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IN A NEW LIGHT

With its spacious renovated basement, the family home of Ana and Peter Ascher exudes a clever mix of practicality and inspirational design

WORDS: LAUREL TREYBOLD | PHOTOGRAPHY: DAVID COOPER

HUG VICTORIAN FAMILY HOME

DINING ROOM

As the layout of the three newly created bedrooms evolves, the dining room is deliberately formal. The effect is intensified when the glass-pannelled pocket doors are either shut or ajar.

Stellars Piccola chandelier
from £9,850, Doughty, 020 7635 3454, doughty.com

Palm Stripe wallpaper
Stock ordered to order £250 roll (maximum of eight)
Georgie Spencer Designs,
020 7584 8005, georgiespencer.com **Flowers**
Paul Hawkins Flowers,
paulhawkinsflowers.com



H&G VICTORIAN FAMILY HOME

KITCHEN

Ann's desire for a larger kitchen was the trigger for reconfiguring the layout of the house. The resulting space - one of three rooms in the basement - is much more practical, boasting a walk-in larder, wine cellar, island unit with breakfast bar, and television.

Silvered glass pendants from £285 each. Single level: 020 7376 7205, targeted.co.uk.
For a similar kitchen, try Houm & Co, 020 7502 8626, www.houm.co.uk.



Two years after the completion of major works to turn her west London home into a flexible family space, Ann Archer still waxes lyrical about it. "I will never have another house that is this beautiful," she sighs. Ann also loves the new layout for its efficiency; nothing in the house is out of bounds to her three growing sons, she says, because it was designed from the outset with the whole family in mind.

This mixture of good looks and functionality is the result of a great deal of thinking on Ann's part about how she wanted to use the space with her fellow-American husband, Peter, who works in the City, and the boys. She came to the conclusion that they needed a large area on one level in which they could cook, eat, watch television and relax together. For that to happen, the property would need to be reconfigured internally, and the only floor where this was possible was below ground. This would require digging down and then out into the garden.

The Archers had lived in the house for a year and a half but had recently made the transition from renting to owning it. Ann wanted to make changes, such as removing a pink marble bathroom and installing a larger kitchen, but was bewildered by the number of specialists she had to co-ordinate. That was when a friend recommended interior architect and designer Philippa

FAMILY ROOM

Based in Singapore, the Buddha statue was one of the few possessions in carried from the previous home. The sofa is large enough for the whole family to sit together and a discreet study area (right) has plenty of storage.

For a **benepoka** rug, try The Rug Company, 020 7229 5448, therugcompany.co.uk. For help in finding **antique wax seal impressions**, try Hansard, 01522 530044, hansard.com.



H&G VICTORIAN FAMILY HOME

REAR LIVING ROOM

German windows flood the room with light, and it was essential to have shut curtains would not reduce the effect. The perfect solution was tailored window dressings in a neutral tone hung outside the window.

Curtains in Large Antique 32085, 694cm, Claremont, 020 7521 9575, claremontfurnishing.com. **Edged in** XT020658, 698cm, Bruno Trozel, 020 7623 9990, brunotrozel.com. **Sofa in** 1990/1913, 470cm, Zimmer & Rohde, 020 7101 1711, zimmer-rohde.com.





Thorp, Philippa presented Ann with 12 drawings demonstrating how the house could look if it was significantly altered and opened up. "It was a typical Victorian London house with a warren of little rooms when we started," explains Philippa. She encouraged Ann to work out how everyone lived in the house – something Philippa does with every project – and Ann realised that, in fact, everything needed to change, not just a few details.

"In the end, all we were left with was the front facade and the stairs," says Philippa. "But downstairs was what made it such a big project. We had to reconfigure the basement, putting in structural steel supports. These allowed the space to be opened up and also for two glazed panels to be inserted in the ceiling – one on the balcony, the other at the back of the living room floor. Today, light pours into the rear of the house."

Creating this spectacular basement took 18 months and it now consists of three tall rooms running enfilade into each other. Each room can be closed off, using sliding floor-to-ceiling doors, but when these are pulled back, which is most of the time, daylight shines throughout the space.

At the centre of the new area is an attractive formal dining room, flanked on one side by the kitchen and on the other by the family room, which is complete with a wall-mounted television.

FRONT LIVING ROOM

If it's their main draw in the Dior's New Look dress, a pair of wall lights (above) give this prospectively arranged room a feminine touch.

SO wall lights with antique brass-finish arms W5, D6, £127 each, Richard Taylor Designs, 020 7231 2367, richardtaylor@design.com
Paintings by Tim Woodcock of Ransom, 020 7259 0200, ransomsroom.co.uk

H&G VICTORIAN FAMILY HOME



MAIN BATHROOM

Pair limestone basin surrounds play to the classic simplicity of this space, giving the room a subtly glamorous finish.

FFX limestone, from
478-0 Swan Ln, Stone Age,
020 7764 9290,
estone.co.uk



and a "monster sofa that all five of us can sit on", Ann enthuses. Two double French windows open from here into the garden.

Having resolved the basement living space, Ann and Philippe turned their attention upstairs. There is now a formal living room on the ground floor, which is beautifully thought out with sofas that face each other and a wall-sized window overlooking the garden. "We use this room the least, I'm ashamed to say," Ann admits. "Downstairs is where all the action happens." Upstairs, an enormous walk-in closet leads off to the main bedroom and laundry room. "Storage is my big thing," says Ann, "but I have never had as much as this."

By the end of the renovation project, much of the furniture, soft furnishings and artworks were new, save for a Buddha statue and a few paintings. While Philippe sourced accessories, or had furniture made by her team, Ann was responsible for each and every decision. "As I said to Philippe, 'I want to choose everything myself, but I need you to tease it out of me. Don't give me more than three choices for each item.'"

Ann admits that she now has the home she always wanted because Philippe had the knowledge to make it happen. Or, as Philippe says, "It is not a Thorp Design house. It is a house by Thorp Design, but it is also very much an Ann and Peter Archer house." ■

MAIN BEDROOM

Most of the first floor space consists of the calm oasis that is Ann and Peter's new dressing, sleeping and bathing areas.

Bedroomed in Absolutely Glam 47999006, £200m, Bert Halpern at Fox Linton, 020 7766 7700, foxlinton.com. **For similar cushions**, try John Lewis, 0845 604 9040, johnlewis.com. **Chests of drawers**, from £3,500 each, Hilary Batstone, 020 7750 5335, hilarybatstone.com.