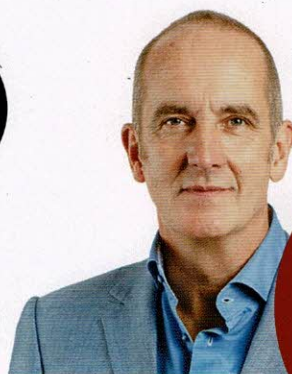


# GRAND DESIGNS

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## A radical renovation

The Victorian eco house that has it all

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# THE HAPPY HOUSE



Homeowners Patricia and Gwen with Shep the dog at the back of the house, which has fluted cast-concrete panels

Colourful, sculptural and highly practical, this updated Victorian property is a joy to live in

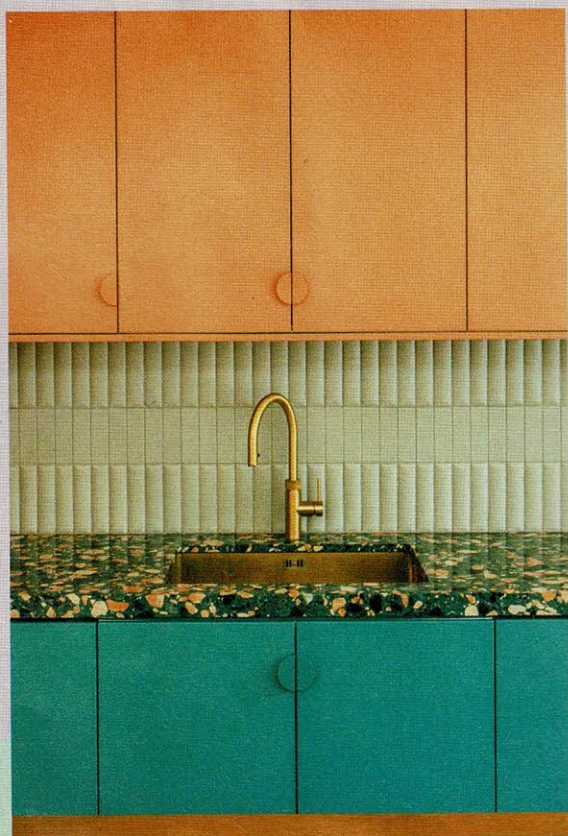
WORDS EMILY BROOKS PHOTOGRAPHY FRENCH + TYE



**C**ues to the exuberant character of Gwen Williams and Patricia Lynch's home lie in the names of the paints used to decorate the interiors – Rosie Posie, Bobble Hat and Mint Turquoise.

Retired solicitor Gwen, 67, and Patricia, 64, who managed Gwen's practice before they both retired, bought their Victorian house in the late 1990s. Adding a side-return extension in the 2000s gave them a little extra space in the kitchen, but it didn't resolve issues such as the underused reception room between the living room and kitchen. 'It was a terminal dumping ground,' says Gwen. They also wanted a loft conversion with a bedroom and bathroom for when family stay over, and to improve the house's energy efficiency.

It's a standard story – but what architect Ewald Van Der Straeten came up with is far from typical. His practice gave the house a thorough upgrade with new »



**ABOVE** The kitchen cabinets are made from MDF and have fronts painted in shades picked out from the terrazzo worksurface

Brick tiles reference the traditional flooring of a Victorian kitchen. They continue up the walls to act as a skirting







#### IN BRIEF

**LOCATION** Tottenham,  
North London

**TYPE OF PROPERTY**  
Extended Victorian terrace

**BEDROOMS** 4

**PROJECT STARTED**  
April 2021

**PROJECT FINISHED**  
April 2022

**PROJECT COST**  
£3,500 per sqm









**LEFT** A gallery wall is made from birch plywood with holes at regular intervals for wooden dowels that support adjustable shelves, and fixed circular wall lights

**ABOVE** In the living room the sofa is upholstered in a bold design from Swedish textile brand Svenskt Tenn

windows, cork insulation lining the interior walls, new underfloor heating throughout the ground floor and an air-source heat pump replacing the gas boiler.

The practice also ran with Gwen and Patricia's love of art, designing a colourful house with many sculptural elements. 'What kept coming back from Gwen and Patricia is that they wanted something beautiful as well as functional,' says Ewald. 'The brief became something more creative and fun – they wanted to be inspired when they walked through the door. It ended up as an eclectic mix of ideas that just worked.'

So the staircase up to the new bedroom and bathroom is a vivid pink with a zingy green handrail, and an arched

## 'Gwen and Patricia wanted something beautiful as well as functional'

ceiling in the side return is inspired by a 1963 work by the American sculptor Donald Judd. The kitchen island is clad in deep-relief tiles with arched tops and has a brass worksurface.

'It was our architect's idea to use lots of colour, but I think it's just fantastic,' says Patricia. 'The light plays >>





on it beautifully, especially on the stairway with the blue sky showing through the roof window.'

The aesthetic aspects of the project are combined with measures that make Gwen and Patricia's home far more practical, including removing a wall between the kitchen and the dining area and adding lots of built-in storage.

With the couple's main contractor in charge of managing the project, they lived with a friend nearby for a year while the work progressed, visiting the site every couple of weeks. Converting the loft came under permitted development (PD) rules, while the new,

taller side-return extension required planning approval, which came through without issue.

The pandemic brought various delays and scheduling adjustments to avoid supply-chain problems, but the project essentially ran smoothly. 'The one thing we wouldn't do again is to move in two weeks before work was finished,' says Patricia. 'The builders were there six days a week from 8am trying to get it done, and that did become a bit tedious.'

One major concern was getting the air-source heat pump installation approved before the government's »

**ABOVE** The first-floor main bathroom has been turned into a spacious shower room. The walls are painted with Ecos Feng Shui in Dewberry from Lakeland Paints



Patricia stitches in the first-floor sewing room. The high ceiling and new rooflight make it look bright and spacious







**ABOVE AND LEFT** Gwen and Patricia's bedroom has Inglenook on the walls with Polka Dot from the picture rail upwards, both by Earthborn Paints

**RIGHT** Patricia upholstered the vintage chair, and a Wallace Sewell blanket on the bed ties all the colours together

Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (DRHI) scheme expired in March 2022 – a payback scheme potentially worth several thousand pounds. 'Demand for installers was very high because so many people were working to the same timeframe,' says Ewald. 'The work had to be signed off to meet the deadline – which it did – and to unlock the next phase of plumbing work. With that and Covid, the project was held up by around three months in total.'

To comply with permitted development rules, the pump is at the back of the garden, a metre from the boundary, with the pipework running beneath the paving.

**'It was the architect's idea to use lots of colour, but it's just fantastic. The light plays on it beautifully'**

Once Gwen and Patricia could settle in, they absorbed the impact of the changes. 'I felt like we'd bought a completely new house,' says Patricia. 'There was nothing left untouched. And I don't think we could have asked for more, because it does make us very happy.' **GD**



