

# METROProperty



**Family affair:** Neil (left) with his wife Lucy (opposite), daughter Stella and father-in-law Charles



**Rustic:** The kitchen features antique brick pammments from a farmhouse in Poland



**Focal point:** The ground floor renovations have added beautiful oak shelving

# A HOUSE FULL OF MEMORIES

Craftsmanship from the owner's home country has revitalised this London terrace, says **Oliver Stallwood**

**T**HIS house in Stoke Newington is architect Neil Dusheiko's most personal project to date. The terrace is the new home of his father-in-law Charles Maggs, who after being widowed needed to downsize from the beautiful Victorian house he had lived in with his wife for 45 years.

Although he wanted somewhere smaller, Charles still wanted a light and spacious home that could accommodate his large

collection of books, ceramics and artworks he had collected over the years. What Neil has created from a small and fairly dark Victorian terrace is a home that doubles up as a gallery and transports South Africa – the place of Charles' birth – to north east London.

'I wanted to make this transition [from old to new house] really smooth and easy and not very traumatic,' explains Neil. 'What's amazing is I've never worked with a client I've known so well and

as I am also from South Africa, we have a common language in terms of design and materials.'

The new house is on a quiet road parallel to where Neil lives with his wife and daughter with a small garden that was not too overlooked. While there was some damp in the living room of the original property and it was poky, Neil knew it had potential if it could just be opened up.

A new design adds a light-filled side extension at ground floor level and a new loft bedroom and bathroom above where there was previously unused roof space. The new loft level is a timber-framed zinc clad structure and enjoys panoramic views towards

Clissold Park and the church steeples in the distance.

A large open plan living space was created by opening up the front and rear reception rooms, providing ample display space for the art collection. A fully glazed skylight to the side extension allows for increased light levels and improved connections between the spaces linking the front of the house to the rear garden. Many an evening has been spent thrashing out the best solutions and

colours to suit Charles' needs. The same floor has been used through the house to provide a base palette to build on. A craft-based approach similar to methods used in South Africa has also been used, using raw, organic materials such as clay and wood.

'Everything is bespoke and handmade and the idea of expressing the honesty of materials is very South African – you don't try to hide anything,' says Neil. The fact the cool interior colours

match those of the pottery displayed is no accident, everything was considered to match what Charles already owned.

A bowl bought in Kenya or a piece purchased in Zimbabwe would have a place designed for it before the extension and renovation was even started. A framework of oak shelving and timber rafters gives structure to the new ground floor area providing further display space for art, ceramics and glassware pieces.

The door handles in dark bronze were chosen for their tactility and the material matches the house's handrails – an addition requested by Charles, as he is in his 80s. A set of new stairs runs full width across the house marking the

connection between the new and old rooms. Niches have been carved into the depth of the walls to allow for storage space and sculptures to be displayed.

The distressed oak worktop in the kitchen is in perfect harmony with the flooring and the antique brick pammments in the kitchen that had been reclaimed from a farmhouse in Poland. Extra emphasis was placed on making the kitchen, dining and living space work well for entertaining as Charles likes to cook. While contemporary overall, the materials chosen add warmth, the brick and wood making the interior homely without feeling overtly cold and slick.

'My father in law is a gentle, considered man. In my wedding speech, I compared him to Obi-Wan Kenobi, because he has this Zen-like calm about him. Everyone who comes into the house feels that, and it has to do with choosing a consistent palette of materials.'

Traditional African music plays through the house further, adding to the calm. It is a place of relaxation and reflection. 'Charles is a man of few words but when he moved in he just seemed to fit right in, he unpacked so quickly, got his books out and pictures up, which to me meant that he really felt at home. And that was what I

wanted to achieve.' Charles says his main requirements were that the house, completed in September 2016, should be comfortable, convenient and easy to run but, at the same time, it should be attractive and a pleasure to live in.

'My previous house was unusually elegant and spacious for a London house and though I wanted to downsize, I wanted the new house to be as uplifting in personality,' says Charles. 'The finished result has achieved all of that. It makes coming home a pleasure – it is friendly, warm and welcoming.'

One final touch is the various links the new home has with the old house in Highbury – key materials such as the white marble for the fireplace are exactly the same as the one in Highbury.

'It was important to have a continuity of materials from the old to the new house,' says Neil. 'One day when I went to the house he shared with my mother-in-law, he [Charles] said you can really feel her presence and energy in the house. He said this is why you and I are creating the new chapter, with the new energy in the new house, and I really thought that was a lovely thing to say. I really feel so grateful that I can play a part in that transition from one life to another.'

neildusheiko.com



**Picture perfect:** The house is full of art and has a gallery feel



**Transformation:** An extension has opened up the ground floor



**Lofty heights:** A loft conversion has added a modern bedroom



**Bright:** Glass doors let light flood in

PHOTOS: ARIESE SANVITO; TIM GROGGER; GAIL SELIGMAN

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