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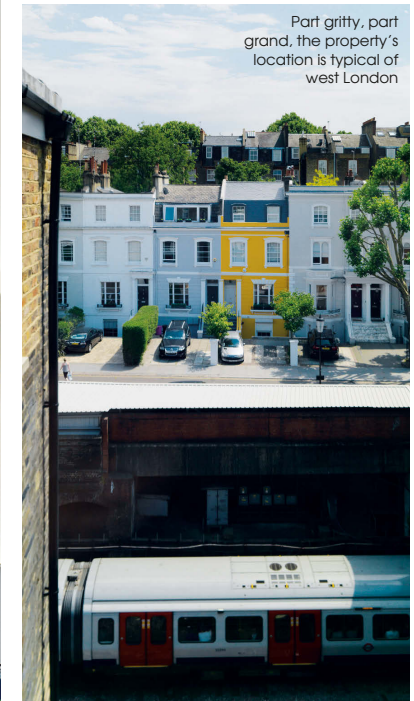
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Tall ORDER

Tala Mikdashi reimagined a skinny townhouse crammed with bedsits as a family home filled with natural light and luxe textures

The first floor is the hub of the family's home, with a flowing space that includes living, kitchen and dining areas



Part gritty, part grand, the property's location is typical of west London

Seeing beyond the superficial and envisaging how a run-down house can be transformed into a groundbreaking home is second nature to architects. But even with her wealth of experience, architect Tala Mikdashi was taken aback the first time she saw this west London house. 'It was subdivided into 15 bedsits, with windows split down the middle by stud walls – the whole place was in a grim state,' she remembers. 'There were three shared kitchens, with around 10 fridges and washing machines stacked up in them and the place was infested with mice and cockroaches. Sadly, there was no charm left to preserve.'

Aside from this legacy of jumbled rooms and general decay, the building itself presented some logistical problems. 'It was an unusual floorplan, with the house shaped like a wedge that gets narrower towards the back.' To complicate things further, the property shares its frontage with a shop, so it is accessed via a walk-up side entrance, and the garden backs on to a train line. 'This was our inauspicious starting point,' Mikdashi says.

Mikdashi's clients, however, had confidence in her ability to reimagine spaces and proportions and find ways to draw light into this tall, slim and awkwardly shaped house. A couple in their mid-thirties with three children, they could see the benefits of the central location – even against the advice of a local estate agent who, →



At a glance

Architect Tala Mikdashi
Location West London
Property Three-storey Victorian townhouse
Bedrooms 4 **Bathrooms** 2
Project started May 2014
Project finished April 2015
Size of house 190sqm

Homes Renovated townhouse

unusually in the overinflated London property market, advised them to avoid it and look elsewhere. Just as well that the clients had Mikdashi and her vision to rely on.

The main requirements of the clients' brief to the architect were to bring light into the house, to include four good-sized bedrooms and to create a focal point in the form of a large kitchen-dining-living space.

Mikdashi's strategy to bring in more light was three-pronged and carefully thought through. The first way was via a double-height void over the main living space. Then, there are frameless roof lights in every room on the top floor, including a central seating area. Finally, a bespoke staircase allows light to penetrate every floor.

There is a constant interplay between the three devices. Look up through the void over the living space and you can see three skylights at the top of the house. Meanwhile, the gleam and colours of Mikdashi's bespoke-design staircase draw the eye upwards, while linking with metallic interior design touches throughout the house. A study on the second floor overlooks the void with a floor-to-ceiling window, letting in yet more light while drinking in the view of the internal architecture.

In order to reconstruct this house as a light-filled family home, every internal wall was removed. 'We did not touch the building's envelope, except to strip back to the party walls and repoint the bricks,' Mikdashi says. The structure was recreated, with a combination of steel beams, box frames, and new floor joists supporting engineered oak boards. Replacing the floors meant that underfloor heating could be installed throughout, freeing up expanses of wall that would have been hogged by radiators. Sliding pocket doors also make the most of the space and keep the building's slender proportions as uncluttered as possible.

The light now drops down through the void to the home's new core, a kitchen with living and dining zones. 'This double-height space communicates with the whole of the rest of the house,' says Mikdashi. The living room itself is a free-flowing extension of the kitchen which, in turn, has a floating island, designed by Mikdashi. Ample built-in storage has been incorporated into every room, to keep the house free of clutter.

The central void is graced by a statement chandelier, Nuage, by French company Designheure. 'We went for a custom finish, with white lacquer on the outside and copper inside,' says Mikdashi. This floating, sculptural piece took two days to hang, an installation directed by Mikdashi herself. 'The result is a fantastic centrepiece – you can glimpse it from the street. It's pretty special.' →



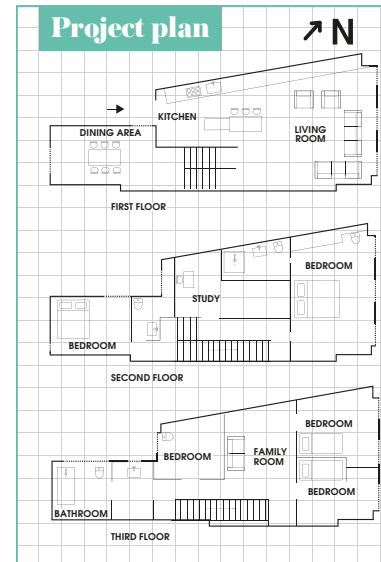
A chandelier by Designheure is suspended inside the double-height void, adding impact to the family hub



Adorned with hand-foiled wallpaper, the formal dining room features a custom-made steel table, while the lights are flea market finds



The sophisticated living space, with a contemporary plaster wall running along one side and classic mid-century shapes



Grand idea



Roof light

This is one of a range of bespoke, frameless roof lights on the top floor, which lets light stream down into the rest of the house. Mikdashi designed each to be slightly different in shape and size to avoid a uniform look. Hedgehog Designs can supply similar frameless roof lights from £1,440 per sqm including installation (01494 722 882; hedgehogaluminium.com)

A word from the architect

Drawing light into this unusual wedge-shaped house was a major part of the brief, so I worked closely with the structural engineers to create a double-height void and a range of frameless roof lights. Metallic touches, statement lighting and interesting surfaces bring a contemporary feel into the finished design, while bespoke storage allows an uninterrupted flow of light and air.

Tala Mikdashi

‘The metallic effect adds gleam without being too trendy’

The bespoke staircase is a further standout feature. It's made of welded steel plates resting on steel hangers, and clad with wooden risers, but what you notice initially is the delicate art deco-influenced balustrade. Painted with a bronze finish, it is elegant yet clearly very functional.

‘We experimented with different finishes, and settled on a metallic effect that adds gleam without being too precious or trendy,’ says Mikdashi. ‘We wanted it to look timeless.’

In a project such as this, you might expect decor to include white walls to maximise the light flow. However, Mikdashi's interior design delves into more interesting wall coverings and textures. In the formal dining room, a Custom wallpaper with hand-foiled motifs echoes the strong verticals and the metallic textures of its neighbouring spaces. By contrast, the wall of the kitchen and living room is finished in breathable grey plaster:

‘It's a very thin layer, almost like Venetian plaster,’ says Mikdashi, ‘but it still adds the right amount of contrast.’

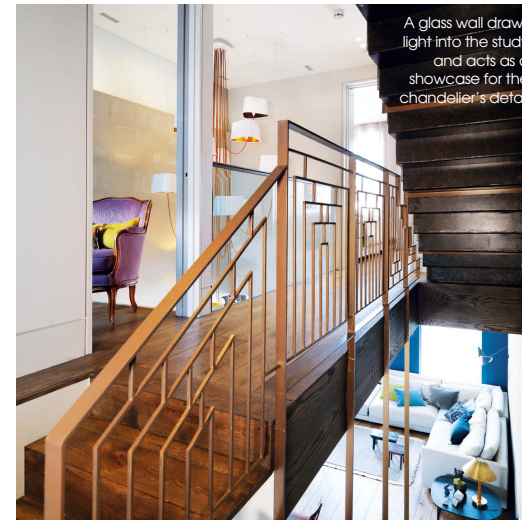
Upstairs, in the master bedroom, the aim was to create an atmosphere that was more warm and tactile, so the alcoves are lined with woven wallpaper that sparkles with gold flecks. Metallic touches are a theme throughout the home, from the metal finish on the balustrade to the glimmer of lighting, both contemporary and vintage, sourced in French flea markets.

The final way in which Mikdashi breathed new life into the interior spaces was by bringing in Joa Studholme, international colour consultant at Farrow & Ball. ‘Joa was fantastic at fine-tuning exactly the right combinations for each room,’ says Mikdashi.

In all, the project took a smooth 11 months. ‘The Italian contractor was very efficient and everyone was focused on making it happen. It was great to find people who can execute what you have in mind.’

And the clients? ‘Well, they invited me to the house-warming party,’ says Mikdashi with a smile. **GD**

above With its bronze balustrade and timeless design, the staircase contrasts with the industrial-style plaster wall



A glass wall draws light into the study and acts as a showcase for the chandelier's detail



Bespoke shelving in a bold blue livens up the top-floor seating area



The bedrooms on the top floor link together around a central family seating area

Suppliers

PROJECT TEAM Architecture and design Tala Mikdashi Architecture (07792 500 309; talamikdashi.com)
Structural engineer Fidler Associates (01923 840 482; fidlerassociates.co.uk)
Contractor, staircase manufacturer and roof light manufacturer Dragonara (amatson@btinternet.com)
FIXTURES & FITTINGS Kitchen Modulnova (020 7487 5077; modulnova.com)
Paint colour consultant Joa Studholme at Farrow & Ball (01202 876 141; farrow-ball.com)
Plaster walls Kerakoll (01527 578 000; kerakoll.com)
Dining-room wallpaper Custhom (020 7358 2358; custhom.co.uk)
Lighting Nuage chandelier, Designheure (+33 467 539 963; designheure.com)
FURNITURE & ACCESSORIES Living-room sofa, Bristol by Poliform (020 7368 7600; poliformuk.com)
Living-room carpet Habitat (0344 499 4686; habitat.co.uk)
Living-room safari chairs Børge Mogensen at 1st Dibs (1stdibs.com)
Top floor sofa Made.com (0344 257 1888; made.com)

STYLE *finder*

Recreate this home's look with classic pieces and an industrial edge

IN DETAIL



Stylish storage

Mikdashi designed a *cabinet de curiosités* to display the owner's collection of sculptural objects in open niches, while providing ample hidden storage, including central controls for the sound system. A matt-lacquer finish was combined with wood veneer, with built-in lighting in each niche. Price on application. (07792 500 309; talamikdashi.com)



1



2

3



4

GET THE LOOK

1 Classic seating Fabricius armchair in chrome and leather, £4,299, Walter Knoll at Aram (020 7557 7557; aram.co.uk)

2 Right angles Ogilvy swing-arm steel lamp in black, £59, Made.com (0344 257 1888; made.com)

3 Recycled accessory Murphey glass vase in orange, £40, Habitat (0344 499 4686; habitat.co.uk)

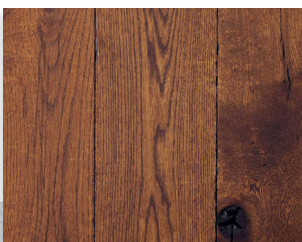
4 Neutral textile Asko wool rug in natural and black, £260, Linie Designs at Heal's (020 7896 7451; heals.com)

5 Factory style Long Island dining table in solid fir and black metal, £299, Maisons du Monde (0808 234 2172; maisonsdumonde.com)



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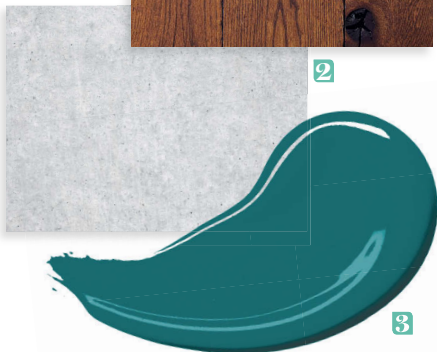
MATERIAL FOCUS

1 Antique style Classic distressed English oak flooring, £84.85 per sqm, Ecora (020 7148 5265; ecora.co.uk)

2 Industrial effect Concrete wall mural, from £25 per sqm, Murals Wallpaper (0151 708 5400; muralswallpaper.co.uk)

3 Teal hue Absolute matt emulsion in canton, £38 for 2.5L, Little Greene (0845 880 5855; littlegreene.com)

2



3

EDITOR'S VIEW

‘This clever design uses light and reflective materials to bring a tricky space to life’

Compiled by Francesca Rock