

# SHEER DECADENCE

Hairdressing duo Royston Blythe and Nick Malenko's home combines opulent decor with dramatic details

FEATURE TRICIA WELCH PHOTOGRAPHY ROBERT SANDERSON

## MEET THE OWNERS



Royston Blythe (shown left) and Nick Malenko, who jointly run two hairdressing salons, plus Ruby the poodle  
**PREVIOUS HOMES** 'This is the fifth place Nick and I have owned,' says Royston. 'The first cost £45,000 and needed a complete overhaul, but we sold it for £125,000 less than a year later. Before we moved here, we lived in a five-bedroom, 1930s house nearby.'  
**CURRENT PROPERTY** Georgian manor house in the West Midlands, built in 1730  
**ROOMS** Hall, sitting room, formal dining room, dining room/snug/kitchen, utility room, office, cloakroom, six bedrooms (all en suite), dressing room  
**PURCHASED 2006 PRICE** £850,000  
**VALUE** £2 million

**SITTING ROOM** The bronze statuette of Mercury is one of many antiques the couple have collected over the years. Hanover sofa, £2,345; faux-tortoiseshell mirror, £1,695, both Andrew Martin (020 7225 5100, andrewmartin.co.uk). The curtains, pelmet and blind are made in Harlequin's (0844 543 0299, harlequin.uk.com) **Mimosa silk**, £31 per metre. These, as were all the window treatments in the house, were made up by Jackie Nicklin and her team at Creative Interiors (01902 764123, creativeinteriorswolverhampton.co.uk)

**DECORATING TIP**  
 'Curtains in sumptuous silks and satins help create a mood of luxury'

**SITTING ROOM** Neutral tones dominate this area, with leather, dark-wood furniture and crystal adding depth and contrast. Chandeliers, from a selection at Mansers (01743 351120, theantiquedealers.com). Triton chairs, £995 each; scissor-leg side table, £995, all Andrew Martin (020 7225 5100, andrewmartin.co.uk). Faux roses, £120, Ruckley (01952 460427, ruckley.com)



**HALL** Polished oak floors and an imposing Adam fireplace greet visitors to the house. The antique gilt chairs are upholstered in Osborne & Little's (020 8812 3000, osborneandlittle.com) Kediri silk/satin in Emperor and Lime, both £57 per metre

Royston Blythe admits his heart ruled his head when it came to buying this amazing manor house in the West Midlands. 'My partner Nick Malenko and I both grew up in the neighbourhood, and I remember walking past this place as a child and thinking how wonderful it would be to live here,' he says. With plenty of renovation experience between them, the couple were ideally suited to take on the restoration of the sprawling Georgian property.

'Over the years, we've assembled a brilliant team of builders, and they were just as excited as Nick and myself when we told them about our vision for the house,' Royston continues. This included reconfiguring the original nine bedrooms and solitary bathroom into six stunning en suites, and opening ►

**DINING ROOM** Grand and atmospheric, this space comes into its own when lit by soft lighting. Creative Interiors (01902 764123, creativeinteriors-wolverhampton.co.uk) covered the chairs in black-grape Vienna velvet, £38 per metre. Little Greene's (0845 880 5855, thelittlegreene.com) Baked Cherry Ultimatt emulsion, £29 for 2.5 litres, is a good match for the wall colour





**1 KITCHEN** Glitzy extractor fans are the finishing touch to this top-end design. Elica Star extractors, £2,084 each; white-gloss and African wenge units, £13,600; Caesarstone worktops, £7,500; white porcelain floor tiles, £45 per sq m, all supplied by Andrew Day at Dayrooms (01902 743016)

**2 DINING AREA** Glossy white table and chairs unify this area with the kitchen. Athos table, from £2,105; Solo chairs, from £575 each, B&B Italia (020 7591 8111, london.bebitalia.com). Jasper Conran china, £13 for a dinner plate, Wedgwood (01782 404045, wedgwood.com). Cutlery, from a selection at Ikea (0845 358 3364, ikea.co.uk)

**DESIGN ADVICE** 'We transformed the RSJ in the kitchen by cladding it on all four sides with mirrored panels – now it's become an architectural feature'

out the ground floor from a labyrinth of small spaces into three huge reception rooms. 'We love hosting parties, and have both a casual and formal dining room as well as two living areas to suit every occasion,' Royston explains.

From the gilded splendour of the entrance hall to the baroque magnificence of the dining room, the atmosphere is one of unashamed glamour. This grandiose scheme continues in the sitting room, where contemporary updates on traditional seating flank an imposing marble fireplace. Ornate window treatments and two chandeliers lead the eye through to the far end of the space, which is graced by a grand piano.

In contrast to these richly dressed rooms, the kitchen area exudes an air of pristine simplicity. 'This part of the house originally comprised five, very dark rooms,' says Nick. 'But we demolished the partition walls to create an open-plan design. The enormous island houses most of the appliances and storage cupboards, yet there's still plenty of room for a 12-seater dining table, as well as a chill-out zone, where Royston and I relax and watch TV. This is definitely our favourite room,' he

says. 'It's tranquil and clutter free – as soon as you walk in, you feel the stresses and strains of the day ebb away.'

The couple's admiration for classical elegance teamed with modern convenience continues upstairs, and is exemplified in the master suite. While their bedroom, with its cranberry coloured headboard and theatrical curtains, echoes the glamour of the formal reception rooms, the adjoining en suite is a vision of minimalist beauty, stark yet stylishly conceived.

They may have taken a year to complete it, but Royston and Nick are delighted with their home. 'This is the most ambitious property restoration we've undertaken,' Royston says, 'and it's been the most satisfying. We've incorporated all of our favourite decorating ideas, as well as our most prized pieces of furniture.'

However, the duo are not resting on their laurels. 'We still don't feel we've found our "forever" house,' says Nick. Having recently opened a second salon in London's Dorchester Hotel, the pair are currently looking for a home in the capital. 'For us, it's the work in progress that is exhilarating,' says Royston. 'That's why we can't wait to start on our next project.' ■



**MASTER EN SUITE** An oversized faux palm enhances the pristine bathroom. Napoli bath, £2,160, Victoria & Albert Baths (01952 221100, vandabaths.com). Canaletto towel radiator, £1,246.60, Roman Bathrooms (0121 561 4374, romanbathrooms.co.uk)



**MASTER BEDROOM** This space is dominated by a giant bespoke headboard framed in walnut. The headboard, made to order by Dayrooms, is covered in Osborne & Little Kediri silk/satin in Cranberry, £57 per metre. Creative Interiors (01902 764123, creativeinteriors.wolverhampton.co.uk) supplied the bedding