets. Since this was a holiday flat, I could get away with it. I googled to see images of cabinet colours that would go with the black and the most appealing to my eye was a bright shade of light green. Two kitchen walls were partially knocked down to allow more light to flow through and give the flat a more open plan feel. The kitchen door was cut to size and attached to one of the walls to be a fold up dining table when required.....taking up no space when not needed. This also freed up space for a study table where the dining area was meant to be. The biggest

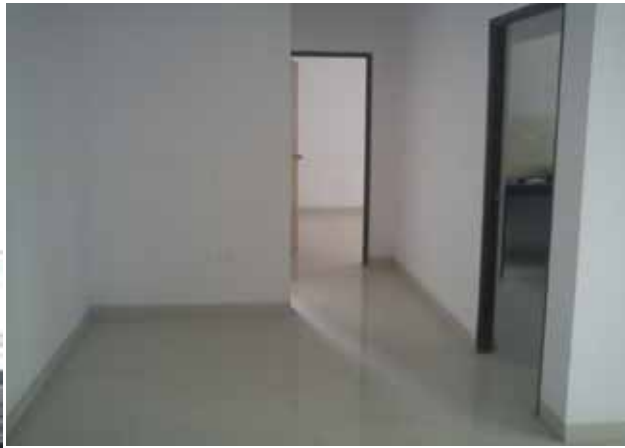
challenge was the chimney as we only had wall space for an outlet next to the kitchen sink on the right and on top of where the washing machine plumbing had been provided. Totally the wrong place for a hob! So we had to create boxing right across the top of the window. Not ideal but I managed to incorporate a wine rack (using left over materials) to help it blend better.

Because I was living in Delhi and know where all the shops were and had transport and time at my disposal, I checked out the laminate colours, hardware, furniture and soft furnishings. For the bedroom, I settled on sheesham wood furniture with a teak polish. I replaced the wooden wardrobe doors with mirrors. This was going to be placed on the wall opposite the balcony doors. In the bathroom, I upgraded the taps, wash basin and wc provided by the builder. Since I had chosen a counter top basin, I had a cabinet made to hold the basin as well as toiletries underneath. Mirrors were placed above the basin and to the wall on the right giving a large bright feel. The electrics in the flat were also repositioned as originally there was a socket above the skirting, the switch for it 2 feet higher and a light point above the switch (the switch for this being on a panel near the door) This was one complaint I had read about in trip advisor as guests found it all very confusing. So I moved all sockets and their respective switches down. For the living room I needed seating that would double up as a bed. So I had two divans custom made to hold a 3ft by 6.5 ft mattress. I had covers made with fabric bought at 'muslin' during the sale. I needed more storage for light quilts/ bed linen, towels, board games and our personal stuff so I had a tv cabinet made with marine ply. This was distressed by a friend and mirrors added, again to give the sense of space and extra light.

No compromise was made on comfort - Snoozer mattresses used by the Oberoi group of hotels were sourced (direct from the factory) and worth every penny! Hafele hinges were used for the cabinets and the channels and baskets too were great quality. Kaff hob and chimney, water heater, ac's and waiting for a washing machine. All the cooking utensils and pots and pans were bought from Lifestyle during the summer sale. Photographs were framed in bright coloured frames. Jaisalmer stone was used on balcony parapet. An architect friend had given me some left over fretwork panels from a hotel project and I incorporated them into the cupboard as well as create a partition next to the fridge using the original kitchen door frames as support. I arrived in Goa on the 24th August for 6 weeks to oversee the work. I was lucky enough to have access to the builders team of carpenters, electricians, plumber, tile layer and painters. Using left over marine ply, a book shelf was created on the half kitchen wall going towards the bedroom. Easy access for my son who loves reading on the loo! A few lights had been bought but the rest were done in Delhi after I got back, now waiting to be put up. Curtains, cushion covers etc. have also been stitched in Delhi. Still have finishing touches to do but have saved them for the month I'm there during Christmas.... I'm attaching a couple of before, during and after, and would love to hear how you think I've done!

Cheers,
Amelia

The Renovation



BEFORE...

The shell as it was: a brand new north-east facing one bedroom flat on the 2nd floor, that looked onto a farm. The kitchen was a fully walled room with a single door opening into the L-shaped living area.

DURING...

Two of the kitchen walls were brought down to a platform height. This way the living area opened out as did the kitchen. Added benefit was the breakfast counter.



AFTER...

Splashes of colour, light fixtures and furniture give this one room apartment a far more roomy feel than what the builder had provided. Anyone listening!?

