

INSPIRING HOUSES, INTERIORS & IDEAS FOR SPRING

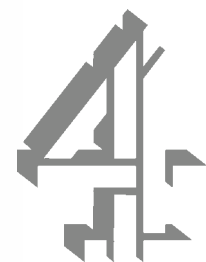
GRANDDESIGNS

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Perfect blend

Dominic McKenzie and Saskia Green's restoration of this north London Georgian terrace elegantly mixes period details with a striking contemporary interior

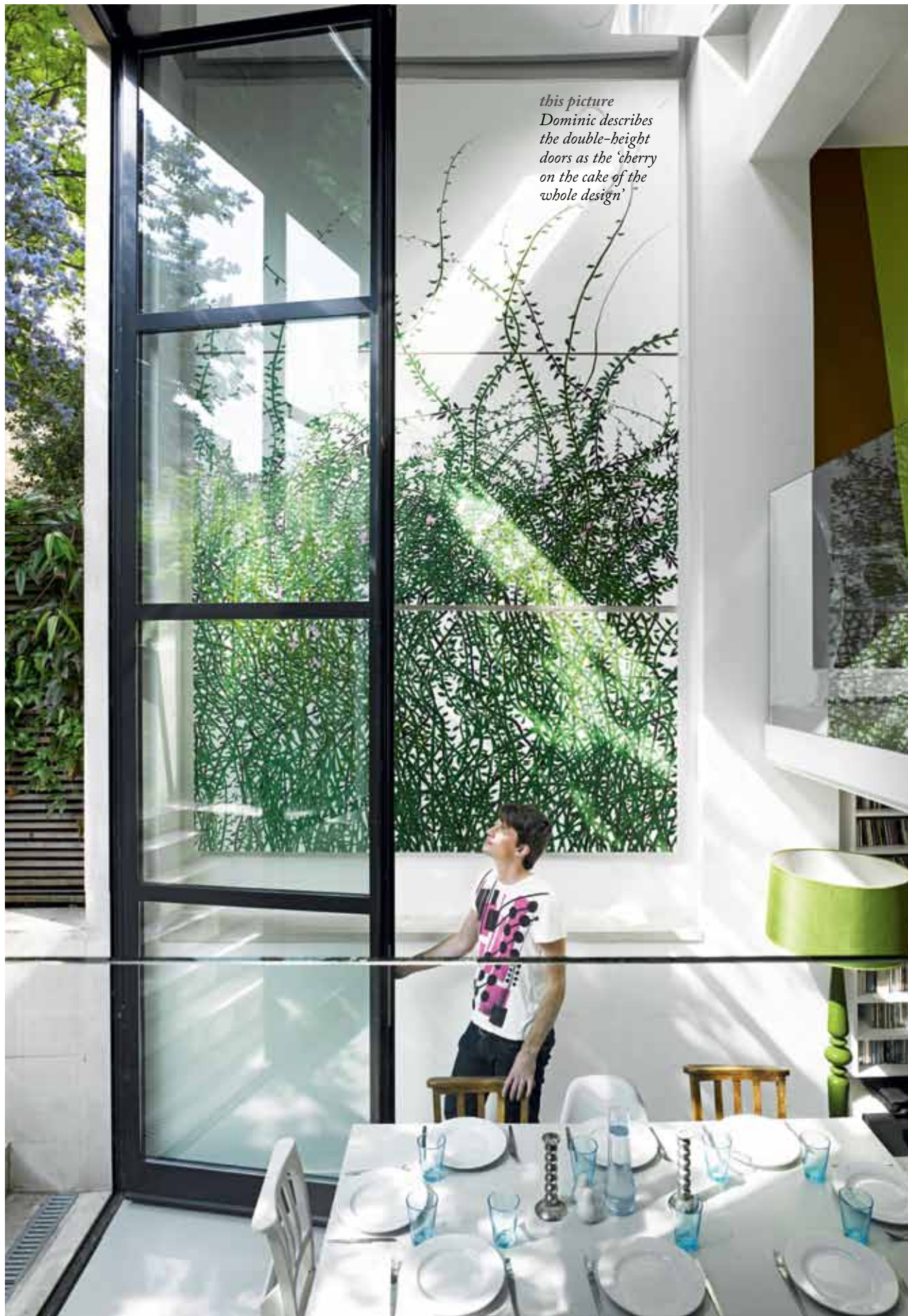
Words Sarah Baldwin Photography Will Pryce

We really wanted to bridge the gap between the historic house and our contemporary aesthetic,' says architect Dominic McKenzie when asked about his and wife Saskia's converted Georgian terrace in Barnsbury, north London. But the couple certainly didn't opt for safe middle ground to achieve this balance, installing an ultra-glam brass-clad kitchen island, walls covered with colourful abstract murals and a double-height steel-framed glass extension. They have rescued all the historic details and set them against dramatic finishes to prove that sensitive restoration and architectural fireworks really do work side by side.

When Dominic and Saskia found the site it was totally derelict – 'the absolute dream,' enthuses Dominic, 'a ruined house on a really nice street.' The ground-level shop had fallen into severe disrepair, with pink-painted walls and a thick layer of concrete suffocating the timber floorboards; there was a dank and dark basement, and the upper levels had been subdivided into shoddy student flats. 'Although the period details were decrepit in places, you could still see that it was a lovely house. And the garden was very nice; it →



this picture
The double-height extension connects the basement-level dining room with the first-floor living room. An almost-invisible glass balustrade on the upper level allows a full view of the garden



*this picture
Dominic describes
the double-height
doors as the 'cherry
on the cake of the
whole design'*



*this picture
Dominic and
Saskia (pictured)
designed the
artwork in the
dining space,
arranging the
divides between
the canvases to
mirror the panels
in the glass doors.
'The idea was that
it was an extension
of the plants that
grow on the trellis
in the garden,'
explains Dominic*



this picture and right The kitchen has been constructed with basic Ikea units given a makeover with unusual finishes. Dominic and Saskia have fitted storage units either side of the chimney breast and used the fireplace to house a wine rack



The key to all of these luxurious materials and finishes working together is balance



had a peaceful quality, so you didn't feel like you were in the centre of London – wood pigeons and everything,' he explains. In addition, extensions to the ground floors and roofs of neighbouring properties showed a healthy precedent that would give Dominic's planning application clout.

They moved in, and Dominic, who was working for another architect at the time and hungry to do his own project, bent his mind to transforming the dilapidated building. 'That stage is always very exciting, as the building is so full of potential. We moved in during the summer, and it was a lot like camping. It had a real outdoors-countryside feel.' This stint living in the property clarified that the key brief needed to be uniting the house with the garden. The original featured small, dark rooms, with only one tiny window looking out over the outside space at basement level in what was a cellar kitchen. 'We wanted to open it up and get as much light in as possible, and connect from the front of the house through to the garden.'

This gave rise to the ground- and basement-level scheme, of which the pièce de résistance is the double-height rear extension. This not only opens up the entire house to the back, but it also connects all the different living spaces – a kitchen and dining room at basement level and a ground-floor living room and reception. To give the additional height, Dominic's team excavated the garden to reveal the full elevation of the previously half-buried basement.

The addition, with its five-metre-high steel French doors, is certainly an architectural head-turner, but Dominic insists that no structural genius was required to build it. 'It's basically a simple goal post,' he explains, 'made of engineering-brick columns covered with a stone frame, and a massive steel beam.' The doors, however, are more unusual, and were a →

HOMES Georgian Conversion

bespoke design by a now-defunct company that adapted Jansen Schüco glazed doors. Like all one-off glass features, they certainly cost a pretty penny, but, as Dominic says, 'they really are the cherry on the cake of the whole design'.

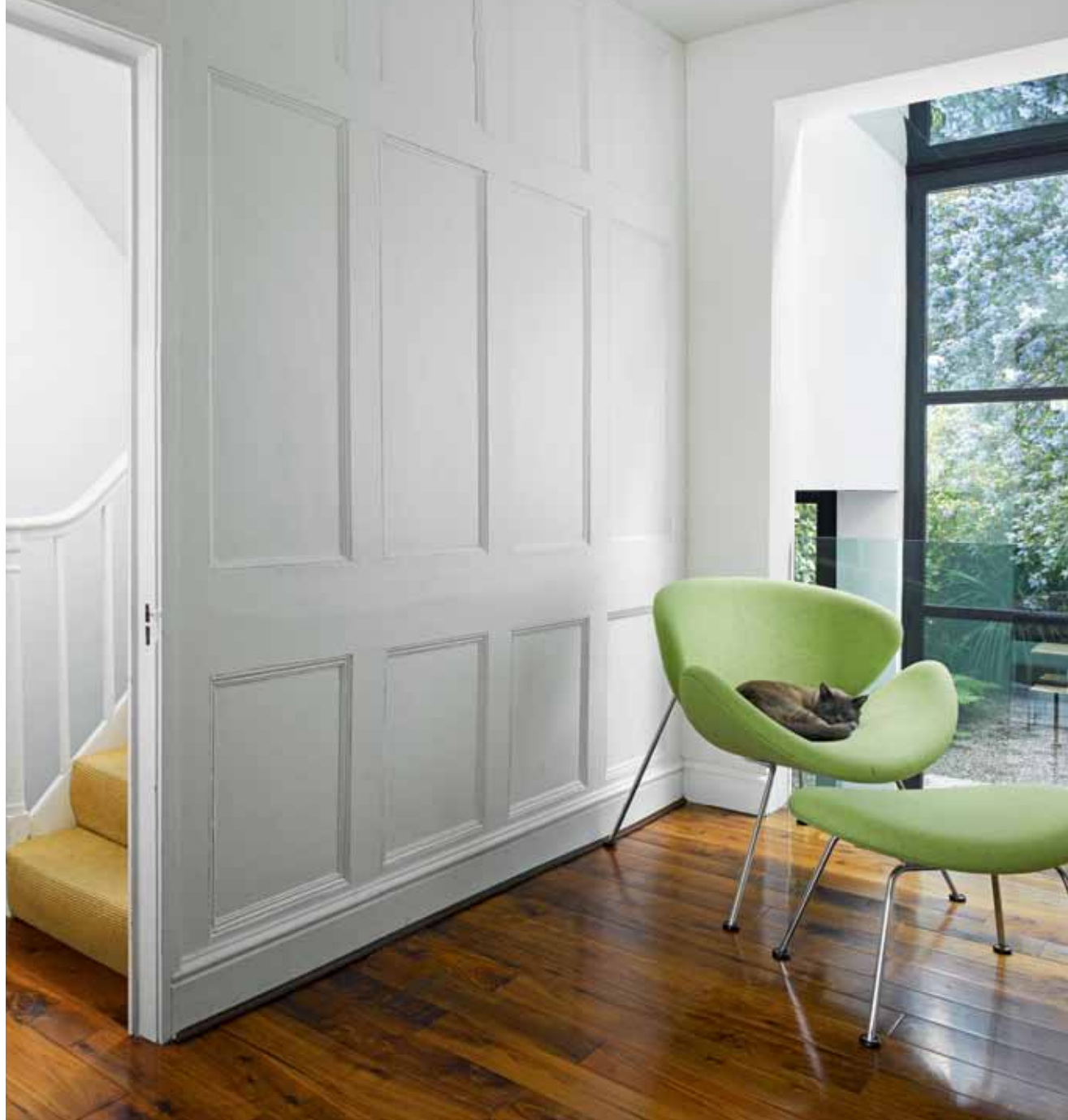
Although the property is in a conservation area, getting planning approval for this rear extension caused no problems; the roof extension, however, was another matter. The initial application was rejected, which meant that this part of the project was put on the back burner for a few years. During this hiatus, once Dominic and Saskia had redesigned the lower-level living spaces, they focused on sprucing up the dingy students' quarters. It's up on these first and second floors that there are now two office spaces (one for Dominic and one for advertising creative Saskia), a nursery and a bathroom. Part of the restoration process here was the careful reconstruction of the knocked-about staircase, plus uncovering original panelling in the bathroom. 'It is this kind of detail that really adds richness to the house,' says Dominic.

The mansard conversion was rejected on the grounds that the council wanted to preserve the home's particular type of roof. 'But you could only see the style when standing on the roof, and ours was compromised anyway by a weird, poky bathroom.' Accessed by a treacherous ladder, this was off the rear bedroom on the second storey, and straddled this floor and roof level, with a small window poking out on to the roof. Dominic and Saskia appealed and convinced the council that they were ruining the row as the only house on the street without a roof extension, finally gaining permission to convert the space into their master suite.

To remain in keeping with the other homes in the street, the exterior of the upstairs addition is very traditional. As with the rest of the house, Dominic has offset this by →



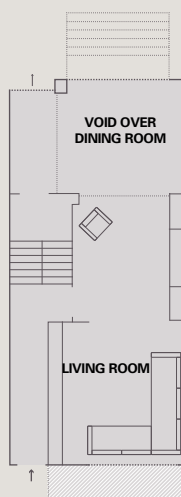
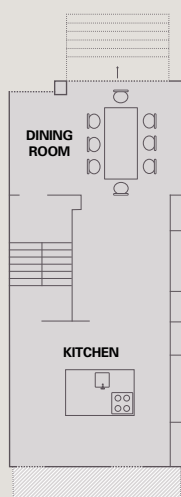
'We really wanted to bridge the gap between the historic house and our contemporary aesthetic'



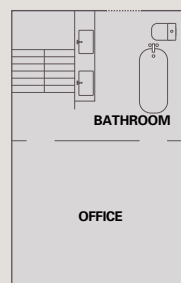
The layout: 196sqm

BASEMENT

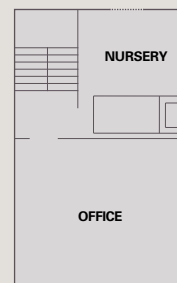
GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR



THIRD FLOOR



above Original panelling in the living room has been restored and painted white; its rectangular sections are a good match for the steel-framed glass doors

left and far left The living room is behind the original shop front, with a window film for privacy. Dominic and Saskia have continued the botanical theme with a mural of a stylised forest

Plans: Edgar Hoffmann



this picture Grey tongue-and-groove panelling in the master bedroom and en suite mirrors the slate tiles on the exterior. The striped painting is by Dominic

below right A sink under the window makes good use of the sloping roof space

designing a more avant-garde interior. The ceiling is clad with grey-painted tongue-and-groove panelling and a large, bold, block-colour artwork, which he designed himself, takes centre stage on the white walls; full-size windows (unusual in loft conversions) and extra-large skylights flood the space with light. The moody panelling continues into their en-suite shower room, and is mixed with rich timber flooring and black-grouted white Metro tiles.

The interior scheme of the upper storey is exemplary of the approach taken throughout. Unusual materials and oversized artworks bring a vibrant and rich texture to the overall look. On ground level you find dark walnut-wood flooring; the basement kitchen has the Hollywoodesque brass-clad island; and the living room features a stylised woodland mural (again designed by Dominic). The key to all of these luxurious materials and finishes working together is balance, not just with the traditional features of the home, but also in terms of colour: take, for instance, the muted brown cabinets in the kitchen (simple Ikea carcasses, painted) which temper the brilliance of the brass.

This kitchen feature is the one thing that, given the chance to do the scheme again, Dominic might have done differently. Although it packs a punch with its appearance, it also packs a punch in terms of work. 'It was inspired by countertops in Art Nouveau French bistros, and, having subsequently spoken to a lot of people in these bistros, I've found there's a reason they spend so much time polishing,' he laughs.

Houses inevitably change as families grow, and the birth of Dominic and Saskia's baby means that their dressing room, once piled high with clothes and shoes, has had to become the nursery. 'Having to empty that stuffed room means that now lots of other spaces that were once minimalist and →





above To the right of the dining space, a half landing at the original level of the basement leads from the living area directly into the garden

ethereal are pretty packed,' laughs Dominic. 'It's all a bit less designery!' Once they've got this latest challenge in hand, Dominic is certain that he and his family will be looking for another project – quite specifically, his dream is to find a plot of land in the centre of the capital for a new-build (although he admits they're now a bit too grown up to be able to live on site for the duration). And if this adventurous and inspiring house is anything to go by, it'll be one must-see design. **GD**

Choose luxury finishes and coloured furnishings from p88 to give your home Dominic and Saskia's dramatic look

Suppliers

PROJECT TEAM Architect

Dominic McKenzie Architects (020 3302 0794; dominicmckenzie.co.uk) **Contractors** McDermott

Construction (01948 667 023; mcdermott-construction.co.uk); Steve Ruston Builders (01702 432 966; steverustonbuilders.com)

Project management Dominic McKenzie Architects (as before)

Structural engineer Akera Engineers (020 7613 2324; akeraengineers.com)

STRUCTURE Roof lights Glazing Vision (0333 800 0881; glazing-vision.co.uk) **Glass balustrades**

Glass by European Glass Group (020 8961 6066; europeanglass.co.uk) **Glass doors** Jansen

Schüco glazing system (01908 282 111; schueco.com) **Roofing** Steve Ruston Builders (as before)

Insulation Kingspan (01544 388 601; kingspan.co.uk)

FIXTURES & FITTINGS Kitchen

carcasses Ikea (0845 358 3363; ikea.co.uk) **Brass worksurface** Smiths

Metal Centres (020 7241 2430; smithmetal.com) **Wood flooring** For similar, try Wood and Beyond (020 8209 2662; woodandbeyond.com)

WC and basins Duravit (0845 500

7787; duravit.co.uk) **Taps** Pillar taps by Bristan (0844 701 6273; bristan.com); bath mixer tap by David Chipperfield for Ideal Standard (01482 346 461; ideal-standard.co.uk) **Bath** Victoria Plumb (0844 804

4848; victoriaplumb.com) **Bathroom tiles** Topps Tiles (0800 783 6262; toppstiles.co.uk) **Bathroom**

flooring Albion Stone (01737 771 772; albionstone.com) **Built-in shelving** Bespoke MDF designs by

Dominic McKenzie (as before) **FURNITURE & ACCESSORIES**

Sofa Lansdowne by Terence Woodgate for SCP (020 7739 1869; scp.co.uk) **Living-room chairs**

Orange Slice chair by Pierre Paulin (pierrepaulin.com); Ghost chair by Kartell (kartell.it) **White chaise**

in master bedroom Shadow by Christian Ghion for Cappellini at Poltrona Frau (020 7014 5980; poltronafragroup.com) **Rocking chair in living room** Eames RAR by Vitra (020 7608 6200; vitra.com)

Living-room light For similar, try BestLite by Gubi (020 7193 7753; gubi.dk) **Dining table** Habitat (0844 499 4686; habitat.co.uk) **Green light in dining room** Habitat (as before)

Kitchen calendar Stendig calendar by Massimo Vignelli, available at

Zoma Store (zoma.co.uk)