



# Rich pickings

Self-confessed perfectionist Laura Rich-Jones has turned her sharp eye for detail to property development, creating homes she'd be happy to live in herself and bathrooms to die-for

Words: Amelia Thorpe Pictures: Darren Chung



**THE BATHROOM HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN THE SMALLEST ROOM IN THE HOUSE, BUT I HATE THAT CRAMMED-IN FEEL. LUXURIOUS SPACE, THAT'S WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT**

Not many property developers would build a bathroom, decide it wasn't big enough, then knock down a wall and re-build it. But that's just what Laura Rich-Jones of Richstone Properties did. "I am a complete perfectionist with very high standards," she says. "But getting it just right is what gives me great satisfaction." And maybe it's because she is fresh to the market - Laura's move into property development comes as something of a life change for her. "I have a secret past," she laughs.

Four years ago, she left a successful and high profile job in advertising to spend more time with her young daughters, Serene and Charlotte and develop a new career which could be more flexible and managed to suit her family life, something which she clearly now adores. "That's what it's all about for me," she says. Some might have spent years wondering what to do next, but not Laura.

"I've always had a passion for property," she explains, "and over the years, I've bought and sold quite a few houses of my own, so it seemed like a natural move to start my own development company."

Turning her business skills in a new direction, she began by investing

in a small portfolio of properties, which she refurbished, let and managed. And so her new company, Richstone, was born.

Soon new-build houses were added to her range of activities, and her latest venture is a development of six individually designed large homes, ideally situated almost on top of the entrance to one of London's most beautiful Royal Parks at Richmond. "Family homes are our thing," says Laura, "and this location, so close to the park, really couldn't be better." Well, it needs to be pretty good: the house in which we stand is on the market for £3.75m. And it may have been on sale for only a matter of days, but it looks like a deal done: the buyer is due to sign contracts at any minute.

So what is Laura's recipe for success? Clearly a lot of hard work is part of the mix, but there's a strong vision at work, too. "I give a lot of thought to how the space will work as a family home," explains Laura of the six-bedroom, six-bathroom house, complete with its own nanny flat. "It has to have a sophisticated, elegant feel, but it also needs to suit the lifestyle of a couple with young children." At the top of Laura's list for

*Business styling in the photo business ensures the best-looking bath, large and roomy like Laura's and others more with care*

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The massive Neovise full top freestanding bath is by Osmaster Collection



The large multi-in-shower area has handy wall niches for toiletries



The vanity unit is made of solid oak and topped with black granite. Being wall-hung, it further enhances the spacious feel of the room



Polished chrome fittings add to the sleek look



Datam-made recessed cabinets have storage recessed into the wall. They hang above contemporary glass-tinted basins by Ceolan



The oak vanity unit is designed to give a plenty of storage space, while the black granite top provides contrast



Philippe Starck-designed Laps add to the contemporary theme, here and right



**I GIVE A LOT OF THOUGHT TO HOW THE SPACE WILL WORK AS A FAMILY HOME**

essential bathroom retailer profile Richstone Properties



Laura added a steam room to truly complete the bathroom space



Recessed large square shower head by Dornbracht



Must-have for any bathroom, the heated towel rail is from C.F. Ball



**product specification**

**developer profile**

family requirements is plenty of space. "We could have squeezed in a lot more rooms, but instead we've been really indulgent and gone for a smaller number of rooms to create the most spacious layout possible," she says. A huge 11 metre-long master bedroom with his and hers dressing rooms leads on to the ensuite with an ultra-roomy feel. "We wanted something that would be 'wow'," continues Laura. "That's why I had the wall moved after the room was built: it just wasn't large enough for a house of this scale. And since we were going to the maximum degree with everything else, it was essential to make this bathroom just as beautiful."

She may have only on the job training, but Laura doesn't let a lack of formal design qualifications stand in her way. "I just knew what I like and believe in works," she says. "I always try and do the viewing myself, because it's so important to hear what people's lifestyle requirements are," she says. "And it's such a pleasure to be able to talk about the house when so much of my time and effort has gone into it."

Laura prefers a neutral palette of colours as a calm and relaxing backdrop to busy family life, opting for classic looks and clean lines. "Actually I think I'm slightly obsessed with clean lines," she laughs, pointing to the wet room style shower area, "even down to a seamless floor finish – I'd never have shower trays."

Laura prefers natural materials, especially wood and stone, to add warmth to mass schemes which might otherwise be clinical, and luxurious fittings which add a little more than expected. "We all know we'll use a basin, bath and toilet, but not necessarily a wet room-style shower or a steam room," she explains. "The bathroom has traditionally been the smaller room in the house, but I have that crammed in. In a large space, that's what it's all about."

**Sanitaryware** Hilti (www.hilti.co.uk), Greenwater Collection, Tel: 01274 238340, www.greenwater.co.uk, on stock. Zero 269 765 7666 (UK), Galena, Tel: 08702 277443, www.galena.co.uk

**Cabinets** Onyx (listed in the north by Kewick Bathroom Distribution), Tel: 01274 687535, www.bathrooms-direct.co.uk or in the south by Farnibond and Partners, Tel: 020 8625 6900

**Shower** Square shower head, 3D thermal jet shower valve with 3-way diverter, Dornbracht showers, Galaxy shower valve (jet steam), C126 valve, Tel: 01222 628270, www.crowwater.co.uk

**Shower screen and furniture** The glass shower screen is jet black, as are the oak and black granite vanity and is dimensioned to board it, all made by Green Country (see p 66)

**Bowling** Acle Stark 2-handled (01491 41926), Acle Stark 2-handled (01491 41926), Acle Stark 2-handled (01491 41926), Acle Stark 2-handled (01491 41926), Acle Stark 2-handled (01491 41926)

**Steam room** Nordic steam room, C.F. Ball, Tel: 020 7902 5250, www.cfball.co.uk

**Radiators** RAE towel rack, C.F. Ball

**Tiling** Costa Star on floor and wall tiles, Porcelanosa, Tel: 020 8347 3177, www.porcelanosa.co.uk

**White** in 0580 3125, in steam from Surface Tiles, Tel: 020 7899 2100, www.surface-tiles.com

**Lighting** Ales wall light, Light & Co., Tel: 020 8745 7900, www.light.co.uk

**Builder** Green County Developments, Tel: 020 8878 0473

**Richstone Properties**  
**who are we?** Developer Laura Rich Jones, Director of Richstone Properties  
**where are we?** Park View, 742 Hilly Lane, London SW19 3JF, Tel: 020 8878 0333, www.richstoneproperties.co.uk  
**What we do** Upscale new build family homes in the London area  
**Business history** Founded in 2003 by Laura Rich Jones with husband and co-director David, the property development company is growing fast. Its latest venture is a new build development in East Hampton Lane, south west London, comprising six individual family homes with plenty of bespoke elements. The Queen Anne style home featured here has six bedrooms, six bathrooms and a nanny flat, and is being marketed at £3.75m  
**Experience** Laura says all her design skills have been developed 'on the job', while her business experience is born of 10 years in the advertising industry  
**Design influences** Laura says she enjoys travelling, always seeking out inspiration for around the world. Her travels in place to stays close to home however, the Glenegles Hotel in Scotland. "The bathrooms there are magnificent," she gushes. She adds that she prefers using natural materials – including wood and stone – in her developments to create a light-filled and uncluttered, sophisticated feel in the corners of her homes. She enhances this with precise layouts and top-end fittings