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H&G FOCUS

...ON SECOND HOMES

A pied à terre in town and summer house in the country offer two very different lifestyles



CITY HOME

- London mews house
- Modernistic design
- Generous storage space
- Maximum light
- Easy access to shops

COUNTRY RETREAT

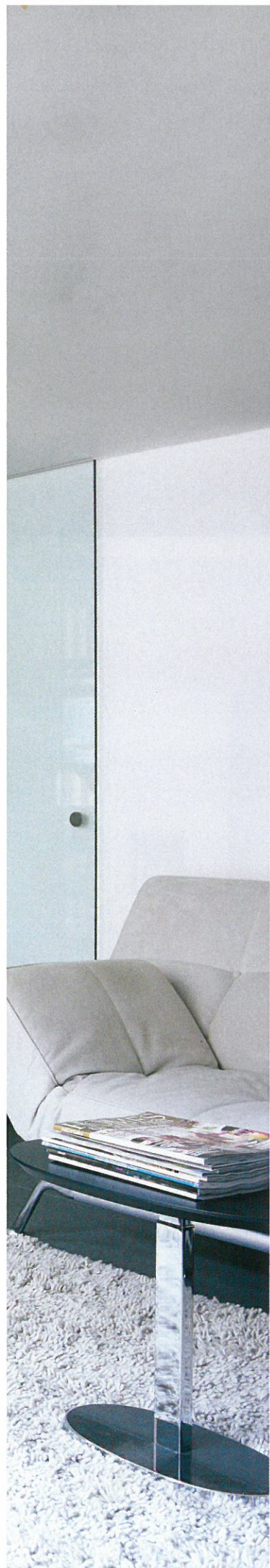
- Traditional rural summer house
 - Single-storey living
 - Simple, romantic interior
- Verandas for relaxing outside
- Views of water and meadows



CITY HOME

This pared-down, easy-to-manage London mezz house makes an ideal contrast to country living





MAIN PICTURE AND ABOVE The glassed-in staircase forms a natural divide between the living area and kitchen on the first floor, with glass doors connecting the two spaces that, when closed, protect the children from falling down the stairs. Chairs, sofa, rug, small tables and console table are from Ligne Roset, 0870 777 7202, ligne-roset.co.uk. The small painting (main picture) by Lin Pattullo, 01764 652332, linpattullo.com, comes from the Richard Hagen Gallery, 01386 853624, richardhagen.com.

TOP For Fiona, the minimalist interior and central location make her second home an ideal choice for her and her family.

ABOVE The striking painting above the sofa by Charles Neal is from Astley House Fine Art, 01608 650601, art-uk.com.



When it came to finding a perfect London pied à terre, Fiona and Nick Hunt wanted the polar opposite of their country home – an 1890s family house in the Cotswolds, which they are currently renovating in traditional style. For the city, they were after clean, minimalist lines.

CHOOSING A SECOND HOME

"We wanted something that wasn't too big and that was low maintenance but in a central location," says Fiona, a human resources consultant and mother of two small children, Annie, four, and Ed, two. "We looked at a few places that needed renovating, but we decided on something that didn't need any work and was very different to our main home."

Nick, a finance director, spends much of the week working in London, and Fiona often travels down with the children. A second home meant the family could see more of one another, while managing to avoid the pressures of constant commuting.

The couple found a two-bedroom, new-build mews house in central London, designed by Belsize Architects for a developer, and bought it while it was still being finished. The striking, ready-made home simply needed some furniture, personal touches and a little softening around the edges.

A MODERN MEWS

Situated on a quiet mews street, the new house is surrounded by period buildings and occupies the footprint of two garages which had a small flat above. As the size



THIS PICTURE Sleek grey units with glass worktops and splashbacks, by Belsize Architects, 020 7482 4420, belsizearchitects.com, who also designed the house, create a smart look in the kitchen. The volcanic stone floor is used throughout the whole house, unifying the scheme. For similar flooring, try Da Vinci Antique Ceramic in Noir CK25, Karndean International, 01386 820100, karndean.co.uk. Accessories, including bar stools from Ligne Roset, 0870 777 7202, ligne-roset.co.uk, add colour.

ABOVE LEFT The wooden screens at the windows provide privacy while allowing natural light to flood through.

of the site was modest, the design had to pack a lot in. Shahriar Nasser at Belsize Architects achieved a sense of greater size and light with space-saving measures, especially at the top of the house.

"The best way forward for small areas is to keep them open," says Shahriar. "First we created the gallery above the living room, and this added another half-storey for a bedroom and steam room. Built-in units in the entrance hall, living room and gallery provide storage space."

LIGHT AND PRACTICAL

Large windows plus skylights bring in light from all sides. The main living area, which has a staircase enclosed by glass walls, allows light to flow freely and thus maximise the sense of space. The family loves this fluid, flexible approach and the clean, minimalist lines.

Besides a garage, the ground floor includes a children's bedroom and bathroom, with space in the hallway for a washing machine and dryer. On the first floor, an entire wall of the living room is filled with a leather-faced storage and television unit. On the mezzanine, the main bedroom features a television that pops out of a recess in the balcony opposite the foot of the bed.

"Nick and I aren't that creative when it comes to modern design so it was good to have our boundaries pushed a bit with this house," says Fiona, whose main home is definitely more traditional.

PERSONAL TOUCH

Bringing in their own furniture and pieces of art has given their second home character, besides making it more family-friendly. Fiona and Nick also enjoy the high-spec touches, including piped sound and electric blinds. Most of all they like its central yet peaceful location and proximity to parks and shops, which they can walk to so easily with the children. "It is a perfect second home," says Fiona. "It's the whole package – the situation, the location, the design. We love everything about it."

Turn to page 132 for more second home ideas. ▶

RIGHT In Nick and Fiona's mezzanine bedroom, the bed and wall of storage units were designed and built by the property's architects; the storage units, which also incorporate a large mirror, cleverly conform to the shape of the room. Further storage is afforded by cubby holes next to the bed and built-in cupboards under the eaves. For similar bedlinen, try John Lewis, 08456 049049, johnlewis.com. Similar cushions, crushed silk velvet in Grape, Cushions Online, 01524 844078, cushionsonline.co.uk.



THIS PICTURE AND LEFT

The glass-lined stairs lead up to the main bedroom and en-suite shower room on the mezzanine. The curved balcony softens the lines of the new-build mews house.

