



A paint-on sense of drama and history

Property Clever use of paint adds a sense of drama and history to this Clifton sitting room. Designer Gill Richardson explains the tricks of the trade.

The dark muted colours of this snug sitting room in Clifton lend a moody atmosphere inspired by the past and reminiscent of the Victorian era.

I love the passionate depth of colour on the walls – a Marston & Langer's paint in Roman Bronze. It achieves a sort of seriousness and a warming feeling, while also providing an excellent cover for all the architectural detail in the room.

The paint contains lots of green and a wealth of brown through Marston's clever mixing and the bronzing effect adds a quality and weight to all it touches.

This paint colour was integral to the design of the room because there is an awful lot of cheating and faux effects that are typical of the Victorians – and a lick of paint helps to hold the whole theatrical picture together.

The walls are panelled with cost-effective timber and then

painted to match the plaster so that no one can see the join. Similarly, the built-in tall cupboards and alcove were constructed in-situ using utilitarian materials, but brought to life with final decoration.

Housing a hidden TV screen behind the abstract painting, the shell, with a picture light above, has been aged with dark paint to present an antique bronze appearance too.

Everything ties together, yet nothing is as it seems.

The dark fire surround was salvaged and cut down to improve its proportions – for the room needed to feel snug, not overly formal.

Previously, there was no fire surround, simply a Seventies hole-in-the-wall. Once covered in a typical white gloss and looking like a nasty pastiche, we decided to reuse the timber surround because of its lovely corbels.

By cutting the width and so giving it height, it became a more elegant piece. To make it seem more bespoke and individual, we painted it in an

Off-Black Eggshell from Farrow &

Ball to achieve a dark slate effect that added age and history. This included the mantle shelf that was polished to become even more like stone.

The dark blue pigment in the Off-Black complements the green within the Roman Bronze on the wall and so the fireplace appears to be made out of a much plusher material than painted timber.

The Victorians would be rejoicing at the success of such a simple paint trick.

The elaborate cornice in this room and papered ceiling were left unchanged due to the Grade II status of the building.

Cleaned up and restored, then painted a simple Slipper Satin soft grey/white from Farrow & Ball, the unusual decorative cornice gives a lovely lace collar effect to the Roman Bronze walls.

The furnishings, materials and fabrics were also selected to set off the paint colours.

Black as an accent colour looks especially authentic as it presents an ebonised and lacquered finish typical of the

Victorian period.

The cane settee, though Arts and Crafts in style, adds to the quirkiness of the interior.

The red Persian rug and velvet upholstered seat and sofa soften the formality and their rich and vibrant tones lend yet more comfortable and sumptuous style to the room. The room becomes more artistic and Bohemian this way and deliciously snug.

All in all, the theatrical effect of a period room is suggested through colour and the way in which that colour changes all it touches. Never underestimate a paint and finishes effect; it's a cost-effective way of achieving interior changes.

Gill Richardson is one half of Clifton-based husband and wife team, Goodchild Interiors, specialising in architectural design. For more details, visit www.goodchildinteriors.net, or call 0117 927 9475.

