

Inspiration from abroad

Design influences from Los Angeles and the Mediterranean had a major impact on the transformation of this London house

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PHOTOGRAPHY JULIAN CORNISH-TRESTRAIL

IN BRIEF

NAMES Felix and Anouska Armstrong
AGES 49 & 48
LOCATION Ealing, London
TYPE OF PROPERTY
1920s detached house
BEDROOMS 5 & annex
BATHROOMS 4 & 2 WCs
PROJECT STARTED August 2015
PROJECT FINISHED December 2016
SIZE OF HOUSE 337sqm
BUILD COST £950,000

A Lutron lighting scheme has been installed throughout the home and garden



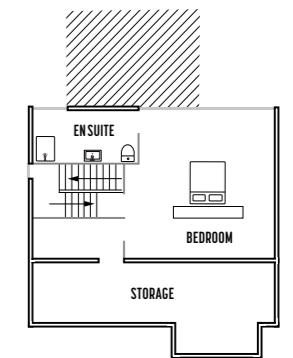
Felix and Anouska Armstrong's stunningly modern home is a far cry from its former tired exterior and internal layout. In 2013, Felix, a commercial property developer, and Anouska, a marketing executive in the film industry, along with their two teenage children, decided to relocate from the laid-back sunny climate of California to London. Having lived in a spacious, light-filled LA home, the couple knew what they wanted.

'We had a detached house in mind, with good transport links, that we could transform into our family home,' says Felix. 'We wanted to include lots of light and space, and a beautiful mix of natural materials. Our aim was to take something very ordinary and make it extraordinary.'

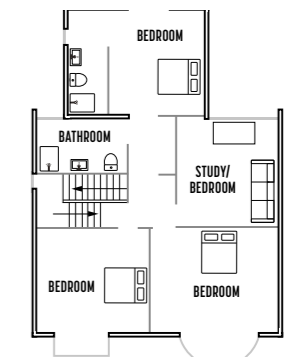
While still living in LA, the couple spent nine months scouring the internet looking for suitable properties located between the M40 and M23. They came up with a shortlist of 20 homes in Ealing, Barnes and Chiswick that they then flew over to view. >>

A striking dining table by designer Stefan Knopp adjoins the island; the sleek kitchen is from Halcyon Interiors

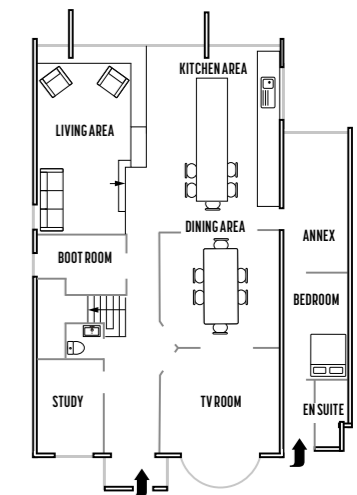
FLOOR PLANS



SECOND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR



GYM



'It soon became clear that we could get more for our money in Ealing and when we saw this house, which had space to extend, we knew it had potential,' says Anouska.

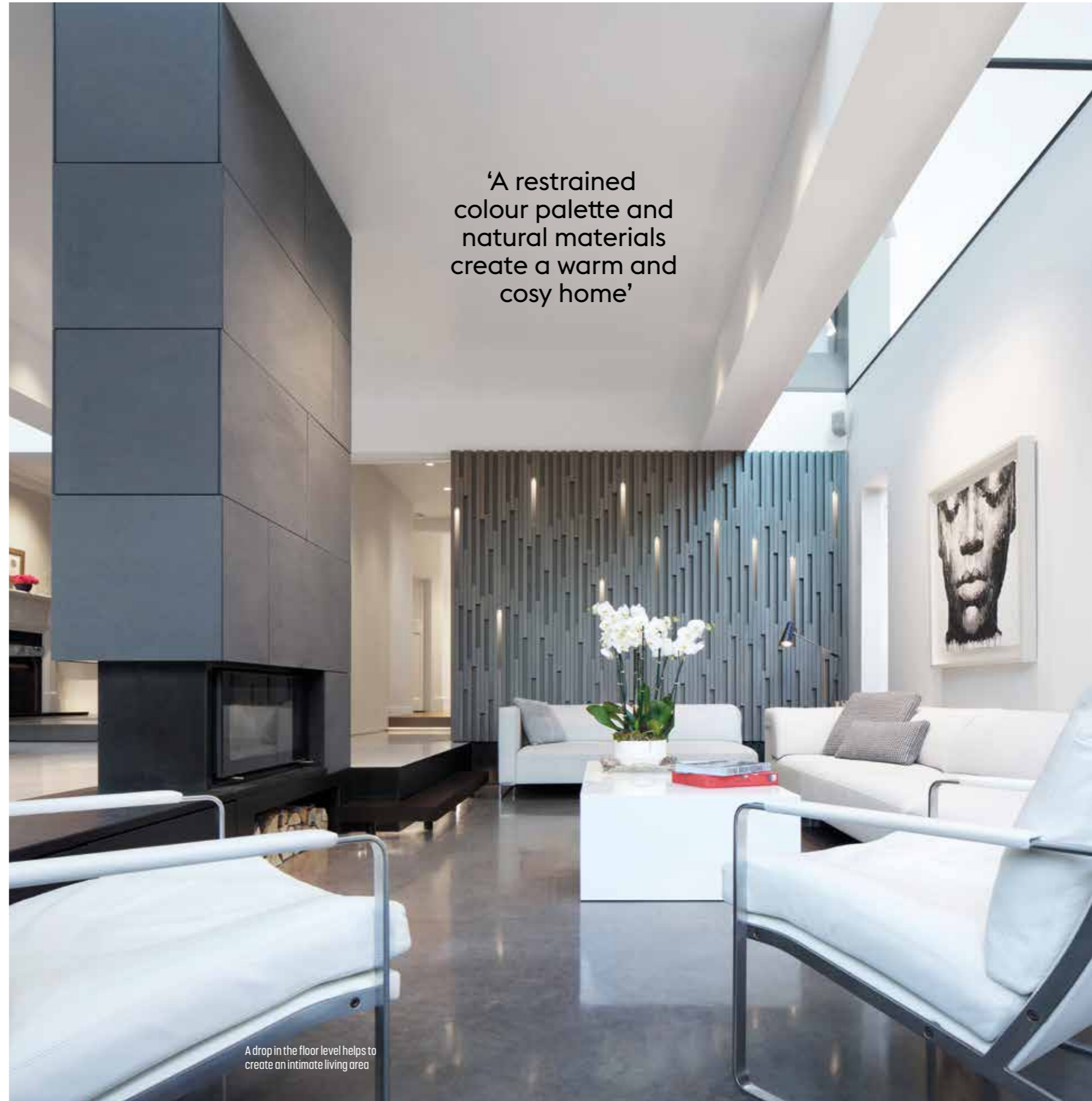
Once the sale went through, the couple began searching for an architect and came to admire Robert Dye's work. 'We fell in love with his architectural style and use of materials,' says Anouska.

With a plot and architect in place, the family moved into the house in 2013, spending six months working on a renovation and extension plan with Dye. 'He would come up with a dramatic concept and then the three of us, along with his colleague, Jason Coleman, would debate and shape it. With Felix's background in engineering and mine in marketing and design, it was a wonderful fusion of creativity and technical know-how,' says Anouska.

In terms of design and layout, the couple were keen to have a series of interconnecting spaces through the house. 'We wanted our home to feel modern, but not brutalist,' says Felix. 'Using a restrained colour palette and natural materials, we created a warm and cosy home. We also wanted to create intimate areas within bright, open spaces,' explains Anouska.

Dye's solution was to build a rear and two side extensions to create space for a generous open-plan living-kitchen-dining space. The first-floor internal walls were rearranged to integrate more storage, and a loft extension was added to include Anouska and Felix's bedroom and en suite. The garage was converted into an annex for visiting family and friends, while the design of a separate studio-gym mirrored the look of the house, using a similar palette of materials. This can be found at the end of the plot, with the garden separating the two buildings and acting like a central courtyard – a layout that is very reminiscent of Mediterranean villas.

A sculptural wall, combining hundreds of oak pieces with integrated lighting, runs the full height of the stairwell and creates a dynamic connection between the three floors. A single run of glazing pierces a side wall on the ground floor and goes all the way up to the roof, filling the centre of the house with natural light. Clever use of varying floor levels, materials and ceiling heights, and a strategically placed fireplace, were critical in creating intimate zones within the open-plan space that Anouska was so keen on. A similar amount of attention to detail »



'A restrained colour palette and natural materials create a warm and cosy home'

A drop in the floor level helps to create an intimate living area



The staircase, by Dan Clark Furniture and PMF Metalwork, cleverly highlights light and shade



Views from the first floor study take in the extension's sedum roof and the garden beyond

went into the purely functional areas, too. A boot room was included on the ground floor, with a warm-water hose placed outside to wash the family's dog, Rolo.

The couple knew that they wouldn't be able to do all the work under Permitted Development (PD). Dye's solution was to break the project down into individual PD elements applied for one after the other. 'We signed off the basic envelope of the house in September 2014 and our first PD application went through in November 2014,' says Felix. 'In total, we had nine different planning applications of various types and having certified our PD rights we applied for full planning for the overall scheme,' he says. 'It was a really intense period and the most stressful

part of the whole project,' says Anouska. 'When we finally applied for full planning permission, we had already spent 18 months and a lot of money getting to this point. There was still a risk that planning would be refused,' she says.

Thankfully, planning was granted in May 2015 and the family moved into a house nearby. Building works began in August 2015 with three boreholes dug at key places before any foundations were laid. Once the engineer was happy with the site, the back of the house was demolished and the staircase, ceilings and internal walls were all removed. Next, the foundations were laid and the steel frame went in, ready for the brick and block extensions to be built and internal walls rebuilt. >>



Sleek fitted wardrobes in the eaves provide a serene, clutter-free bedroom for Anouska and Felix



The bespoke glazing had to be lifted over the roof by crane

The house was finished predominantly in render, in keeping with the local vernacular. To meet Felix and Anouska's desire for an eco-friendly home, solar thermal panels were placed on the loft extension roof to provide the home with hot water. Sedum roofs have been fitted over the side and rear extensions, which help with insulation. Efficient underfloor heating has been fitted throughout the ground floor, the loft extension and in each of the bathrooms. Thermal blocks have also been used in all the new walls to stop heat from going into the foundations, all the windows have thermal breaks, and all the new external walls are insulated, too.

In December 2016, the house was ready and landscaping began soon after. Despite the planning process and issues around the build, the couple are happy. 'People talk of how architecture can affect lives and that is totally true for us,' says Felix. 'We have the home of our dreams that our family gets pleasure from every day. Our teenagers have their independence, but still live under the same roof. It is our special place.' GD

SUPPLIERS

PROJECT TEAM
Architect Robert Dye Architects (020 7267 9388; robertdye.com) **Garden designer** Charlotte Rowe (020 7602 0660; charlotterowe.com) **Planning consultant** WEA Planning (020 7993 2075; weaplanning.co.uk) **Structural engineer** Ling Engineering (07545 915 805; lingengineering.com) **Main contractor** Peake Projects (020 7207 4165; peakeprojects.co.uk)

Garden contractor Landform (01276 856 145; landformconsultants.co.uk)

STRUCTURE
Metalwork PMF Metalwork (01273 517 333; pmfmetalwork.co.uk) **Glazing** IQ (01494 722 880; igglassuk.com)

FIXTURES & FITTINGS
Kitchen Halcyon Interiors (020 7486 3080; halcyoninteriors.com) **Wood flooring** Mardegan

Legno (+39 0423 467 939; mardeganlegno.com) **Lighting** Lutron (020 7702 0657; lutron.com)

FURNITURE & ACCESSORIES
Custom metalwork PMF Metalwork (01273 517 333; pmfmetalwork.co.uk) **Joinery** Dan Clark Furniture (07786 924 717; danclarkfurniture.co.uk) **Dining table** Stefan Knopp (+43 6991 002 6796; stefan-knopp.com)