

DUTCH COURAGE

Petra Postmus has brought fresh sensibilities to classic design themes in a home that surprises and delights at every turn

FEATURE RACHEL LEEDHAM | PHOTOGRAPHY COCO FEATURES/DENNIS BRANDSMA



SITTING ROOM
Large Delft chandeliers bring a sense of drama to this scheme, which is enlivened with fresh stripes. Try the Kangxi Baluster jar lamp base, £810; shade, £201, both Vaughan Designs. Carlton Stripe wallpaper in Pewter, £269 a roll; curtains in And They're Off!, £56m, both Ralph Lauren Home at Designers Guild



After a visit to the Palace of Versailles in France a few years ago, Dutch interior designer Petra Postmus honed her decor style. 'I fell for the interiors of the Petit Trianon,' recalls Petra, 'and I realised this classic style is what I favour, albeit mixed with modern influences. I love the idea of transforming a home into a little château.'

The late 19th-century townhouse that Petra shares with her husband, Martin, is located in Utrecht, a city she describes as 'a smaller version of Amsterdam, with its canals and a medieval town. I can get everywhere on my bike.' When the couple bought the property, in 2011, they didn't have far to move. 'We were living seven doors down the street in a tiny 75-square-metre house,' says Petra. 'This place was a bit out of our budget but I managed to win Martin over because, at the time, he was running a cookery school and we realised we could have a big, open-plan kitchen in which he could hold classes.'

When Petra looked into the history of the building, which dates back to 1889, she discovered it had been built for the director of a neighbouring cigar factory, and there had



UNIQUE

HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

Townhouse, built in 1889
LOCATION Utrecht, the Netherlands

ROOMS Hall, sitting room/dining area, kitchen-diner, second kitchen, cloakroom, two bedrooms (one en suite), shower room

PURCHASED 2011

PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'We lived in a small house further down the street,' says Petra.

DINING AREA

When Petra and Martin are not entertaining, they prefer to eat at this smaller, more informal table.

Cheshire bench, £1,950, Sweetpea & Willow, is similar. The Chaise A RAL chair, £192, Tolix, has this look



KITCHEN

The soft green that flows from here to the dining room creates a cohesive feel. Walls painted in Lichen estate emulsion, £45 for 2.5L, Farrow & Ball. Vintage French crystal beaded basket chandelier, £1,075, Pamono, would work well here



DECORATING TIP *‘Curtains can be quite an investment, but they are one of the best things for creating a warm atmosphere’*



DINING ROOM

Floral curtains and a matching painterly panel print create a rich look. Ornamental Garden panel print, £43.46sq m; curtains in Rugosa in Slate, £101m, both Designers Guild. The Louis French rattan-back chairs, £275 each, Crown French Furniture, are comparable



originally been a small cigar shop on the ground floor. After the Second World War, the property was used by the church and although it later became a house again, it still required a considerable amount of work. ‘The ground floor was the biggest job, as we wanted to create a new kitchen and dining space,’ explains Petra. ‘We tackled that first and then gradually did the other projects ourselves.’

The kitchen, with its white cupboards, robust composite stone worktops and large central island, meets all the needs of this dedicated cook. Bold flourishes, including an antique French chandelier, taxidermy goose and oil paintings in gilded frames, lend striking decorative touches. The walls are painted a calming shade of green, and this colour has been carried through to the dining area. ‘People are often afraid of colour but it can bring a lot of warmth to a room,’ explains Petra, who has introduced richly patterned floral curtains for a painterly touch. ‘Wallpapers and fabrics are another key ingredient to making a home feel cosy and welcoming,’ she adds.

While the influences on the ground floor are decidedly French, the sitting room on the level above is more Dutch in



GUEST BEDROOM

This space doubles up as a tranquil work area for Petra.

Try Lloyd Loom's Burghley chair, £299. Verona six-light pendant, £396, David Hunt Lighting, is a match



MAIN BEDROOM

A blue wall brings contrast to this predominantly pale room.

Wall painted in Oval Room Blue estate emulsion, £45 for 2.5L, Farrow & Ball



BATHROOM

'We had to hire a crane to lift this bath through a window,' says Petra.

Astonian Rimini bathtub, £1,264, Aston Matthews, is similar



style. 'I call it the "Old Dutch Room"', says Petra, who used three exquisite Delft chandeliers as her starting point, picking out the same blue for some of the walls and bespoke joinery. A trip to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam inspired her to have the images of two masterpieces made into canvases. 'One of the portraits is of our first king of the Netherlands – William I,' she says. Crisp stripes, including a wallpaper

and rug, lend a modern twist, as do the sofa and armchairs, which are upholstered in fresh white fabrics.

Chandeliers are one of Petra's biggest indulgences and she has 14 beautiful antique examples throughout the house, including three classic French crystal designs in the main suite. 'I have a few special locations where I buy my lighting from,' explains Petra, citing Utrecht, Amsterdam and Tongeren in Belgium as some of her favourites.

What makes this home so inviting is the playfulness that runs throughout, from the bold Vivienne Westwood tartan wallpaper in the hall to the dining room's gilded frame that displays a wall sconce, rather than a piece of art. 'I like things to be a little unexpected,' she says. 'It's important to have fun when you're decorating – it makes a home exciting.' 25

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