

HERE can't be too many apartments on Airbnb which come complete with £50,000 worth of designer furniture, having been completely overhauled – to the tune of another £185,000 – by renowned interiors guru Maurizio Pellizzoni.

But the result is quite possibly central London's dinkiest luxury lodgings – both a liveable apartment and a short-term holiday let, all in the space of just 60sqm in Marylebone.

In 2014, Rosella Albano bought the compact three-bedroom apartment for nothing more than the location – on the doorstep of Regent's Park, the British Museum and Sherlock Holmes' house. Inside it was bare, basic and boring. The fittings, she said, were poor quality and the general aesthetic of the flat was tediously simple. But Rosella had spotted a hidden charm – it was split level, making it both a liveable small space and a good rental opportunity.

It was decided that Rosella's daughter, Isabella, would live there and one room would be reserved for the booming Airbnb market.

Rosella wanted to create something special. 'When we first saw the place it was very basic but charming,' she explains. 'Our vision was to make it look like a Parisian boutique hotel. It's a very small space but we knew that with the right designer we could use that to our advantage and use beautiful and high-quality materials to turn it into a little jewel.'

Maurizio had experience of being creative with very small spaces and we knew we could trust him to make every square inch of the flat beautiful and useful.'

Space planning was key. The original entrance hall was very small with a dark corridor, as was the second bathroom, which was mainly under the original staircase.

The position of the staircase meant that it took up more than half of the open-plan space upstairs. It was also a U-shape, which made it incredibly difficult to move furniture.

'The biggest structural change we made was to move the staircase in the flat, which at first was a spiral that blocked light from the hallway and made the upstairs living room a really awkward shape,' explains Rosella.

'Maurizio had the amazing idea to turn it and lay it flat against the back wall, creating an incredible open feel to the whole flat that made the open-plan top floor feel endlessly bigger. The staircase is definitely my favourite feature.'

Through discussions between Rosella and Maurizio, the colour scheme evolved, using soft pastels and a mixture of polished brass and chrome finishes.

'The result is an apartment design that's modern, elegant and feminine but that has been specifically designed to be commercially viable for the Airbnb generation,' Maurizio explains.

He also took inspiration from Californian music festival Coachella.

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Bright idea: Part of the remit was to allow more natural light to flow through the apartment



GOOD THINGS COME IN SMALL PACKAGES

This reworked Marylebone apartment might just be central London's dinkiest, luxury lodging place, says Oliver Stallwood

'I wanted to create a fresh and young look that incorporated textures and colours,' explains Maurizio. 'Palm Springs meets London chic... this project was very much inspired by Coachella. The colours, textures and finishes associated with this upscale festival marry bohemian chic with luxury style.'

Beautiful pale wooden floors run through the apartment, transforming it into a home that has a real luxury feel, enhancing the space and light.

'Before, when you walked in, the whole place felt small, especially with the minuscule hallway we had,' says Rosella.

'With only a few tweaks and a bit of smoke and mirrors,

Maurizio has made it look twice the square footage.'

Other tricks pulled from Maurizio's magic hat can be found throughout the pad. 'When working with a small space, there are plenty of ways to create the illusion of space,' he says. 'For this project we did so by keeping the windows in the living space free from treatments so that the terrace becomes a part of the room, therefore making it look larger than it is.'

'For the bedroom, we used simple blackout blinds that were mounted inside the window frame to make the room appear larger.'

They chose to install a frameless glass balustrade along the staircase, to maximise the illusion of space in the hallway when entering the apartment.

The kitchen features carefully selected small kitchen appliances by specialist KitchenAid, and the compact Minotti sofa is the perfect fit.

The three bedrooms are the same size as before – master bedroom, 11.3sqm; guest bedroom, 9.3sqm; small guest bedroom/study, 6sqm – but all feel twice as big now.

The key is a deft use of eclectic pieces which add an element of intrigue to a simple, pared-down colourway, while not making it feel cluttered.

Maurizio says it was important to make the guest room just as inviting and luxurious as the rest of the house, adding colours with soft furnishings and art from LUMAS Gallery in Mayfair. Maurizio created a small

shower room for the guest room boasting beautiful floor-to-ceiling tiles and given a luxurious feel thanks to the polished brass taps.

Scatter cushions and throws on the beds are sourced from de Le Cuona and delightfully downplayed.

Isabella says the colours chosen for the apartment help to tie everything together, from the pop of soft pink in the bathroom to green in the other.

She says: 'There's a slight boho feel with the furniture selected which really creates a comfortable, casual look. You can really live in the apartment and every room feels relaxed yet chic, impeccable but calm.'

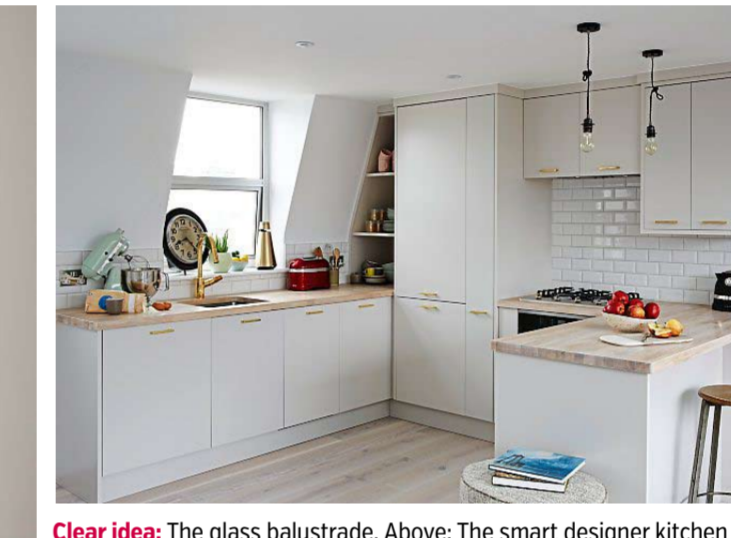
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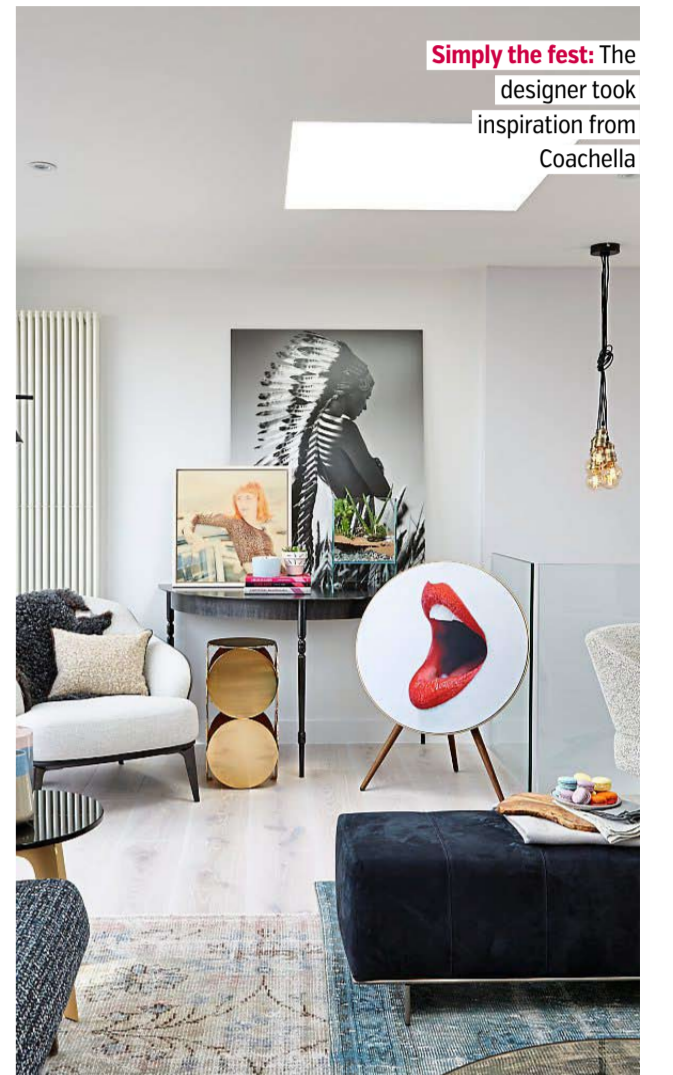
Details: Maurizio, left, chose diverse items, above, right and far right, to marry bohemian chic with luxury



Art-felt: Each bedroom features unique art. Right: The guest room shower



Clear idea: The glass balustrade. Above: The smart designer kitchen



Simply the fest: The designer took inspiration from Coachella



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