

On the raised ground floor, the connecting drawing room and study (all pictures) are decorated with flowers and a Christmas tree by Scarlet & Violet (tel: 020-8969 9446; www.scarletandviolet.com). The bespoke ottoman, with concealed storage, was designed by Sarah Delaney. The paintings - by Tanya's grandfather, Théodore Roussel - influenced Sarah's colour choices for walls and fabrics throughout the house



To create a calm, elegant family home, when there are four children and a hectic lifestyle to contend with, is quite a challenge. But Tanya Roussel has managed just that with her updated Victorian house, which is a hub of family life and entertaining, particularly at Christmas time.

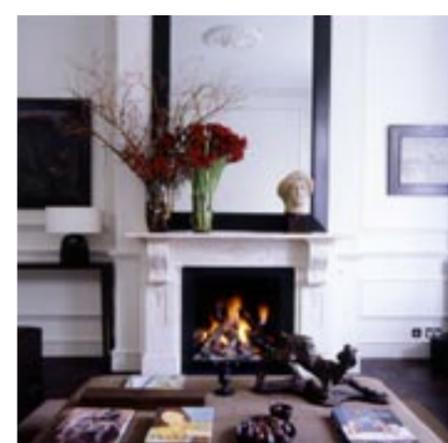
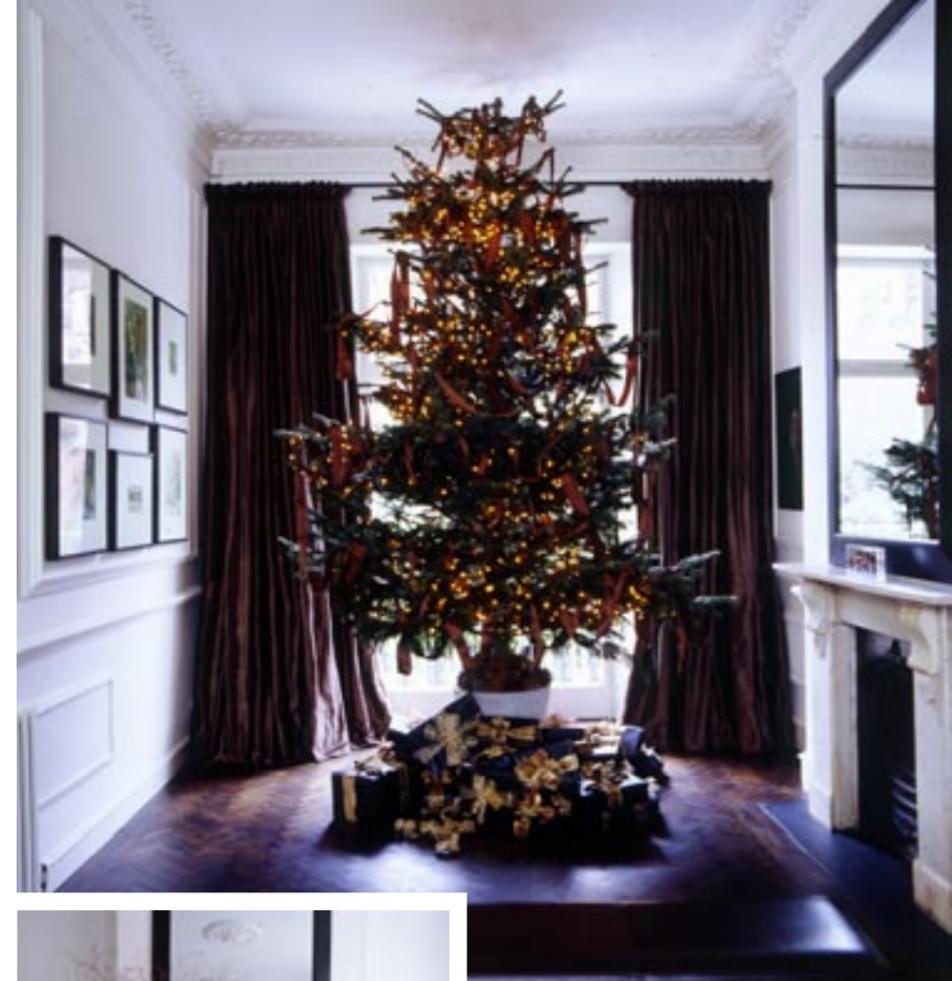
Tanya moved into her London house 15 years ago, just as her second child was about to arrive. For a decade or so, she left the house largely unchanged, limiting herself to modernising and cosmetic tweaking, while her family expanded and grew. But eventually, she realised that the four-storey house was not working for them - especially the lower ground floor, divided as it was into a series of dark, uninviting spaces. She had known architect Alex Michaelis and interior designer Sarah Delaney for many years, and called in their help.

'We started talking to Alex about six years ago, and by then we had four children and an au pair,' says Tanya. 'We really needed a large space where we could all get together and where the children could bring their friends. The house felt cramped and, in particular, I wanted to open up the lower ground floor and turn it into one large kitchen and dining area, leading directly into a conservatory at the back that could nestle on the edge of the communal garden behind the house.'

Alex, of Michaelis Boyd Associates, is well known for creating homes - and hotels, such as Babington House - that look modern, fresh and inviting, with a strong emphasis on ergonomics and real living. For a family house that needed reinventing with maximum use of light and space, his approach was perfect.

'Alex is brilliant at creating space by eliminating redundant areas wherever they may be - a poorly positioned partition wall, an attic, a staircase,' says Tanya. 'As well as opening up the whole of the lower ground floor, bringing all this light and open space into the house for the first time, he also reconfigured the top two floors of the house. Three bedrooms became four, the kids got their own bathroom - meaning my husband and I could have one to ourselves - and we gained a laundry room and storage.'

The family moved out for the summer while the heavy structural work was done, sending most of their period furniture off to their second home in France. They returned in time for the start of the school term and were delighted by the changes to the house, especially the large, open-plan lower ground floor, with its antique-limestone floors, a Bulthaup kitchen at one end, a sitting area in an open conservatory at the other, and

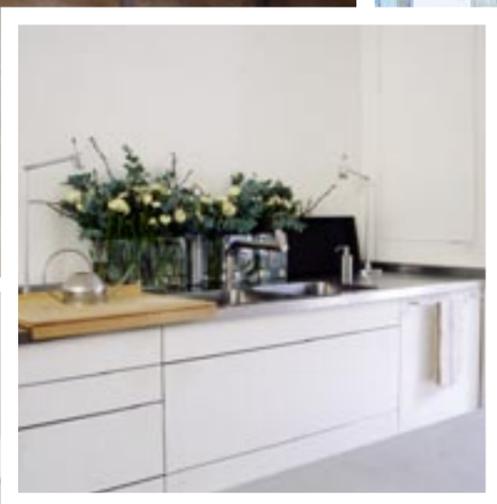


To make their London house more family friendly, the owners decided to open up the basement as a single, multifunctional space. They were so pleased with the result, that they extended the updated look to the whole house

WELL GROUNDED

TEXT DOMINIC BRADBURY
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THE HOUSE NOW WORKS IN A WAY THAT SUITS LIFE WITH A LARGE FAMILY AND IS AN OPEN, INVITING SPACE FOR ENTERTAINING



ALL PICTURES Stairs lead down to the lower ground floor, which was transformed into an open-plan living space by architect Alex Michaelis. The kitchen and matching sideboard are by Michaelis Boyd in conjunction with Bulthaup. The dining table is from The Conran Shop, while the dining chairs, sofa, armchair and coffee table are all by Christian Liaigre

'OUR ANTIQUE FURNITURE DIDN'T SEEM APPROPRIATE BECAUSE THE HOUSE NOW HAD THIS FEELING OF GENTLE MODERNITY'



In the main bedroom (this picture and opposite top), the chair and footstool are from B&B Italia, while the bespoke shelves and bedside units are by Sarah Delaney and Julian Smith Joinery. Alex Michaelis created an extra bedroom and bathroom, so that Tanya and her husband now have a bathroom to themselves (opposite middle). In ??????????'s bedroom (opposite bottom), the 'Scanglobe', by Henrik Tengler, is from Twentytwentyone

breakfast and dining areas – all in one large, multifunctional room. The chimneypiece halfway along one side wall creates a focal point, while large, bespoke mirrors help throw light across the space.

On the raised ground floor, Tanya was keen to preserve the interconnecting drawing room and study as a more formal area. At Christmas, her desk in the study gives way to a large Christmas tree, which looks dramatic against the window at the back of the room.

'We really camped in the house for a year without bringing our furniture back from France because we just loved all this new space,' says Tanya. 'Increasingly, the idea of living with our antique furniture again didn't seem appropriate because our Victorian house now had this feeling of gentle modernity.'

Tanya had initially asked Sarah Delaney to provide a single blind, but then decided to ask her to help out with the house as a whole, creating a loose collaboration between the interior designer and Michaelis Boyd, which has since led on to other successful joint projects. Sarah began working on a more modern approach, mixing bespoke pieces of furniture with designs by Christian Liaigre and others. For inspiration on colour choices for walls and fabrics, she turned to paintings in the house by Tanya's grandfather, Théodore Roussel, a French post-Impressionist.

'Sarah really understood my wish for elegance, and the fact that I love entertaining, as well as the practical needs of a house that has to accommodate four children,' says Tanya. 'I loved our outings together to furniture shops. She found things that fitted really awkward areas, and fabrics that I would never have looked at that turned out to be just right when we got home. She rightly insisted we stain the oak parquet in the drawing room and then there were details – bed heads, bookshelves, desks – that helped transform each room. She continues to tweak the place as time goes by.'

The house – restructured and reinvented – now works in a way that suits life with a large family and is an open, inviting space for entertaining. At busy times like Christmas, it is a house that really comes into its own.

'We love our home, so much so that we declined an opportunity to relocate to New York,' says Tanya. 'All of us feel relaxed in the house. With my father, my brother and his family joining us as usual, we're very much looking forward to a family Christmas here this year' □

Michaelis Boyd Associates (tel: 020-7221 1237; www.michaelisboyd.com)

Sarah Delaney Design (tel: 020-7221 2010)

