

YOU'RE HIRED

An office space in Bloomsbury has been converted into such a beautifully luxurious home that the BBC promptly rented it out for filming one of its most popular TV series

Report: Felicity Borthwick Photography: Justin Paul





When Paul Marazzi was commissioned to design a kitchen for Steve and Victoria Bowler's new house, little did he realise that his work would be showcased on national TV this year, as 15 budding entrepreneurs take up residence to film *The Apprentice*. However, a quick inspection of the property reveals that it is indeed the perfect home for a group of wannabe millionaires.

Set in the prestigious area of Bedford Square – the only Georgian square in London that's still intact – the enormous home stretches across some 15,000sq ft. A four-storey building occupies the front of the property, while across the courtyard converted stables accommodate an equally luxurious, three-storey annexe. However, when the couple purchased the property it was being hired out as office space, so they knew they had a major refurbishment project on their hands.

One of the first rooms to be tackled was the kitchen, for which the entire basement level of the main house was dedicated. As this was such a large space, the Bowlers needed to create something with some real wow factor – thus, they decided to approach Paul Marazzi of Marazzi Design, who is famed for his eye-catching, crescent-shaped creations.

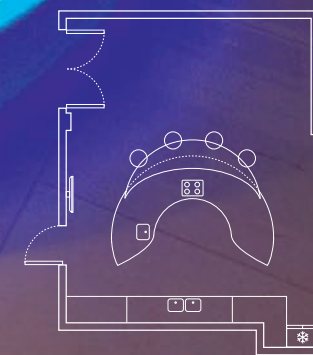
“It's just the shape and lighting that provide the wow factor”

“Steve and Victoria were already aware of our design concept when they came to see us so our first step was to evolve this into the space they had,” Paul explains. “They regularly enjoy entertaining so a key part of the brief was for a practical, sociable layout, which all our designs offer anyway because, when you're in the centre of the island, everyone and everything surrounds you. However, to enhance its sociable feel and add to the overall visual impact, I incorporated this inlaid glass panel, which serves as a breakfast bar and seamlessly carries on the movement of the island almost as if it's floating.”

Like the rest of the kitchen, vibrant blue lighting accentuates this effect and adds to the room's dramatic ambience. Moreover, when the lights around the plinth of the island are turned on, the four-metre structure appears to hover weightlessly above the floor. A cylindrical extractor hood is suspended above the flush-fitting induction hob to complement its circular form and an undermounted sink blends seamlessly with the Gimmegi Volcanic worktop to enhance the room's clean, streamlined aesthetic. The island also offers a plethora of storage with cupboards built into both the inside and outside of its enormous curved base.

Opposite the island, further appliances and storage have been arranged into an equally sleek and symmetrical layout. A worktop featuring double sinks is framed by two handleless wall units above, two Fisher & Paykel dish drawers below, and a pair of stainless-steel Miele appliances on either side, including an integrated coffee machine, microwave and two ovens.

“For the cabinetry, we opted for a silver-metallic lacquer finish as it's in keeping with the rest of the house and is actually quite a restrained, almost Farrow & Ball-like colour,” explains Paul. “Thus, the kitchen itself is not particularly overwhelming or too over the top; it's just the shape and lighting that provide the wow factor.” ▶



Left: Marazzi Design's trademark lighting has been incorporated around the plinth of the island and the edges of the inlaid glass breakfast bar to create the illusion that the enormous structure is floating weightlessly above the floor



Upstairs on the third floor, the master bedroom-bathroom suite is equally luxurious in size and décor although the styling is slightly more traditional thanks to an ornate chandelier and thick, patterned curtains framing two full-height windows. The focal point, however, is a glamorous bed with its oversized, white-cushioned bedhead and sumptuous gold quilt cover. A sleek black chest of drawers, meanwhile, complements the enormous flat-screen TV and charcoal fire surround and brings a masculine touch to the scheme.

To ensure that nothing detracts from the beautiful furniture, the bedroom walls, ceilings and carpet have all been veiled in white or a very pale grey – a colour scheme that carries through to the equally large, adjoining bathroom. Its walls are painted in a soft, soothing grey, while white porcelain tiles flow across the floor.

Like the bedroom, the space offers an immediate sense of opulence. However, here it is provided by the architecture as opposed to the furniture, with an enormous central column dividing the room into showering and bathing zones, the latter slightly elevated via two steps. A further three stairs lead up to a sunken bath, which is ideally positioned alongside several enormous windows so that the couple

can lie back and look across the courtyard below. With much of the bathing zone concealed from view, the WC has also been sited on this side of the room.

To the other side of the pillar, an enormous walk-in shower is defined by a frameless glass enclosure and suitably large showerhead. As well as remaining in proportion to the rest of the vast space, the generously sized bath and shower augment the feeling of luxury and relaxation, as does the soft glow created by uplights in the suspended ceiling and a meditative Buddha perched beside the bath. However, when Steve and Victoria feel like indulging in a different form of relaxation, they also have the option of diving into their indoor pool, which occupies the basement of the annexe.

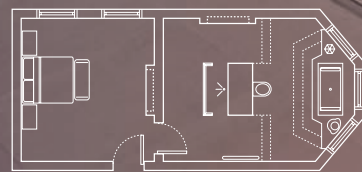
None of life's luxuries have been overlooked in redesigning this house and it now caters to every whim the couple may have – whether that's enjoying a hearty meal within a sociable environment or recharging their batteries with an invigorating swim or soothing bath. Indeed, winner or loser, every contestant on this year's *The Apprentice* will certainly experience a taste of the good life during the time they call this magnificent space home. [KBB](#)

Top left: As with all Marazzi Design kitchens, this layout is incredibly practical and sociable as all appliances are easily accessible from the centre of the island and guests can sit in a circular arrangement and chat while their hosts prepare food. **Top right:** As would be expected of this ultra-modern kitchen, it boasts an impressive line-up of high-tech appliances including two Fisher & Paykel dish drawers, an integrated coffee machine, two ovens and an induction hob. **Below:** A crescent-shaped glass panel has been skilfully integrated into the island's worktop for a seamless transition between the worktop and breakfast bar.



Above: Located at the top of the main house, the master bedroom has a light, bright feel thanks to its two full-height windows and a crisp, white palette throughout. This also provides the perfect blank canvas for all the beautiful furniture in here including an elegant chandelier and large and luxurious bed adorned in soft, sumptuous accessories. **Below:** A meditative Buddha statue and large vase of flowers adorn the window ledge, which merges seamlessly with the top step of the bath to add to the calm, relaxing feel in here.





Above: A central pillar breaks up the enormous bathroom space into two distinct zones: the side nearer the entrance of the room serves as the shower area with a luxurious frameless enclosure from Majestic, whilst the other side, which is largely concealed from view, features the bath and WC. Although the overall scheme is relatively sleek and simple, an old, restored fireplace adds an element of charm



Above: The couple decided to use the extra space in the annexe across the courtyard to build an indoor swimming pool, thus providing them with yet another means of rest and relaxation

SourceBook

DESIGN

Kitchen Paul Marazzi of Marazzi Design (020 8450 9555 or www.marazzidesign.com)

KITCHEN

Cabinetry Silver metallic lacquer, Marazzi Design, as before
Worktops Giemmegi Volcanic, Marazzi Design, as before
Splashback Glass, Marazzi Design, as before
Appliances two ovens, microwave, coffee machine, induction hob, two warming drawers, all Miele (0845 365 6600 or www.miele.co.uk); Two single-drawer dishwashers, Fisher & Paykel (0845 066 2200 or www.fisherpaykel.co.uk); Fridge-freezer, Liebherr (0844 412 2655 or www.liebherr.co.uk); Extractor, Westin (01484 421585 or www.westin.co.uk); Taps, Zip by Gessi (www.gessi.com) and Ratio Professional from Abode (01226 283434 or www.abodedesigns.co.uk)

Barstools Carlton Davidson (020 7795 0905)
Flooring Pietra di Vicenza, Direct Supplies Ltd (020 8961 7700)

BEDROOM

Bed and bedhead Alexander James Interiors (0118 932 0828 or www.aji.co.uk)
Chandelier Jet black, Nine-arm chandelier, Heal's (0870 024 0780 or www.heals.co.uk)
Chest of drawers Alexander James Interiors, as before
Bedside lamp Alexander James Interiors, as before
Television Pioneer (0870 600 1539 or www.pioneer.co.uk)

BATHROOM

Bath Grande, Kos UK (020 8200 6697 or www.kositalia.com)
Shower enclosure Majestic (01279 443644 or www.majesticshowers.com)
Brassware (shower) Dream showerhead, Starflo handshower and thermostatic mixer

with diverter, Signorini, available from Colourwash (020 7586 1441 or www.colourwashbathrooms.co.uk); (bath) Pino flow deck-mounted BSM on square plate, chrome, Signorini, available from Colourwash, as before
Floor tiles Oietra di Sargenda, Casalgrande Padana (www.casalgrandepadana.it), from Direct Supplies Ltd, as before
Wall tiles Imperiale Bianco, Iris Neobarocco (www.irisceramica.com), from Direct Supplies Ltd, as before
Towel rails Strato, available from Boundary Bathrooms (01282 862509 or www.boundarybathrooms.co.uk)
WC Wall-hung WC, Caro (020 7688 0596 or www.carodesigns.co.uk)

COSTS

A similar kitchen would cost from £80,000, a similar bedroom would cost around £10,000 and a similar bathroom around £13,000