

INTERIOR DESIGNERS AT HOME

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Inspiration, Aesthetic, and Function with 20 Top Global Designers

SALLY MACKERETH

A COMBO OF JOHN LAUTNER AND DICKENSIAN LONDON

London, United Kingdom

Architect and interior designer Sally Mackereth combined the LA feel of architect John Lautner's inspiration with that of Dickensian London. However, her initial description of her home, which she shares with her two children and two cats, is considerably more complex and intriguing than this comparison. Located in St. Pancras, a five-minute walk from Kings Cross Station, the two Victorian buildings (circa 1870s), one used as her home and the other as her studio, could easily have been demolished, like most on her street from this period.

However, while developers and many others saw the opportunity for a clean slate, Sally could see the opportunity to restore both buildings, but to move them into the twenty-first century. They were initially built as stables for the horses that pulled goods from the nearby canal to the train, and there are numerous hallmarks of the buildings' past that are still clear, such as cobblestones that originally existed in the stables but now form the terrain in the central courtyard that divides home and office, an arched brick enfilade, and even signs of wear and tear, some of which was caused by the horses nibbling away at the bricks, some of which are still blackened by the bitumen. There are even dents alongside the internal steel columns in the home's main living area that indicate where the stable doors for the horses once were.

Most of the original brickwork both for the studio and the house remain, with many of the bricks recycled but used in the same tradition of bricklaying in the Victorian period. "The way the walls are treated is still quite rough, with all their imperfections," says Sally, who had to convince the bricklayers to create that unique English garden bond style with all its imperfections rather than tuck pointing. Above the brick walls is a first floor, with translucent glass walls that allow for privacy and a black steel hood or roof that extends beyond the roofline. And while there are skylights and strategically

These 1970s armchairs by Pierre Paulin are complemented by designer furniture and objects from the 1950s.

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placed windows, the large oculus, open to the sky, allows the changing weather to be enjoyed both from first-floor bedrooms and Sally's bathroom and dressing area.

While a breezy LA awaits on the first floor, a darker and considerably moodier ambience can be found at the basement level—where there's a music room and a media room. There's still a connection to the garden at ground level, designed by award-winning landscape designer Christopher Moss. At one end of this middle area and ground level are the main bedroom and bathroom (her main dressing area and en suite is on the first floor), with a living area at the core, and a kitchen and dining area at the other. One of the smallest rooms is the television / relaxation nook adjacent to the kitchen, a few steps below to create that sunken 1970s feel, complete with wraparound banquette-style seating. "When I'm lying down, my eyes are aligned with the private garden," says Sally.

In addition to a 65.6-foot-long (20 meter) glass-walled corridor set behind the brick-arched facade, the home includes a combination of contemporary and period features. The kitchen, for example, with its Calacatta Verdi island bench, expressing its deep-green veins, is complemented by large brass drawers below and also a wall of cupboards that literally disappear into a wood-paneled wall, concealing everything from a pantry to kitchen appliances, the latter of which aren't seen unless being used. And in the meals



The living areas feature the original exposed-wood beams.

Opposite: Steel-and-glass doors and windows open to a courtyard garden.

area, there's an eighteenth-century Belgian wall tapestry, illuminated by a pendant in the form of two glass cherries that add a surreal quality to the space. Two Hollywood chinoiserie chairs, framing the back door to the private garden, also provide a whimsical touch.

Sally pulls her innate style together in the main living area, framed by brick walls and burnished concrete floors, inset with end-grain wood in the center to create that slightly rough and Victorian feel. Here you'll find a couple of Groovy Chairs designed by Pierre Paulin in the 1970s, a Harry Bertoia Bird Lounge Chair from the 1950s, and a chair that completely envelops the sitter, together with a Fornasetti cocktail cabinet, designed in collaboration with Gio Ponti. And for a little humor (not that this house is wanting), there's a rug by Fornasetti showing a snake with a forbidden apple in its mouth. The skeletal-like steel screens, almost whispery in their effect, were found at a flea market in Paris, a number of 1970s umbrella frames stitched together. Linking the home to the studio is a glass pavilion that contains Sally's library, a place where she, along with her cats, can often be found.



An enflade features steel apertures and cobble stone pathways.
 Right: The home office provides a link to the home and to the commercial office that fronts the street.



Throughout this house, there's the subtle tension between past and present, Victorian versus contemporary. The zigzag, built-in wooden handrail in the oak-treaded staircase is referred to as David Bowie's character Ziggy Stardust, while the palm tree wallpaper in the dressing area is definitely LA—and for a lush and verdant ambience, the terrace below the oculus is heavily potted with ferns. Nothing is predictable in Sally's home. What appears to be a solid brick wall is actually a large pivotal brick door (on a hydraulic system), with the door handle taking the form of a steel brick in the wall! And if a leading designer, who received numerous awards for this house, can't have some fun, then who can! Nothing is predictable, with each space having its own voice and unique character. The front gate / fence with its painted image of an elephant (the street was originally called Elephant's Lane) indicates this is no ordinary house, with many queuing up to take photographs. It's certainly not a John Lautner house from the 1950s, nor is it Dickensian. It's a home that has some elements found in these periods but has clearly moved on to become an intriguing and exciting London home, conveniently located not just to a station but to Sally's studio.



Left: Indoor plants in the dressing area for the main bedroom / en suite
 Right: A closer look at the home office, which is lined with books

The main bedroom enjoys vistas into the garden.



TIPS

You need to understand how you live or want to live. There's no point in creating spaces that suit someone else.
You need to understand the context—how a site is oriented and the potential views / outlooks that can be achieved.
When you're looking at your budget, spend money on the touchstone areas, such as handles or the floors. Even if you end up sitting on a wood crate, how much better will this feel if the floors, be they wood, concrete, or covered with a rug, are thoughtfully conceived.

The open-floor kitchen and dining area combines an old tapestry with contemporary furniture.
New steel-and-glass doors lead out of the kitchen to a courtyard.

Opposite: Marble countertops and brass cabinetry feature prominently throughout the kitchen.





The en suite to the main bedroom has graphic tropical-patterned wallpaper, evocative of the 1950s.

Opposite: Echoing the kitchen, the en suite to the main bedroom includes a double marble vanity with twin mirrors, the latter from the 1950s.

