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LOCATION LONDON, ENGLAND
DESIGN MATTHEW GILES ARCHITECTS, LIZA GILES
WORDS PHOEBE FRANGOUL
PHOTOGRAPHY BEN ANDERS

FULL CIRCLE MOMENT

Returning this house to the family home it once was has been a true labour of love for one creative couple

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his Victorian house in Peckham has lived many lives. First a family home, it has also been a church hall, a social club – complete with bar, dance floor and snooker room – bedsits and even, at one point, a school. ‘People drive past and say, “I used to come here as a kid with my mum and dad,”’ recalls Matthew Giles who, with his wife Liza, is the house’s current custodian. The couple lived down the street for five years, so were in the right place at the right time when it went on the market. They moved in 16 years ago, baby and toddler in tow, and knew they’d found their forever home.

The building was structurally sound but had been heavily altered over the years so had lost any sense of coherence or identity. Luckily, their professions meant they had the skills to take on the project: Matthew runs his own architecture and interior-design practice, while Liza, before becoming a full-time artist (represented by Flowers Gallery in Mayfair) was art director at ►

Living room Opening onto the garden terrace, this space could feel grand because of its high ceilings and ornate plasterwork, but has a relaxed, Palm Springs-style ease thanks to its low-slung furniture and low-hung pictures. Patricia Urquiola’s ‘Tufty-Time’ sofa for B&B Italia provides ample room for family and friends to pile on. The white armchair is the ‘Garret’ from Soho Home. In the centre of the space stands a coffee table by Eero Saarinen for Knoll, with a matching side table beside the sofa. The rug is a bespoke design from La Porte d’Or in Marrakesh



Designers Guild for 16 years. ‘The intention was not simply to renovate, but to give the building a new clarity and purpose – restoring it as a family home while introducing light, flow and a sense of calm continuity,’ says Liza. ‘We knew our needs would evolve over time as our boys grew, so the house needed to adapt with us.’

The front door opens into a generous entrance hall that looks straight through to the garden beyond. ‘We wanted to celebrate the house’s double width at this point,’ says Matthew. ‘The original layout, split by a central hallway, made it feel quite divided, so our aim was to create a stronger sense of lateral living by much better connecting both sides.’ They introduced two large sets of double doors that created clear sightlines into the adjoining kitchen, living and dining rooms.

The couple have tackled projects together before. ‘They are always a learning curve, but we make a good team,’ says Liza. Their approach is both architectural and decorative. ‘We wanted to restore the house’s character while introducing contemporary elements,’ explains Matthew. Traditional cornicing and white marble fireplaces reclaim the house’s former elegance, sitting alongside more modern interventions, such as the green steel-framed garden doors – inspired by their favourite place in Marrakesh – and the marble kitchen island. The living room is shaped by the Parisian apartments Liza used to shoot in with Designers Guild, with their parquet flooring, antique fireplace mirrors and plasterwork. The hallway’s patterned tiles were influenced by the atmosphere of Moroccan riads: ‘A nod to the original Victorian tiles, but with a twist,’ she notes.

The aim was to create a home that feels calm yet generous. Huge windows span the back of the house, drawing the green of the garden and the light in. ‘I’m a real sun worshipper,’ says Liza, explaining how a west-facing orientation was non-negotiable, ‘so you get that sunny glow on the back of the house. My happy place is in a kaftan with bare feet, wandering straight out onto the patio.’ Over the years, green tones have been replaced in the couple’s favour by a golden, warmer palette and they admit that they recently updated some ‘beautiful but uncomfortable’ designer furniture. ‘We’ve got to an age now where we need a bit more comfort in our lives!’

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Portrait Artist Liza Giles with her husband, architect Matthew Terrace
Terrace The family’s toy poodle Biscuit suns himself outside, where a pair of ‘Michelangelo’ rattan day beds by Sika-Design are positioned to make the most of the west-facing aspect



says Liza, laughing. Thick, bespoke Moroccan rugs and a huge golden ‘Tufty-Time’ sofa feel cosy in winter and sunny in summer. ‘Quite often there are about 10 16- or 17-year-olds on there!’ jokes Matthew.

While most rooms are white, bright and airy, over time one or two have been washed in colour. ‘Somebody said to me years ago, “Never try to fight and turn a dark room light,”’ says Liza. ‘The guest bedroom in the basement is probably the darkest, so we’ve gone with that and it feels rich, enveloping and cosy.’ Their favourite spot is a space by the stairs where a pair of comfortable armchairs overlook the garden. ‘We tend to sit there at the weekend when we’ve got time to read the paper with a coffee,’ says Liza. ‘That seems quite luxurious these days.’

The couple’s sons Elwood and Arlo are now teenagers and instead of muddy boots and scooters, ‘hundreds of huge trainers’ clutter the hall. The boys have a den in the basement known as ‘the HQ’. Liza says: ‘We always wanted to be that house where everybody would hang out. It’s nice because we know all their mates, and when they’re too noisy, we can shut the door and be peaceful upstairs.’ Although they love beautiful things, they never wanted their home to feel too precious. ‘If there’s a scuff on the wall or a mark on the floor, it’s just signs of life and a good time had,’ explains Liza. ‘Honestly, it’s a lovely house,’ adds Matthew. ‘We feel grateful to live here.’ Finally returned to its intended purpose and described by Liza as ‘part of the family’, the house must feel just as lucky. lizagilesart.com; matthewgilesarchitects.com ➤



The FRONT DOOR opens into a GENEROUS entrance hall that looks straight through to the GARDEN beyond

Garden 'We're lucky because we've got a large garden – especially for London – that faces west,' says Liza. Its design draws from the romance of the South of France and the structured beauty of Italian villas

Hallway The floor is covered in 'Majadas' encaustic tiles from Bert & May – a subtle tribute to the original Victorian tiles that would have covered the floor when the house was first built

Dining room Looking towards the street, the dining space centres around another Saarinen table for Knoll with Hans J Wegner oak 'CH24 Wishbone' chairs for Carl Hansen & Søn from Heal's. The 'Socket' pendants are from Ferm Living. The rug is from Bakr Carpets in Marrakesh, and the large painting is by homeowner Liza ➤





Kitchen Overlooking the street, this room faces east and catches the morning light. A large island in white Statuario marble strikes a contemporary note, contrasting with the plaster mouldings and oak parquet floor by Turgon. A vivid band of ochre on the wall provides a warm backdrop for a display of vases by De La Jardin, Sophie Cook and MAH Gallery, alongside flea-market finds. The kitchen is the work of Daulby and Tickle

Sun room A pair of bouclé-covered chairs from Soho Home give Matthew and Liza the perfect spot to enjoy the sun and the garden at the weekend with a cup of coffee or a cocktail. The checked rug is a bespoke design from La Porte d'Or in Marrakesh. All the plants were sourced from New Covent Garden Market. The vintage pendant lights are from Sunbury antiques market. 'In winter, even if it's cold outside, you feel like you're sitting in the sun,' says Liza

Bathroom In this second-floor space, a zingy lime-green shower room makes a bold statement. The double Corian basin is from CP Hart, with brass taps from Vola and a vintage mirror from Maison Artefact. The kilim rug is from Marrakesh and the lampshades were a flea-market find ➤



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‘We wanted to RESTORE the house’s CHARACTER while introducing CONTEMPORARY elements’

Lounge area Situated in the main bedroom, this space is centred around a table by Saarinen for Knoll. The chaise longue is vintage Kerstin Hörlin-Holmquist from 1st Dibs and the lighting is from Etsy

Bathroom A resin bath from CP Hart has been paired with brass taps from Vola. Liza is responsible for keeping all the plants in the house alive – a role she likens to looking after another child

Main bedroom Covered in Caravane linens and a vintage kantha from Designers Guild, the bed is a design from The Conran Shop. The cream rug is a bespoke piece from Marrakesh’s La Porte d’Or
See Stockists page for details [E](#)

