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habitat

INTERIOR DESIGN ART ARCHITECTURE & LIFESTYLE IN SOUTH AFRICA





Enclave of Tranquility

location: Pimlico, London
architects: Jestico & Whites
interior design: Derek Frost
photography: Clive Frost

Located in a London mews cul-de-sac, interior designer Derek Frost's own home is concealed behind an inconspicuous wall at the end of this narrow street.

Inside, it is a light, airy and contemporary structure which is full of the unexpected and not at all typical of a London house. Even the furniture, most of which was designed by Frost himself, is radically different.

Colin Sharp visited it recently. ▷

opposite: The Conservatory has visual access to the courtyard.
Tropical plants include: bananas, palms, ferns and huge bamboo; the
furniture was designed by Linda Garland and made in Bali.

this page: Exterior design includes a pedimented façade. Curtain
glazing allows views into the double volume drawing room.





above: The Drawing Room features a marble fireplace and mirror above. The 'Hand' painting to its left is by Gwen Hardy. 'Untitled' to its right is by Robert Lowe. The DFA design Pebble table of Burr Maple is inlaid with gilded lines and sits on a DFA design rug made by Roger Oates.

right: This view extends from the fireplace across the Drawing Room to the courtyard and conservatory beyond. To the right is a fine Louis XVI commode and to the left the Dining Room partially concealed behind a DFA design screen of marquetry and gilding.

Frost is no stranger to regular *Habitat* readers and has completed a number of assignments in southern Africa. His early experiences as a globe trotter in Bali and Indonesia were the catalyst for a career in interior design which began as a wallpaper salesman and ended up as a director of Mary Fox Linton's interior design studio in London. Today, he controls his own company: Derek Frost

Associates through which he handles interior design contracts and custom-designed furniture.

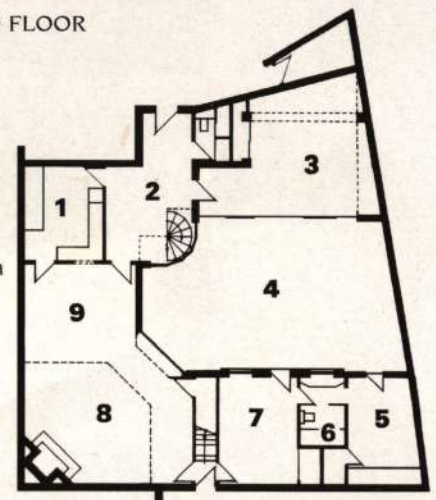
Derek Frost's home is a good example of both these equally personalised talents. It is a spacious and innovative double storey house designed as one of three dwellings on the site of a derelict mews. It is a separate structure from the two smaller neighbouring mews cottages one of which Frost uses as his ►

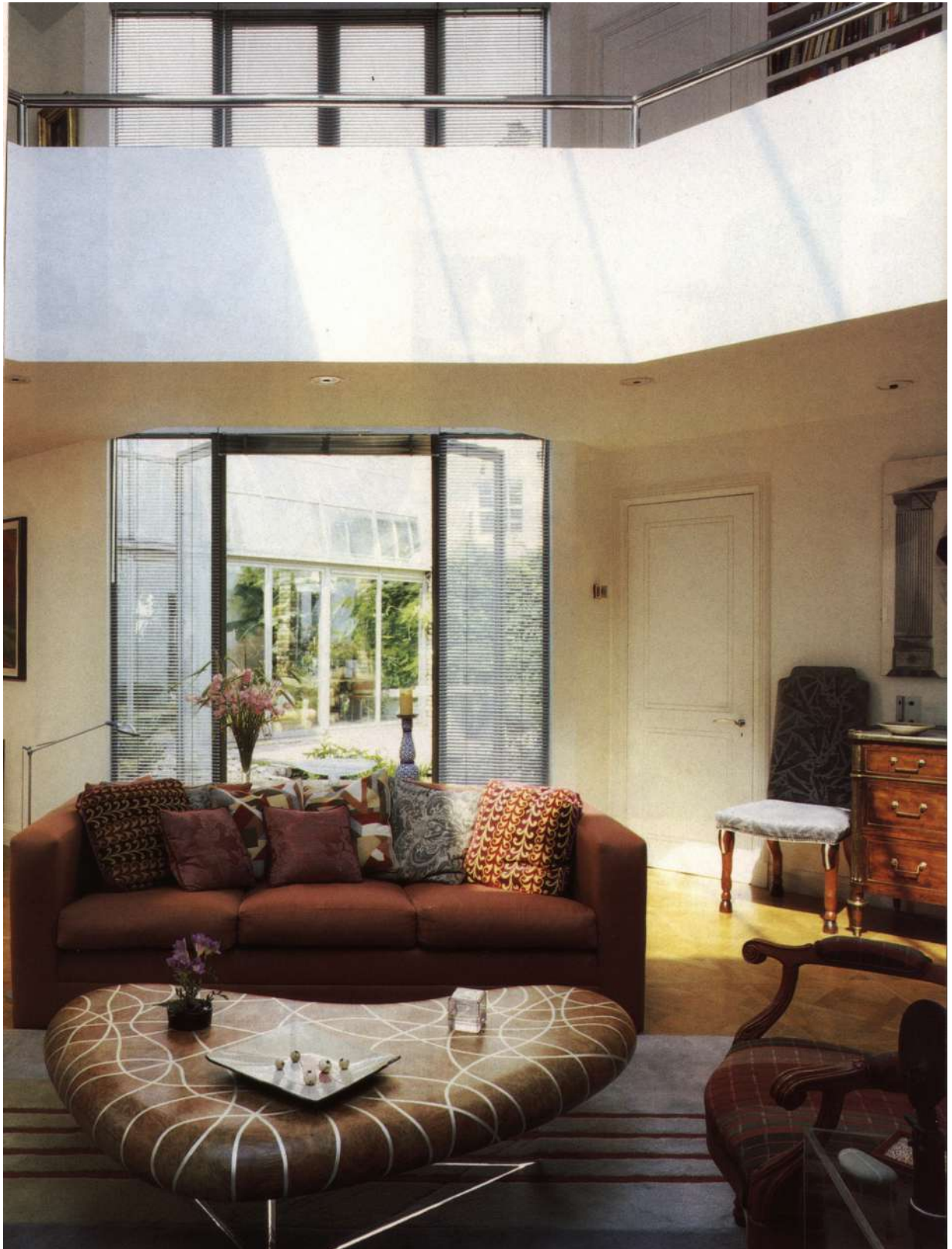


PLAN OF GROUND FLOOR

this page: On the upper floor mirrored displays are positioned over a pair of sofas covered in grey suiting wool. Between them is a DFA designed dhurrie of African influence. Beyond is a DFA design desk flanked by a pair of Brno Chairs and to its left a DFA design blue and gilded juke box containing TV, and sound system and the picture 'Caribbean Street Language' by Richard Walker. Surveying the scene is a painting of a young man by Sir Godfrey Kneller.

- 1 Kitchen
- 2 Entrance hall
- 3 Conservatory
- 4 Courtyard/garden
- 5 Utility room
- 6 Steam room
- 7 Bedroom
- 8 Drawing-room
- 9 Dining-area







top: This architectural view from the library end of the upper floor illustrates the office sitting room. A high level skylight allows sunlight into the Drawing Room below.

left: In the Entrance Hall a polished stainless steel spiral staircase gives access to the upper floor. Beyond is the dining room/sitting room with DFA design marquetry console table and nursery chair inlaid with an oyster shell. Flooring is oak Parquet de Versailles and the drawing 'Church Spire' is by Ian Brice. ▷

The DFA designed dining table has a glass top on a base wrapped in polished stainless steel. DFA design Racing chairs are carved mahogany inlaid with gilded strip. The upholstery fabric is Thai silk. Also shown is a DFA design lacquered bar on gilded base. Portrait 'Triumph of Silence' is by Rod Judkins.



office/design studio.

The house is quite unique in London terms in being built in a U-shape around a central courtyard. Says Frost: 'We were fortunate in being able to do what we wanted stylistically because the structure was not attached to the neighbouring terrace. Yet there was a necessity to match the depth and height of the other buildings in the mews'.

The sitting room is the central core of the house and is a double storey space overlooked from the mezzanine gallery level. A diagonal bisects this interior space from the 18th century marble chimneypiece which cuts across one corner to the window, positioned at a 45 degree angle and sliced horizontally by the internal balcony. Above the fireplace, a strategically placed vertical

mirror reflects the window opposite and the courtyard and conservatory beyond.

This core living space also contains the dining area as part of an open plan multi-purpose interior which is overlooked from the balcony above. Upstairs is an office and a second sitting area; the main bedroom suite is on the ground floor and contains an *en suite* steam >



room.

Such is the success of this innovative architectural approach that each room seems to be visually connected to its neighbour. The result is an impression of space and light in what is a fairly compact area. Even the hallway is well lit with floor to ceiling glazing following the curve of the skeletal stainless steel spiral stairwell.

Says Derek Frost: 'Working within such an architecturally refined shell

it was important to define each area by its furniture'. Examples are the glass topped table and horse-leg chairs in the dining room and the 'pebble' coffee table in the drawing room; both were designed by Frost.

His are carefully sculpted pieces featuring mainly natural materials like exotic woods and stone. All are custom built and are usually 'one-offs' for a particular scheme. Says the designer: 'I enjoy sculpture and

creating pieces of this type allows me to exercise sculpting techniques in a medium which I understand. And the technical process of manufacture is fascinating; I like to tackle complex designs which however, when completed, appear to be simplistic'.

The designer's handiwork is also seen in the courtyard garden which was laid out with the assistance of garden designer Jeremy North. The landscaping is Japanese in essence



opposite: In the master bedroom the overall tone is silver metallic in sponged paint to cornices and skirtings. Sprayed silver car paint was applied to the doors and pilasters are of brushed stainless steel. This tone is carried onto the DFA design 'Chrysler Day Bed' and his pair of rusticated bedside tables. The bed is covered in a piece of 'tie dyed' cloth from Ghana.

left: In the master bathroom, mirror serves to increase the sense of space. Grey marble walls contrast with counter top and cornice of peach granite. The photograph 'Boys of Los Angeles' is by Tom Bianchi and the ceramic bottle by Peter Hayes. Painted surfaces are finished in silver car enamel.



left: On one wall of the bedroom a 19th Century Japanese screen stands over DFA's 'Quilted Commode' – an extraordinarily sensuous piece whose girth conceals 9 drawers. On its top of Eritrean red marble are ceramic pieces by Sutton Taylor and Christine Constant. To the left is a nude by Yumi Katayama and to the right a portrait of 'Signorina Damonte' by Ethel Gabain.

with a gravel 'beach' leading onto a curving pond filled with water plants, its length visually replicated by a mirrored wall on the street side.

Adds Frost: 'It is this courtyard, its water feature and adjacent conservatory which makes this house the perfectly tranquil sanctuary it is in the heart of Central London. It is an oasis of greenery and light which is something of an enigma in this location'. □