

TALES OF THE UNEXPECTED

Behind the classic façade of a Victorian house lies a contemporary style, thanks to the imaginative approach of design studio Kitesgrove

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DINING AREA

One corner has a streamlined bar complete with wine fridge for easy entertaining. Wall behind bar and joinery in Fence Green 31, M&L Paints. Brass furniture knobs, Buster + Punch





LIVING AREA
Simple details create a characterful look, including the black strips on the wall that chime with the rug and mid-century chairs. **Rug**, Coral & Hive. **Table**, Another Country. **Artwork** (over fireplace), Kate Jupe, Blue Shop Cottage

Everything about this classic Victorian mews house speaks of contrast. A flat-fronted, period façade gives no hint of the bold architectural shapes and unconventional layout within, just as a deeply peaceful crescent setting belies the building's hectic west London location.

It's exactly this juxtaposition that appealed to owner Lynn Chen. Though she had renovated a number of London new-build apartments, the prospect of nudging a period house towards relaxed, modern living was new to her. Nonetheless, its previous incarnation, which incorporated a vast LED-lit glass staircase, seemed to Lynn to jar with the bones of the building. 'I wanted to restore the English feel of the house and to respect its context,' she says. 'It also needed to cater to our busy family life.'

Working with architects Studio McLeod and interior design practice Kitesgrove, Lynn simplified the layout of the house, improved circulation and carved out two further bedrooms and bathrooms without expanding its footprint. Key to the design was the creation of a lightweight steel and oak open staircase hung from the roof, which neatly dissects all three storeys. Extra light was introduced throughout via floor-to-ceiling windows, skylights and an ingenious Rubik's Cube-like configuration of angular light wells.

'A well-conceived layout was our driving force,' says Kitesgrove's Caitlin Nicol. 'We moved the kitchen and dining area to the lower ground floor, along with an informal sitting room, and created a glass-fronted study on the ground floor, plus an open-plan living area, anchored by a fireplace.'

Those tweaks were instant game changers. 'It meant the spaces related to each other,' says Lynn.

'My family loves spending time around the dining table and so it made sense for us to have kitchen, dining and relaxation areas on one floor.'

Lynn's decorative choices were gentle yet impactful, thanks perhaps to the structural motifs that run throughout. As a result, in the main bedroom elegant ochre striped wallpaper echoes the vertical lines of the staircase, mid-century furniture and curved sofas complement angular skylights and long, lightweight sheers graze frameless windows.

Though Lynn has a preference for minimal interiors, she wanted to experiment more boldly with pattern and colour. In the study, walls were papered in a sisal grasscloth, featuring an informal deconstructed chevron design. While a hidden jewel of a cloakroom, tucked under the stairs, features a modern pastoral wallpaper by Cole & Son.

'The house was built in 1850, around the time of London's Great Exhibition, with its emphasis on cultural and decorative richness,' says Caitlin. 'We took our cue from that, sourcing furniture and fabrics that introduce a global flavour, along with a sense of comfort and warmth.' A marble-topped bar, painted in a grounding blue-green, creates a natural focal point while, conversely, an off-white kitchen seems to melt seamlessly into its setting.

Now, a series of contemporary shapes complement this building's period origins while standing apart from them. It's an unexpected harmony that appeals to Lynn. 'The house is a stone's throw from everything I need and yet it's incredibly private,' she says. 'It is such an oasis of calm amid the busy city life.' 🍷

■ Kitesgrove, kitesgrove.com; Studio McLeod, studiomcleod.com

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HOUSES



STUDY

A patterned wall and window treatment double the decorative impact of this space. The glazed wall (above right) allows for a sense of space while providing acoustic and visual privacy when necessary.

Loxo sisal grasscloth wallpaper, Brook Perdigon Textiles. Massproductions Crown armchair, Twentytwentyone; upholstered in Hallingdal 65 Col. 0457, Kvadrat



STAIRS

The central roof-hung steel and oak staircase offers striking vertical connections across all floors and open views. It also lets plenty of natural light flood in.

Hanging staircase, Cake Industries. Railings in Farrow & Ball's Downpipe



KITCHEN-DINER

Above the table is a triangular skylight – just one of the striking architectural features of this renovation.

Apollo XXL oak cafe table, Heerenhuis. 1960s Danish teak and paper cord chairs designed by Arne Hovmand-Olsen for Mogens Kold, Max Inc. Cabinetry by Kitesgrove. Mimosa light by Areti, Nest



BEDROOM

A striped wallpaper emphasises the softly curving roof angle. Its deep ochre hue evokes a cocooning feel.

Harrington **headboard** by Kitesgrove for Ensembler London. Atollo **lamp** 237 by Vico Magistretti for Oluce, Nest. **Nightstand** by Fratelli Strada, The Kairos Collective

EN SUITE

To flood this room with natural light, a vast and retractable skylight was put in. The sinks and bath are surrounded by Calacatta marble.

Design by Kitesgrove. **Marble**, Stonecraft



MEET THE DESIGNER

Kitesgrove's Caitlin Nicol shares her design inspiration **SECRET ADDRESS** 8 Holland Street is one of our favourite sourcing destinations for its continually evolving collection of unusual vintage pieces.

GO-TO COLOUR We are so often drawn to an organic palette of greens and blues and are very excited about our recent collaboration with Farrow & Ball.

'Kitesgrove' is a deep teal tone that is bold and dynamic.

SMALL CHANGE, BIG IMPACT Updating handles is an easy change that can have a big impact.

DESCRIBE YOUR STYLE IN THREE WORDS Quiet, comfortable, nuanced.

LAST THING YOU BOUGHT FOR YOUR HOME I have my eye on one of the playful bobbin pieces from Robin Myerscough's new collaboration with Lascombe Hill cabinet makers.

WHAT'S ON YOUR COFFEE TABLE *The Anatomy of Colour* is a gem. It's a fascinating history of colour and paint over a 300-year period.

BEDROOM

The scalloped headboard and a rattan-fronted wardrobe add depth and texture to this space on the top floor.

Scalloped headboard designed by Kitesgrove; upholstered in Milano wool Col 32, Clementine Oliver

