



OPPOSITE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The front garden. A Louise Bradley mirror hangs in the hall. In the drawing room are an inherited Chinese cabinet, with tribal artefacts from Peter Adler at Pebble on top, and a William Yeoward table (bottom left). THIS PAGE The drawing room



# Male order

The owner of this 1850s villa in London has given his home a fresh, smart look and filled it with a collection of fascinating objects

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‘All is for the best in this best of all possible worlds,’ are the words incised in slate by the letter-cutter Tom Perkins in the courtyard garden, designed by Mark Lutyens, of this elegant Kensington house. The quote, from the German philosopher Leibniz, denotes a mood of optimism and joie de vivre that is reflected in the sense of equilibrium achieved in this house. Immediately you enter, it feels like a haven. If outside the world in central London is bustling and frenetic, inside this 1850s villa with its secluded garden, everything is peaceful, ordered and beautiful.

It is surprising to learn that the interior of the house was largely stripped out and reconfigured for this project. This has been done so sensitively by the architect Christopher Mitchell of Hill Mitchell Berry Architects and the interior designer Charlotte Lane Fox that the integrity of this grandly pretty Victorian property has been spruced up but not defiled. The main staircase, which leads to the main bedroom on the first floor, was restored to its original form and position, while an arched window, added in the flanking wall towards the top of the stairs, brings extra light into the stairwell and hall below.

The hall is stylish and minimalist; a mirror-polished stainless-steel console with black granite top, crafted at the workshop of Villiers Brothers in Essex, with a Louise Bradley panelled mirror above make the high-ceilinged hall seem spacious. ‘My client wanted a smart, masculine house,’ explains Charlotte. ‘He has impeccable taste and is very orderly, but still likes collecting things.’

There is more evidence of the owner’s fondness for collecting objects in the drawing room leading off the hall. This consists of two rooms knocked into one, spanning the full depth of the house, with tall, balconied french windows at either end. This is more densely furnished, with pride of place given to a decorative Chinese cabinet that was the owner’s father’s wardrobe during his childhood spent in China, to where his family had fled during the Russian Revolution. It was one of the few pieces brought to the restored house when the owner moved in, although the room is hung with pictures that also made the journey with him. They form part of his collection of mainly early twentieth-century art, bought over many years and displayed throughout the house. ‘I don’t collect with a plan; I’m very haphazard, but I know what I like,’ he says.

The most radical structural changes were made on the lower ground floor. ‘We brought a sense of light and space to this floor by opening up walls and adding a conservatory extension leading out onto a terraced garden, which helps light to flood into the rear,’ explains Christopher. ‘We also used pale-coloured natural limestone for the flooring to make the area brighter.’ A sleek, modern kitchen by designer Chris Spink in

cherry wood, black granite and stainless steel continues a modern theme.

Throughout the house, the background colour palette is cool and restrained with walls painted in light, neutral colours. This restrained backdrop gives clarity to the complex layering of detail built up by Charlotte. Starting with few possessions to incorporate in the design, the owner and designer had a free hand to invent a fresh look and have succeeded in creating an interior that feels as if it’s been created over many years. Charlotte describes enjoyable whirlwind trips to select showrooms in Fulham and Chelsea, or quick dashes round pinpointed stands at the Decorex fair. ‘He has a good eye and is decisive,’ Charlotte explains. ‘Within minutes of walking into a shop, you could tell if he was interested.’

‘William Yeoward’s King’s Road shop is a particular favourite,’ adds the owner. ‘He’s classic with a twist.’ A fitting mantra, it seems, for this comprehensive project □

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OPPOSITE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP A sense of light and space was brought to the lower ground floor with the addition of a conservatory extension that leads out onto the garden. The staircase leading to the first floor was restored to its original form and position, and an arched window added to the flanking wall at the top of the stairs. The dining room on the lower ground floor. THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM BELOW Clothes are neatly kept in the dressing room. The main bathroom. In the main bedroom, the bedside lamps are by Richard Taylor and the bedlinen is from the Monogrammed Linen Shop

