

Space INVADER

How do you turn a box of a house into a stunning home?
Like Brian, extend it every which way, then add wow architectural
features and huge windows to bring the outside in

Photography – Rachael Smith
Styling – Mary Weaver
Words – Kate Jacobs

Home profile

THE OWNER Brian Reinker, a project manager and co-owner of Material Life, an online store that sells design classics, plus his Jack Russell Dexter.
THE PROPERTY A late-Georgian semi in north London. The lower-ground floor has a kitchen, dining area, living area and WC. Upstairs there's a library, office, study, guest bedroom and bathroom. On the top floor is the master bedroom suite.

DINING AREA

'It's so important to me to be able to look out and see the garden,' says Brian. In this room, he excavated to lower the floor by eight inches.
GET THE LOOK The dining table and chairs are all by Eero Saarinen for Knoll at Material Life. The pendant light is a Sixties design from the 2&4 Gallery. The Hat Trick side chair is by Frank Gehry for Knoll. The Cyclone occasional table is by Isamu Noguchi for Knoll at Material Life.

A home with a dog

— that had always been Brian Reinker's dream. And when he quit his small central London flat to buy this north London house, complete with a large garden, all his ships came in at once.

Unusually, he knew the house well before he bought it. Brian had been visiting it — even staying in it — for many years before he considered making it his own. That's because it had been the home of some good friends of his. When they decided to downsize, *he* decided it was time to trade up. 'It ticked so many boxes, including lots of lively cafés, restaurants and shops nearby,' Brian says.

Another bonus is the short walk to his office in the City, where he works as a project manager, creating high-end offices. Brian's other role is as co-owner of online store Material Life, selling design classics by the likes of Charles and Ray Eames and Jean Prouvé. Oh, and he's a trained architect. So it's no wonder his first move was to hire a practising architect. Brian chose Martyn Clarke because he liked his thoughtfully designed, contemporary residential projects.

With Martyn, Brian developed the changes he had been idly musing over whenever he'd visited the house in the past. The existing floor plan didn't work, the bathrooms to the rear of the upper- and lower-ground floors blocked off the garden and, with boxy rooms and narrow staircases, the place was cramped. A two-storey side extension created a new kitchen and WC on the



Neil Smithies was Brian's contractor. Find him at nsgbuildingservices.co.uk

KITCHEN

Here, as elsewhere, Brian stuck to a simple palette of materials and colours — granite and oak, black, white and grey. 'I wanted it to feel very cohesive,' he says.

GET THE LOOK Brian had his joiner make bespoke fronts for the Ikea cabinets, which were sprayed to a matte finish using Wiltshire White by Dulux. The bespoke flamed granite worktops are from Luxury Granite Worktops. For a similar white oak wood floor, try Victoria Luxury Flooring.

LIVING AREA →

'The slatted oak staircase lets light pour down through the centre of the house,' says Brian.

GET THE LOOK The cosy pebble *Suita* sofa is by Antonio Citterio for Vitra at Material Life. The Prismatic side table is by Isamu Noguchi for Vitra at Material Life. The reading lamp was bought at Ralph Lauren Home in New York. For similar, try Holloways of Ludlow. The set of paintings on the wall are by Cecil Skotnes and the Sixties sculpture is by South African artist Sidney Goldblatt. Bonhams regularly features both their works in its fine art auctions.

lower-ground floor, as well as an extended bedroom (now the home office), bathroom and study area on the floor above.

The lower-ground floor was then opened up to create free-flowing living, dining and kitchen areas. A bold decision was taken to excavate the floor down eight inches to give the dining area a more imposing height. A window seat wraps around the room.

The garden is made up of contrasting blocks of formal box hedging and free-form meadow, bordered by limes and copper beeches, and is the real focal point of the house. 'I'm an early riser and love to watch the sun rise over the garden while I have my coffee,' Brian explains.

Sadly, most of the Georgian features inside were long gone. Brian and Martyn made the most of the few that remained, especially in the library, where there is a moodier, gentleman's club vibe. 'I love my books, so it's great to be able to dedicate a room to them,' says Brian. Otherwise, he and Martyn had the confidence to go for a contemporary look with a simple palette of materials, including grey flamed granite across floors and worktops and white oak woodwork throughout. Brian knew he wanted his collection of largely South African art to take centre stage: 'So I stuck to pieces in neutral shades of black, white and grey.'

Brian loves to entertain. 'Lots of dinner parties and casual barbecues, I specialise in easy party food — I cook a mean risotto. There's always room for everyone with the window seat,' he says. And, best of all, having a house and garden has given Brian the chance to get his Jack Russell puppy Dexter. 'He's got his little doggy door, so he's always in and out of the garden or trying to escape to the pub across the street — he's very sociable,' says Brian, laughing. Wonder where he gets that from?

See the full range of Material Life furniture at material-life.co.uk. View Martyn Clarke's portfolio at martynclarkearchitecture.com

LIBRARY

Brian planned this room to be a contrast to the rest of the house with dark grey walls and rich tones in the furniture.

GET THE LOOK The wall is painted in Steel Grey emulsion by Dulux. Brian designed the circular rug using wool and silk to create a light-reflecting pattern. For similar, try Stellar Works at Staffan Tollgård. The Florence Knoll armchairs are teamed with an LCW chair and stool, upholstered in calfskin, both by Charles and Ray Eames for Vitra. This is the Guéridon Bas coffee table by Jean Prouvé for Vitra. All the furniture shown is available at Material Life. For similar bookshelves, try John Lewis.



← STUDY

Brian created the study in the entrance hall on the lower-ground floor. 'It's a nice place to sit with my laptop when the sun is on this side of the house in the afternoon,' he says.

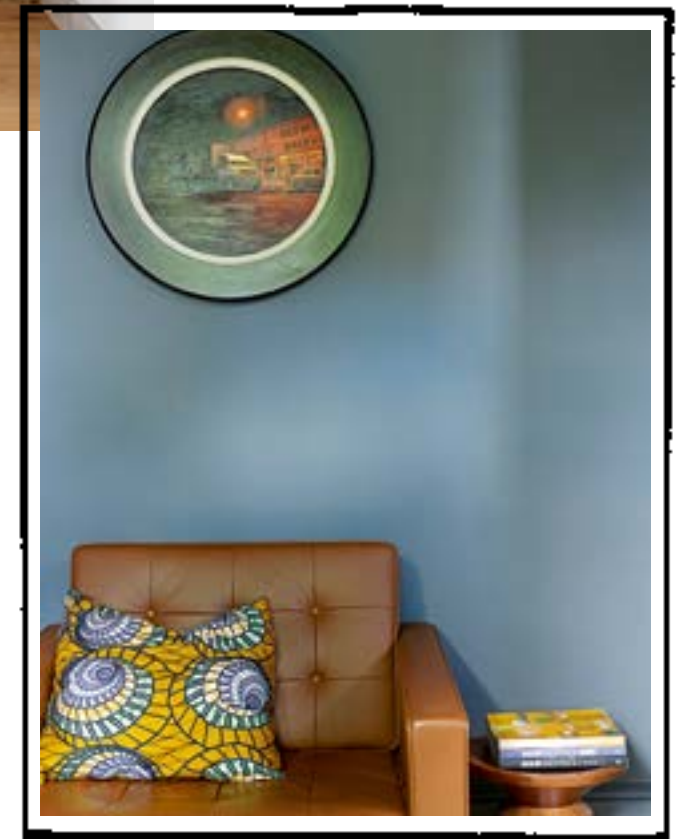
GET THE LOOK The Compas Direction desk and Standard chair are both by Jean Prouvé for Vitra at Material Life. For a similar Jielidé lamp, try Holloways of Ludlow. The artwork is by Friedensreich Hundertwasser. Prints of his work are available from worldgallery.co.uk.

LIBRARY ↓

'I like to sit here and read, especially during the winter,' says Brian.

GET THE LOOK The circular night scene painting is by South African artist Henk Serfontein. Contact Cape Town's Christopher Moller Art Gallery for more details. The armchair is by Florence Knoll for Material Life.

'Dexter and I like to follow the sun around the house, so I read in the library or work in the study area in the afternoons'



HOMESetc

Home truths

WHAT CAN'T YOU LIVE WITHOUT? My books and artwork.

LIFE'S ESSENTIAL LUXURY? Coffee made from freshly ground beans in my Jura coffee machine – I couldn't start the day without it.

WHAT'S YOUR ULTIMATE TIME-TRAVELLING DESTINATION? Gauguin's Tahiti. Tahiti's the most beautiful place I've ever been – I'm saving to go back!

DO YOU PREFER TO BE A HOST OR A GUEST? Host – I like to entertain a lot. My signature dish is a barbecue with steak, asparagus and garlic bread on the grill.

WHAT'S NEXT IN INTERIORS? A couple of years ago, it was bright colours. Now there's a return to white.

WHAT NEVER GOES OUT OF STYLE? Georg Jensen's Vivianna stainless-steel cutlery. I've used it for over twenty years.

MASTER BEDROOM →

'I wanted this space to feel completely neutral,' says Brian.

GET THE LOOK The Nyx bed is by Emaf Progetti for Zanotta. The bed linen is by The Linen Works. The Plate side table is by Jasper Morrison for Vitra, available at Material Life. This is the Tizio bedside lamp by Richard Sapper for Artemide.

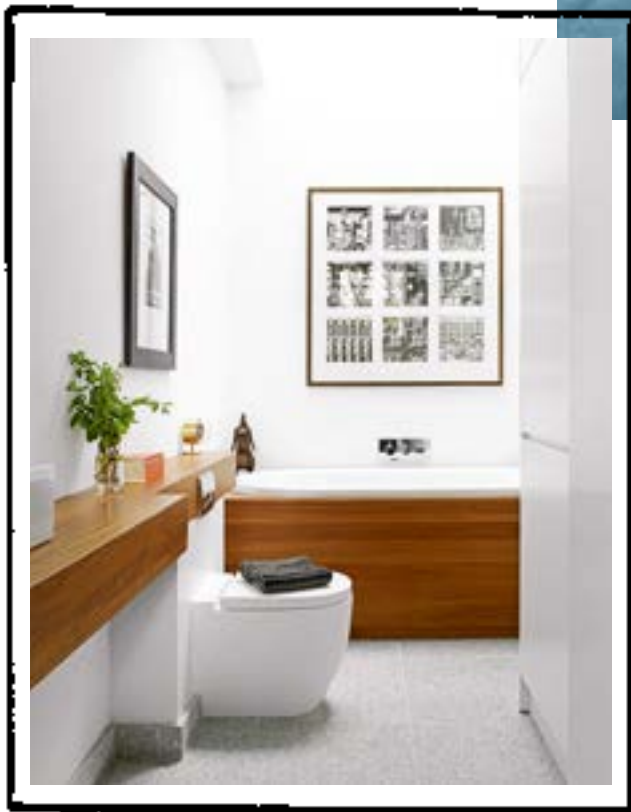
BATHROOM ↓

The main bathroom is lit from above via a large rectangular skylight, which provides drama and privacy.

GET THE LOOK The Axor Citterio suite and Hansgrohe taps were sourced by Martyn from Aqualite Trading. Find a granite floor like this at Mandarin Stone.



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The blueprint

