

# Balance of power

A dramatic use of geometric pattern teamed with modern furniture creates a playful yet sophisticated effect in this Notting Hill town house

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BOTH PAGES At the back of the sitting area, a bespoke sofa by George Smith is accented with cushions covered in Prestwick wool satin from Schumacher (this picture). Adjacent, a white marble table by Bethan Gray for Lapidia stands in front of a stone chimneypiece by Jamb, while full-height, glazed doors lead in from the entrance hall (opposite, both pictures)





**A** collaboration between a couple with differing tastes, an interior architect and an interior designer, this five-storey town house in Notting Hill could have ended up being a project of two halves. But thanks to an open-spirited approach to the coalescence of ideas, the result is a lesson in balance and harmonious contrasts. A graphic chevron rug in minty pastel sits against dark-blue, ethnic-print curtains in the bedroom. Giant black-and-white stripes appear from nowhere in an otherwise muted kitchen spanning the lower-ground-floor kitchen. Dusky pink velvet cushions make an unexpected showing in a masculine media room. Yet there is no doubt that it works. It feels like the home of real people who have flair; and who also have their quirks.

The mixologist who made it so is interior designer Suzy Hoodless, known for her mild eclecticism and smart monochrome backgrounds. 'My aim,' she says, 'is that when I hand over a house, it is an extension of its owners' personalities, and with this project we achieved that.' Suzy worked closely with Johnny Holland of Hackett Holland architects, and both speak warmly of the partnership as a positive creative experience. 'For many houses I act as creative director for the entire project, but in this case it was genuinely a joint effort,' she says.

In the front sitting area, entered immediately from the entrance hallway, a set of full-height, glazed doors establish an elegant architectural mood reminiscent of the smart family houses across Europe. The result is a pleasant surprise, as the reception-floor layouts of Victorian town houses can be all too familiar. This is one of several clever, glazed elements that give Johnny's conversion its particular allure. Another is the single, undivided interior window at the end of the entrance hall, which reveals a double-height bespoke lighting installation and gives a vertical vista over a 'Rain Effect' coffee table by Mint. It looks out on to the gorgeous little garden landscaped by Alasdair Cameron, with white cobblestones and slim, silver-birch trees and down to a sunken surrealist urban folly, featuring a stone mantelpiece that forms a miniature smoking yard at the lower-ground level.

The third transformative piece of glazing is the double-height grid of window panes that sits between the seating area and the garden; along with two sets of full-height french windows, it completely opens up the ground and first floors. All this window play gives a feeling of being at once in a London town house and a contemporary Parisian apartment. Johnny says they did indeed borrow from the French capital's know-how in making the most of old buildings, using more pane and less frame.

His passion is for restoring period houses to retain their original integrity for future generations. In this case, his sensitivity to the property's original proportions, combined with his imaginative approach to maximising space, has produced a canvas that is neither retiring nor in your face, but manages to be classic, cool and chic.

Much of the structural work here went into reversing the architectural

misdemeanors of previous owners. The project started in the spring of 2012, and the majority of time since then has been spent constructing the lower-ground floor, correcting the window placement and the alignment of the walls, and extending the roof to open up the top-floor main bedroom. During those two years, the architect, the interior designer and the clients all had babies, adding yet another layer of hurdles to an already complicated project-management jigsaw puzzle.



THIS PAGE FROM ABOVE Throughout the house are large striped rugs designed by Suzy Hoodless, including this black-and-white flatweave in the street-side sitting area. Reclaimed tiles run across the upper-ground-floor hallway to the two-storey window at the back of the house



ANTICLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE The lower-ground-floor kitchen and dining area opens out on to the garden terrace (bottom left). A custom-made brass pendant light hangs above an oak dining table paired with a set of 'Wishbone' chairs by Hans J Wegner





ANTICLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Suzy designed the black-and-white striped wallpaper that spirals down along the staircase from the kitchen to the basement's work den and cinema room (below), which features a curved velvet-upholstered sofa custom-made by George Smith and a playful 'Patchwork' chandelier from Moooi. A neon-yellow side table from Muuto and a mural above the chimneypiece add colour and warmth in the nursery



In support of clichéd adages about chalk, cheese and opposites attracting, the house's hybrid personality derives from the differing tastes of its inhabitants. 'The owners had quite contrasting briefs, which would usually be challenging. He's into contemporary design with strong colours, and her taste is far more minimal and neutral,' says Suzy, who attributes the ultimate success to their willingness to trust the team. 'Even though she, in particular, had a very good eye, they were brave enough to let us go for it so we could develop a dialogue where I could push if I believed in a piece.'

The desire to develop a personally tailored, one-off feel led to a handful of standout bespoke creations being commissioned that now seem to anchor the house's overall look. Suzy designed the rugs, which are a series of corresponding, geometrically striped flat-weaves that vary in colour and pattern, made by Christine Van Der Hurd. Suzy designed much of the lighting, a white pedestal table and the teak cabinet in the dining area, not to mention a showpiece flash of wallpaper with oversize, diagonal black-and-white stripes that leads down from the kitchen to the basement cinema room and work den. The pared-back stone chimneypieces were specially made by Jamb.

Talking through her process of finding the contemporary/classic balance to give an interior longevity, Suzy fastens on many details – the fabric-fronted wardrobes, the Vittorio Introini shelving – before deciding that her own favourite touch is a relaxed *mise en scène* in the bathroom area of the open-plan main bedroom. A Fifties chair by Philip Arctander, which she found through a Swedish dealer, sits next to Rose Uniacke's 'Hoof' side table, arranged at a relaxed angle beside the freestanding bath. 'That chair was the first piece we sourced for the project, and those initial purchases tend to set the tone,' says Suzy. The bath-side scenario sketched out by these three pieces certainly looks inviting, and acts as a simple reminder of how interior design shapes people's lives, the way they spend their time and even how they relate to one another □

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THIS PAGE Wide-plank oak floorboards and geometric tiles create a division between the open-plan main bedroom and bathroom on the top floor. Brass strips edge the fabric-fronted wardrobe wall (above), which complements the brass taps and reclaimed wash stand in the bathroom (right). Graphic curtains made with fabric from Madeline Weinrib add colour to the white walls by the bed, while a Fifties Swedish chair upholstered in sheepskin sets the tone by the free-standing 'Vieques' bath from Agape (far right)

