



Dress to Impress: An interior designer's guide to prepping a home for sale

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As CEO of design studio Angel O'Donnell, Richard Angel is entrusted with creating the interiors for some of PCL's top developments, so which principles has he applied to making his own house sale-ready...

We demand a lot from property, *writes Richard Angel*. For over a decade, platforms like Instagram and Pinterest have fed us a fat-rich diet of showbiz-level real estate. Our days are peppered with sleek house tours, chatty estate agents, home hacks, hot trends and urgent reminders that a beautiful home is essential to our wellbeing. Even AI robots are plumping cushions and cooing over colour palettes.

These stimuli have lifted our aspirations, refined our aesthetic sensibilities, and powered our understanding of space planning, shelf styling and everything in between. So when my wife and I decided to sell our Streatham home, I knew we'd need to refurbish the place to meet the demands of today's buyers.

As the co-founder of an interior design studio, I felt pressured to do a great job. To make sure I did, I sat down with the team and outlined five guiding principles for making a home sale-ready. It's worth noting that while we took care of the property's curb appeal, these principles focus solely on the interiors.



Richard Angel (pictured at his home in Streatham, south London) co-founded interior design studio Angel O'Donnell with Ed O'Donnell in 2018; the firm has since designed luxurious show apartments at The OWO, One St John's Wood, 101 on Cleveland & The Dumont

If in doubt, don't do it

Not every loft requires a conversion. Not every kitchen needs to be open plan. These works are costly, time-consuming, sometimes stressful, and not always profitable. So if you doubt the hassle will yield a decent return, don't do it. Instead, enhance what you already have.

In Streatham, Edwardian fireplaces were brought to life with new tiles and hearths. Decorative mouldings were reinvigorated with fresh paint. Cracked stained glass windows were renewed. A damaged Everhot stove was restored. Rooms were reconfigured to improve their functionality. And key pieces of furniture were reupholstered in contemporary fabrics to give them a new editorial edge.



An original fireplace in the hallway has been contemporised with glossy green finger tiles and a large stone hearth

Colour it up

Want to stand out from the crowd? Then don't fade into the background. Pale walls and furniture can all too easily pale into insignificance. People want properties with presence, personality, a point of view – and colour can achieve that by the tin load.

Colour distinguishes a room, gives it depth and character. And different colours throughout the home can create a multitude of moods – from vibrant and alert to soft and sleepy. We chose a varied palette – including ruddy red, putty pink and light toffee – and let it flow across the house. Now everything looks bolder and more impactful, making this is a listing to be noticed.



A dark red envelops the dining room. For added depth, the chalky texture of the walls contrasts with the gloss finish of the fireplace and the high polish of the granite dining table

Give each room a purpose

Empty rooms look small and uninviting. Cluttered rooms are chaotic and energy-draining. And rooms with poor layouts lack flow and definition. But rooms that have been put to good use enable buyers to see their full potential.

For this reason, we rejigged three key areas in Streatham: The kitchen, whose size and layout were compromised by an adjoining utility room. The now dining room, which was an underutilised third reception. And the guestrooms, which lacked imagination.

By knocking through from the utility room into the kitchen, we gained space for cupboards, worktops, even a good-sized larder. Turning the third reception into a dining room gave us a new dedicated area for dinner parties and family get-togethers. And by repurposing two of the guestrooms – making one a study and the other a dressing room – we demonstrated the versatility of the upper floors.



Every inch of the kitchen was redesigned to maximise storage, improve flow and create an inviting central point where a family could eat, do homework and catch up the day's events

Don't sweat the small stuff

You want to get your house in order swiftly and cost-effectively. This means prioritising rooms that typically influence buyers. These include an impactful entrance hall. An expertly configured kitchen with optimised storage. A warm and welcoming living room. Fresh-looking bathrooms with contemporary fixtures and hardware. Plus, a standout principal bedroom.

In Streatham, we retiled the bathrooms, reclaimed 6sq ft of unused space behind a stud wall in the ensuite, built a walk-in shower and added a double vanity. We painted the living room in the pale toffee and filled it with new and upcycled pieces for an eclectic, lovingly curated feel. Then in the principal bedroom, we designed a half-height upholstered wall to extend the full length of the room. This did three things: cover a redundant chimney breast, level out the awkward nooks either side, and create a soft and sumptuous backdrop for a super king with large bedsides and lamps.



In the principal bedroom, a half-height upholstered wall extends the full length of the room, covering the chimney breast and amplifying the generous proportions of the space

Dress for success

Once you've mended things, reworked layouts, painted liberally, and created several standout rooms, it's time for a spot of styling.

Add art. A giant oil painting, a piece of sculpture, an immersive gallery wall – these things will enliven your home no end. And if you don't own much art, rent it.

Declutter shelves. Remove old manuals, loose receipts, broken widgets and dog-eared family photos. Then replace with books, vases, succulents, a large reed diffuser – anything that adds shape, colour, texture and fragrance to your home.

Warm up your lighting. Lamps are an essential alternative to unflattering downlighters and cool white LEDs. They look good and gently glow up a space – perfect for those evening viewings.

Upcycle old treasures. You get to reimagine beloved pieces of furniture, and your buyers get to see some custom-made design. Win-win.



A colourful picture wall creates a fresh focal point, while a vintage Halabala armchair looks renewed in dual fabrics of embroidered leaves and moss-green velvet

Images: Taran Wilkhu Photography

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