

OPPOSITES ATTRACT

Architect Robert Dye walks us through his team's transformation of a north London Victorian terrace into a spectacular artist's abode

Words RACHEL MANTOCK



With a brief from a couple who had very different ideas about what they wanted their home to look like, Robert Dye Architects had their work cut out to revamp this north London property, but relished the opportunity to fuse two opposing outlooks into something beautiful and in sync. Formerly a narrow Victorian terrace along Grafton Terrace, the first thing they did was rejig the layout to allow in floods of light and a strong sense of space. 'The house was in a very poor condition when they bought it and they lived in it for several months before contacting us,' Robert Dye explains. 'It's a very tall, narrow house, so we radically altered the relationship between the ground floor and the lower ground floor. We cut a big hole in the rear of the house and made a

two storey void, which created this huge sense of height. Our main endeavour was to bring light into the house.'

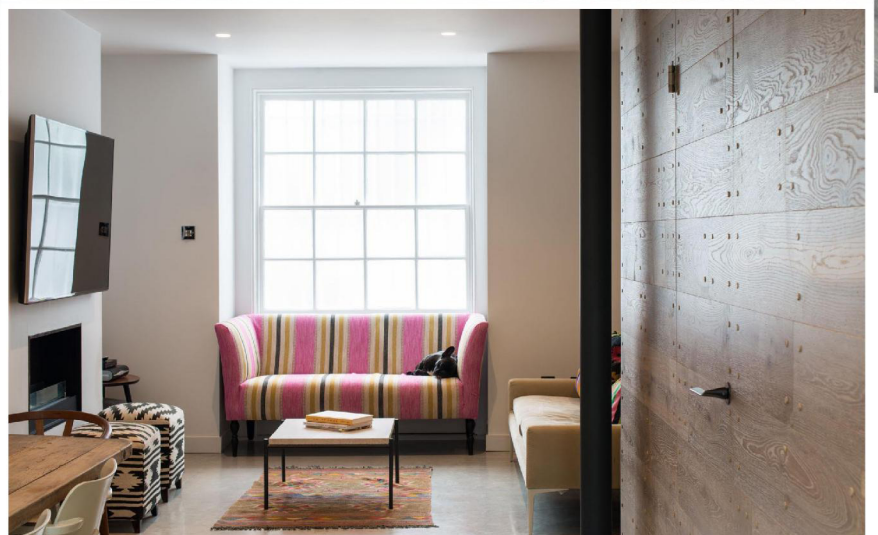
Looking at the images that sit on these pages, there is no sense of narrowness. Each room looks like a large open space bathed in natural light, which can only be attributed to the sorcerous fingertips of the Robert Dye Architects team. Then there's the interior design, a perfectly formed amalgamation of artsy

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aesthetics and very classic country British touches, courtesy of the clients, an American artist and a traditional British gent, who form the couple that own this striking home. Pops of bold yellow and swathes of rich black give the design an edge, while differing reclaimed wood textures soften the whole affair. The exposed brickwork in the kitchen ties in perfectly with the



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pastel Aga cooker, giving it a subtle country feel, while the soft grey wood cabinets bring the kitchen into the 21st century, the modern and the traditional existing side by side pleasantly.

Glass doors from the kitchen lead directly onto a decked oasis area, somewhere that just promises to be glorious in the summer with its potential for lush green foliage and perfect placement for soaking up rays. The double height section towards the rear of the kitchen features a lengthy, crawling charcoal wooden book case that soars up

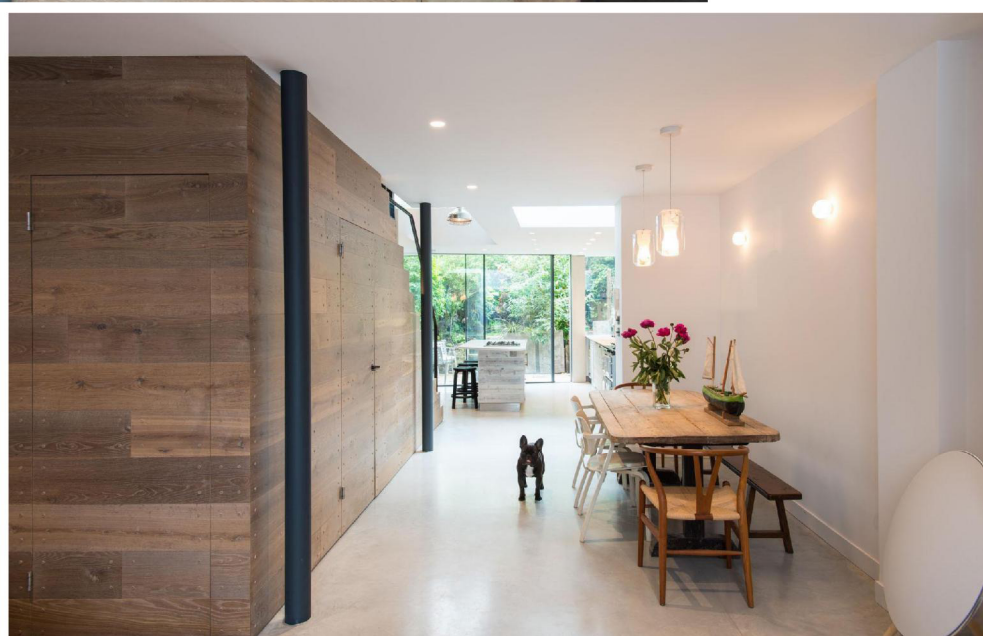
past the level of the hanging ceiling lights with a nifty ladder in place too, as well as a bright orange seating area for cosy nights in with a glass of red and your favourite classics. The building's past was preserved on the outside with fanciful chalky white detailing, stunning against a backdrop of brickwork.

'We always ask our clients to use Pinterest and magazines to illustrate what they like. Typically our clients are couples with families and often what they both want clashes,' explains Dye. 'Our job is to fuse each parties' interests



Different wood textures, broody blacks and bright yellows were used to bring this project to life

Getting the right black is pivotal, if the shade is even slightly off it can throw the whole look off balance



together in a way that works aesthetically, practically and long term. Distressed wood was a big part of this project, as was reusing materials in general. We actually like to reuse materials with most of our projects; we always have a view towards being as sustainable as we can.'

While the finished product is tantalisingly and tastefully modern, there are many small elements that still tell stories of the building's past; they painted one of the original timber staircases black in a brave move that paid off. Dye says: 'We actually spent a long time finding the right black, it's actually more of a green, anthracite type black. Getting the right black is pivotal,

if the shade is even slightly off it can throw the whole look off balance.'

The new staircase that they introduced was left unfinished, resulting in a swapping of finishes – the old staircase updated in a contemporary black, while the newly introduced stairs were designed as a nod to the building's past.

With restraint, playfulness, light intricate touches along with a profound respect for the building's old bones, Robert Dye Architects took this home of the Victorian era and placed it in the 21st century, just like an architectural time lord that regenerates every so often, fit for purpose in a new age.

Find out more at robertdye.com