



# The Jumanji moment

If nine-year-old Natalie hadn't chipped in, Anna Campbell-Jones' redesign of a Glasgow townhouse would have been so much less daring

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ometimes a fresh perspective is all it needs to take an idea from great to amazing. When interior designer Anna

Campbell-Jones first met up with John Finch and Fiona Leverick to discuss some improvements to their Glasgow home, she'd already done her homework, as she explains.

"They had found me on houzz and asked me to help them. They'd been living in the flat for two years. It was a townhouse that had been converted into flats around 2000 and it was looking a bit tired. They owned the ground floor and part of the lower ground floor apartment and they wanted me to look at the hallways, the kitchen, utility room, living room and family bathroom. It was quite a big project.

"When we met, I brought with me various images, the kind of things they had talked about liking when we chatted on the phone. I was showing them quite sensible, grown-up, tasteful stuff because that was what they had asked for. I often ask clients to put together, either on houzz or Pinterest, a selection of images that they like. They don't have to be of the room in question, it's more to get an idea of their taste. What I had brought with me reflected the Pinterest board they'd shared with me. It included shaker-style kitchens and a colour palette of soft greys and greens."

The couple's daughter, Natalie, nine, was also included in the discussion and it soon transpired she had been doing some work of her own. "Natalie



Clockwise from top left: the BoConcept sofa against tropical wallpaper; the living room; a utility shelving unit; a reading chair in the hall





*Her genius unlocked a sense of obligation in her parents to not do the grown-up thing*



was joining in the meeting and we were including her but not paying that much attention,” Anna continues. “We’d probably been talking for about an hour when Natalie said she’d found something on Pinterest she really liked, and she showed me the images that she had found of a kitchen. It had jungle print units and yellow walls and it was kind of lively but amazing. I agreed it was a really cool kitchen, but I didn’t think it was what her parents were looking for. However, they thought it was really cool too and they said: ‘Are we allowed to have something like that?’

“I was literally like, ‘OMG, absolutely, of course we can do this. Presumably if you want the kitchen like this you want to have a similar amount of joy from the rest of the house.’ And they said, ‘Yes please.’ I swept everything off the table on to the floor and we started again.”

For Anna, the next step was to establish if they were planning to sell any time soon. “They weren’t. However, that aside I always say to clients, don’t do work to your house that you think some future incumbent will like. You should design your home for yourself and what you love. Even if you do a safe grey kitchen, the chances are they’ll rip it out anyway. Why not please yourself?”

One thing, Anna was keen to resolve right away was the family’s eating habits. “The dining table was in the living room on the ground floor, meaning the family were carrying food up the dog leg stair



**Clockwise from above: the bathroom with flamingo shower curtain; cord carpet on the landing; a detail of panther-themed wallpaper; the dining zone leading to the utility room**

through the house, so one of the first things I suggested was getting the dining space into the kitchen. We split the long, deep kitchen into two zones with the dining zone at the window, so you eat in natural light. Then we created a u-shaped kitchen with the functional area on one side and a breakfast bar on the other, which keeps visitors slightly separate from the cooking space.”

For the surfaces, Anna suggested black concrete worktops. “John is from Basildon originally and he really liked that idea because of the architecture of Basil Spence, a bit of Brutalism. The cabinetry is a combination of Ikea units, bespoke doors and a few bespoke units. Some of the units were faced with yellow Formica, some lined with turquoise

Formica with the doors in a combination of plain birch ply and a standard Ikea door with a design that has that 60s Brutalist 3D pattern. In the utility room we hung tropical flamingo wallpaper because laundry is such a dreary task, and we laid a retro speckled Marmoleum on the floor to bounce the light around. For the splashback, John wanted something more left-field and came up with what he called “wobbly pink”, ie blancmange colour. It’s apparently his favourite thing in the house.”

With a tropical fabric for the window blind and window seat, the theme continued its way up into the rest of the house. “As the house is a conversion the kitchen is quite disconnected because the social spaces are on the ground floor along with the bedrooms. It was important to connect all the rooms with style and continuity.”

To do this, Anna laid a Kingfisher Blue Tretford cord carpet on the stairs and at the start of the corridor and into the main entrance hall. “We decided to go dark in the hall, painting it in Farrow & Ball’s Mole’s Breath and using another tropical wallpaper, albeit a more glamorous one with panthers and metallics from Osborne & Little.”

In the living room, a wooden floor was a no-no because of acoustics, so the solution was a combination flooring called woven polypropylene. “It’s by a company called Unnatural Flooring,” Anna explains. “It’s bonded to the floor

and looks a little bit like sisal, but you can mop it. John and Fiona already had the grey BoConcept sofa, so we worked with that and brought in more tropical wallpaper but a more muted version than elsewhere. We’ve stayed true to the same colour palette, but we’ve also used the whole range of that palette so it’s in each room just in different guises.”

In the bathroom the palette has been pushed to its limits with Marmoleum in raspberry pink, electric blue glass, pale green tiles and a pink cloud wall covering on the ceiling, which is digital print vinyl made to order by Textura. “That bathroom is a little bit 80s and that’s only a good thing. It was John and Fiona’s homework to find the shower curtain and the flamingo is what they came up with. I believe in collaborating. They were very involved in the decision-making process and I know they really enjoyed it because we’re about to start doing another two rooms next year.”

But Anna still believes Natalie deserves the lion’s share of the credit for the makeover. “She made the three of us question what we were doing in a really positive way and the house is completely different to how it would have been if she had been asked to go away while the grown-ups were talking. Her genius unlocked a sense of obligation in her parents to not do the grown-up thing and the house is all the better for it.”

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