

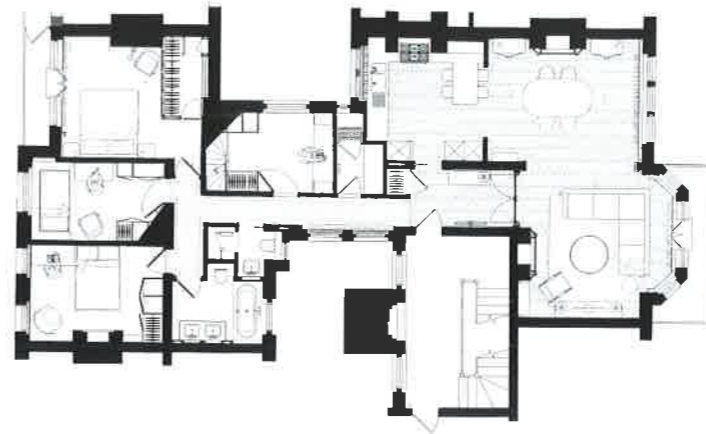
PROCESS OF REDUCTION

With three teenage children, downsizing from a house to a mansion flat in Richmond presented a challenge for this couple – one the architect Johnny Holland easily rose to

TEXT LIZ ELLIOT | PHOTOGRAPHS PAUL MASSEY



BOTH PAGES A neutral palette was chosen for the sitting room to direct the focus on views of the Thames. The bespoke L-shape sofa by Hackett Holland is big enough for the whole family. Through the double doors is the hallway to the bedrooms



When, two years ago, the owners of this flat near Richmond first contacted Johnny Holland of the architectural firm Hackett Holland, I wonder whether they knew just how much that call would change their lives. The couple were living with their

family in a large, double-fronted, red-brick villa in Twickenham and had decided to simplify life and downsize. They had fallen in love with a first-floor mansion flat with views overlooking the Thames. Its only drawback was a big one: it would take a magician to fit in everything needed for a growing family.

'Mansion flats are like Marmite,' explains Johnny. 'Some people love them, others hate them. There are benefits, however: they are purpose-built, have high ceilings, most rooms have reasonable proportions, and the spine corridor particular to such flats gives you that long view and a feeling of space.' Happily, his clients were prepared to sacrifice the bathroom/bedroom ratio, allowing one family bathroom and a separate shower in the guest loo, to give flexibility.

Once the flat had been gutted, parquet was laid over a new rubber acoustic floor throughout to help overcome the inevitable noise made by three teenage children. Constrained by immovable structural walls, Johnny could move partition walls only to a degree, but he could heighten and widen doorways. Above these he installed glazed top lights to introduce light into the corridor.

Since a separate dining room and kitchen are often regarded as unnecessary, Johnny opened up these two rooms. Combined with the adjacent sitting room, he created an L-shape, open-plan space, allowing an uninterrupted view of the river throughout. Aware that in planning a kitchen every inch matters, he decided that the dining area was proportionally too big and, being nothing if not a man of detail, moved the partition wall 30 centimetres to make the necessary difference.

He thought long and hard as to whether he could justify the space needed for an island. 'I think you need that magic component in a kitchen around which everyone can gather when they don't want to sit at a table,' Johnny says. He ended up introducing more of a peninsula than an island: a beautifully simple L-shape form extending from one wall. Made entirely from Corian, it has a bevelled detail on the underside giving it a Sixties feel.

Due to limited space and a desire to focus on the view, furnishings for the reception rooms were chosen for their simplicity. Bathed in natural light, the walls were kept neutral, save for



BOTH PAGES The kitchen and dining rooms were combined to create an open-plan space (seen on the right of the floor plan above). Møller chairs surround a mid-century Danish table from Paere Dansk, with bespoke cabinets by Hackett Holland beside the chimneypiece. The clean-lined, minimalist kitchen has a peninsula made from Corian





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT

The staircase to the mezzanine bed. The Carrara-marble-clad bathroom has contrasting brass fixtures from Barber Wilsons. A rich, dark palette and a range of textures create a feeling of luxury in the main bedroom. **OPPOSITE** Here, a corner was hived off to create a walk-in wardrobe, papered in a tropical Ananbô design



one wall in the sitting room that is hung with a large Hamilton Weston copy of a 1746 Rocque map of London, which focuses on the river in Richmond. A bespoke, modular Hackett Holland sofa provides enough seating for the family who, along with their dog, frequently gather to watch films together. The lines of a rosewood dining table from vintage Danish furniture specialist

Paere Dansk, surrounded by Sixties bent plywood chairs by Møller, stand out in this considered and understated interior.

Another Rubik's cube challenge came in the decision of where to put the utility room and cloakroom. The problem was solved by taking a corner off the original kitchen. The original maid's room was the smallest room in the flat, and considered the short straw when it came to designating bedrooms. However, by moving the door, Johnny was able to transform the space; he also designed a mezzanine bed reached by its own private staircase. Beneath this are copious cupboards on one side and a desk on the other, and the room has now become a favourite with the owners.

The main bedroom has the advantage of huge french windows that open onto a balcony and is decorated in dark colours to exaggerate its cosiness. A corner has been hived off to form a walk-in wardrobe, which is papered with a tropical Ananbô wallpaper and overlaid with a grid of panelling to give it added depth.

Throughout the flat, the finishes are perfect and the family have all the room they need. This was, however, achieved by a massive clear-out of their original home. After two years of living here, they have no regrets, have a life liberated from 'stuff' and enjoy a more communal way of life as a family □

Hackett Holland: 020-7467 0450; hackettholland.co.uk

