



After nine years and two

Left the 18th-century exterior of the mews house offers no clues as to the modern home within. **Above left** the entrance hall cum casual dining area, with its pale oak limed floors, glass balustrade and silvery walls, all of which enhance the feeling of space and light. **Above right** the open-plan living- and dining-room. The chairs are by Bertoia, the black-and-white rug by Rosita Missoni. **Right** the architect Sally Mackereth and her husband, the fashion and beauty PR Julian Vogel

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START SPREADING THE MEWS

refurbishments, an 18th-century stable and coach-house in north London has been transformed into a light-filled four-storey family home. By **Lisa Grainger**. Photographs by **Birgitta Wolfgang Drejer**

Tubs of daffodils bloom in front of a row of primrose-painted cottages in a Belsize Park mews. A coiffured lady is walking her poodle. It's all very polite, very polished. Only when the slate-grey door to Sally Mackereth and her husband Julian Vogel's home is opened do you find yourself in the sort of place you would expect of a rising star of architecture and a fashion and beauty PR. Their eight-year-old daughter, Lola, lets me in with excited offers of tea and croissants and 'jam we made from raspberries we picked ourselves', and the 18th-century house



morphs into a space that is utterly contemporary, saturated with natural light, and dotted with architectural surprises.

The couple had very specific ideas when they started to look for a house. As a north London teenager, Vogel says, he 'walked around these streets and dreamt of one day living here.' Mackereth, from Yorkshire, fell for 'the romance, the hidden-ness of the mews' and the idea of being close to Hampstead Heath. So they slipped notes through letterboxes on roads they wanted to live in and got lucky. Nine years and two extensive



refurbishments later, their home, Vogel says, is 'pretty much everything we wanted'.

Although from the outside the stable and coach-house looks like any other two-storey cottage in the street, inside it has been gutted. The basement has been dug out, an attic converted, and the interior transformed into a spacious four-storey family home. All that remains are the facade and the roof, in compliance with the building's listed status.

The living space is on the first floor: one enormous parquet-floored room with a glass wall opening on to a decked balcony. An attic was converted into a guest suite, with Japanese bath and lavatory tucked into the eaves. The ground floor became an open-plan kitchen with an office leading off it, so they could 'cook and work and hang out in the same space'. In the second phase of renovations, after five months of digging, a 1,000sq ft basement was added, to give the children, Lola

and her five-year-old brother, Oscar, their own quarters. Here, a spacious playroom and bathroom are separated from two bedrooms by a wall that can be folded back to open up the whole basement into a single entertaining space.

It is hard to believe that this was once a small and dark house. From the ground floor, a double-height entrance is lit by skylights in the roof. A glass panel in the kitchen floor streams sunlight into the basement, and white resin floors below reflect it back up. Masterfully hidden throughout the off-white walls of the house are lights: strips behind ceiling boards, LEDs in grooves, lamps and chandeliers, their wiring all sunk into the plasterwork and controlled by dimmers, 'so it can be floodlit or we can create gentle washes of warmth,' Mackereth says.

Mackereth co-founded the architectural practice Wells Mackereth in 1995, and has designed shops (including the Leviev diamond boutique in





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Clockwise from left the children chose the colours for their bookshelves – pink for Lola and orange for Oscar; PEZ sweet dispensers reflect against mosaic tiling in the children's bathroom; hidden drawers within the shelves conceal clutter in the master bedroom; a folding wall in the basement separates the playroom from the children's bedrooms, and can be thrown open to make one big space; in the kitchen, utilitarian stainless-steel and white MDF units are paired with rich teak shelving and worktops

Bond Street), restaurants (such as Smiths of Smithfield) and private homes. She knows about clever storage. In the kitchen she fronted cupboards in water-resistant teak 'to hide things you don't want to see' and built teak shelves 'for the beautiful things you do', in this case Iittala glass bowls, a Rob Ryan teapot and a wooden Finnish coffee set. In the children's rooms are versatile neon-painted shelf systems. There is an entire wall of bespoke cupboards for Vogel's extensive wardrobe (including a neon-orange Calvin Klein suit). Even the piano is hidden in a bespoke closable recess. The walls are clean and architectural, but behind the facades are shelves of belongings and signs of a colourful family life.

The couple have injected a real sense of fun and life into the home. 'I think that while on the outside I am a polite, clean-living modernist, underneath there's a bad-taste West Coast decadent side rearing its head,' Mackereth says. 'Perhaps it's a

London thing too. When I go to New York, that uptown thing drives me nuts. It's all so dull and conservative. Whereas I think in London we know how to have fun with our combinations.' In her dressing-room and the guest bathroom green banana-leaf wallpaper covers the walls like a jungle. In the children's bathroom, colour and a dash of kitsch were injected by lining up dozens of plastic PEZ sweet dispensers, their bright cartoon faces a contrast to the dark, sophisticated mosaic tiles. Pieces are thrown together in a way that manages, somehow, to be both unpretentious and artful – a glossy Richard Avedon poster of Marilyn Monroe beside a friend's naive sketch on the wall; a rough piece of driftwood lying beneath a finely framed Hermès scarf. 'I guess it's getting the mix right,' Mackereth says. 'A house is for living in, it's for having fun. So it's got to be both polite and crazy, because that's what life is.' wellsmackereth.com