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WHEN IT GOES

OUT WEST



Are  
Londoners  
afraid to  
grow up?





# Building the future

SLEEK GLASS AND STEEL ARE TEMPERED WITH NATURAL MATERIALS IN NORTH LONDON'S MOST STRIKING HOME. RUTH CORBETT TAKES AN EXCLUSIVE LOOK INSIDE.

PHOTOGRAPHY: GRAHAM ATKINS HUGHES  
AND NICOLAS CANE STYLING: SHANI ZION



This page: The glass and steel bridge and staircase add to the light, spacious feel. Opposite: Blue tiles create a relaxing atmosphere in the swimming pool.



extraordinary amount of daylight floods into the heart of the house'

atrium floods  
with light.  
clockwise from top  
mounted taps and  
tuble basin in  
; a sheepskin  
minimal  
bright living  
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HELEN'S TOP FIVE INTERIORS STORES

**Roche Bobois, 421-425 Finchley Road, NW3, tel: (020) 7431 1611.**

This company produces very original work. It's best known for smart French leather, suede and upholstered sectional seating, as well as an interesting braided rattan collection.

**Ralph Lauren Home Collection, 105-109 Fulham Road, SW3, tel: (020) 7590 7990.**

I bought the 12-place glass dining table from Ralph Lauren. The London store is a great place for that very American preppy style of stripes, plains, plaids and denims, as well as unusual pieces like ostrich-skin ottomans.

**Ligne Roset, 23-25 Mortimer Street, W1, tel: (020) 7323 1248.**

Some of our beds came from Ligne Roset's contemporary furniture collection, which is extremely elegant. It does a good range of shelving and sideboards, as well as a stylish collection of home accessories.

**De La Espada, 60 Sloane Avenue, SW3, tel: (020) 7581 4474.**

De La Espada is a favourite of mine. I bought two beds here and the craftsmanship of the furniture is excellent. The company combines technology and innovation with traditional skills. The results are stunning.

**Lloyd Loom of Spalding, Wardentree Lane, Pinchbeck, Spalding, Lincs, PE11 3SY, tel: 01775 712111.**

The basement furniture I've used is all modern wicker. Try Lloyd Loom, which now does a contemporary range of garden and conservatory furniture, as well as the traditional pieces.

## THE GRAND AVENUES SPANNING THE LANDSCAPE

between Hampstead Heath, Hampstead Garden Suburb and Highgate Village are home to some of the most desirable houses in London. There are numerous architectural styles on display – mock-Tudor mansions, elegant Georgian villas and impressive 19th-century apartment blocks.

But few properties are as truly jaw-dropping as the house owned by interior decorator, Helen Cadien. See it in Palm Springs and you probably wouldn't bat an eye, but here, in what's known as the Heath Fringes Conservation Area, it's causing quite a stir.

'The original house on this site was built during the 1970s,' explains Helen. 'We bought it with the intention of completely redecorating. But very soon after moving in we decided to apply for planning permission and build a new house from scratch.'

As an interiors expert, Helen had plenty of experience dealing with planners. She knew a certain amount of persuasion might be needed to get the go-ahead for the type of radical design she had in mind, so to give weight to her application she approached the local conservationist groups first. 'Once you've got them on your side you're halfway there,' she says with a smile. 'I did get a little ticking off from the planners, but it worked.'

On the provision that the new house would enhance the road and not obstruct or impose on the house next door, work commenced. Helen commissioned Shahriar Nass of Belsize Architects to design and build her new home. After lengthy consultations, Shahriar and Helen agreed a plan they were both happy with. Although the plot was slightly awkward, being long and rather narrow, the family home that now exists there is nothing short of sensational. Passers-by pull over in their cars to gaze at its exquisitely curved lines and sparkling planes of glass, no doubt wishing they could take a peek inside.

## 'I really wanted to be able to see the swimming pool from inside the house'

As Helen likes to entertain, it was important for the house to incorporate a large central area. Shahriar planned the layout as a U-shape, centred around a triple-height cascading glass atrium. Not only does this maximise the central space, but it allows an extraordinary amount of daylight to flood into the heart of the house. The finished building is rather cathedral-like in concept. Indeed, Shahriar describes the design as 'equating to a series of cells around a chapter house – with the cells being used for contemplation, rest, sleep and retreat, within small but comfortable spaces. The large atrium space is the chapter house or meeting place, while its lower levels are for gathering, eating and socialising.' Architect-speak of the highest order maybe, but wandering from space to delightful space, Shahriar's words do make perfect sense.

The house is built on a succession of tiered levels, starting with a fabulous basement swimming pool. The building of the pool was a complicated venture and extended the length of the works by nearly four months. But it was certainly worth the wait. The pool partially extends out into the garden with access to a sunken courtyard – nicely blurring the interior/exterior boundary.



Helen's home is a masterpiece of modern architecture.

'I really wanted to be able to see the swimming pool from inside the house, so Shahriar created a sheet of structural glass which is part of the floor in the entrance area,' says Helen. 'You can see the water idling below as you walk across it.'

Natural materials such as slate, limestone and wood are used throughout to enhance the Zen-like vibe, and the furnishings are modern without being obvious designer pieces. 'I like contemporary furniture, but I wouldn't call myself a minimalist,' explains Helen. 'Due to the style of the house, it was important not to swamp it with furniture and decoration. I used plain blinds in most of the rooms to keep the look simple. The only exception is the drawing room, which I wanted to be more opulent, so I used silk curtains there.'

Lighting is also important and at night the place really looks tremendous, like an illuminated modern art installation. Gadgetry and state-of-the-art technology are integral to the design. At the touch of a button, massive sliding doors glide open to enhance the main entertaining space further or silently close to offer more privacy. The kitchen is a masterpiece of hidden larders, invisible cupboards and fabulous appliances. Even the shelves in the library work by remote control.

The bedrooms are pared down and simple, but cleverly saved from austerity by touches of drama, such as an optical black and white bedspread, or a fluffy lamb's-wool fleece. The tranquil limestone bathrooms are similar to what you might expect in an über-smart hotel on New York's Upper East Side.

Helen has used a neutral 'earth coloured' palette for the main living areas, adding splashes of colour with painting and objects d'art. 'I like the challenge of mix and match with furnishings,' she says. 'Some pieces are Italian, some French – but what's relevant to them all is that they're beautifully crafted.'

North London's estate agents have recently been beating a path to Helen's door. But, having created such an amazing home, she has no intention of moving on. ■

## +ADDRESS BOOK

Cadien Designs, tel: (020) 8660 7572.

Belsize Architects, tel: (020) 7482 4420.