

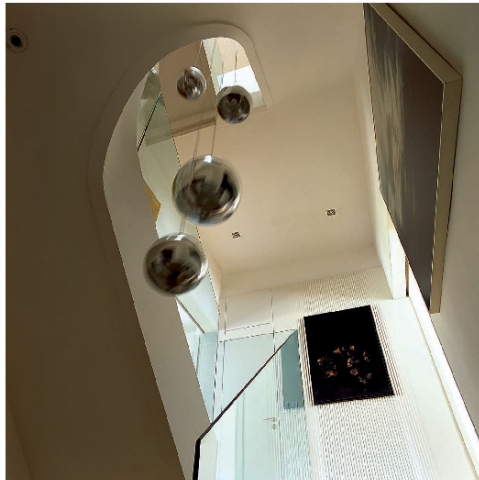


This page: in the drawing room, the Lelièvre wool-velvet upholstery of the Anthologie Quartett sofas complements Eileen Gray's forest-green-and-cream 'Kilkenny' rug. Opposite: brass and marble, which recur throughout, appear in the Bauhaus-inspired black aziza marble coffee table, white statuary marble fireplace, vintage brass side table and boxy 'Prisma' lamp by Azucena



FASCINATING RHYTHM

Waldo Works' founder Tom Bartlett developed contrasting themes for his redesign of a west London villa. Formal clarity – evident in high-backed sofas, clean lines and a toned-down palette – is counterposed with jazzier notes that play on the Memphis aesthetic. Throughout, the architect has employed a range of recurring colours and motifs, thereby ensuring that the overall effect is never less than harmonious. It's a bravura performance, says Bethan Ryder. Photography: Simon Upton



This page, clockwise from top left: low, structured pieces such as Matteo Thun's 'Materassi' daybed for Wittmann lend an orderly calm to the drawing room; the stair atrium, including this bespoke minimal glass balustrade, pre-dates the current scheme; the 'Globo di Luce' lights are by Fontana Arte; lacquered reeded panelling runs across the landing, linking the two rooms

The kitchen survives from a previous incarnation of the villa. The sliding doors open on to a stone terrace and extend the space in the summer. The kitchen work surface is made from Corian and the tap is from Dornbracht. The 'Hardy' pendant lights are made by Bover and the artwork is by Israeli photographer Ori Gersht, from his 2013 series 'Love Me Love Me Not'



Top: in the library, a fabric screen separates the upright piano from Claesson Koivisto Rune's 'Claudine' sofa by Arflex and the TV viewing area. Right: geometric motifs and primary colours reinforce the nod to Memphis design in the library, seen in the large brass handles of the audio-visual cabinet, Philipp Mainzer's 'Habibi' tray and Jorge Pensi's 'Shape O' side table by Viccarbe



Left: the top-floor bathroom combines white Corian surfaces and a Ceramica Flaminia suite. The taps, bath filler and knobs are from Kohler's 'Purist' range. Top: Max Lamb's 'Marmoreal' terrazzo enlivens the walls. Above: the adjoining bedroom houses a mid-century-inspired 'Crillon' chair from Soane and a 'Lederam F3' light by Catellani & Smith. Circular motifs recur on this floor

FOR SOMEONE who has carved out a successful niche designing the homes of glamorous, high-profile Londoners – think Jade Jagger (*WoI* Oct 2004), high-flying fashion producer Camilla Johnson-Hill (*WoI* March 2010), and one of the capital's most photographed female celebrities, who alas must remain nameless – you might expect Tom Bartlett's aesthetic to err towards the ostentatious. In reality, the reverse is true. Just as Bartlett in person is the epitome of witty English self-deprecation, so his architectural practice Waldo Works adopts a more low-key approach. 'It's something we actually don't do very well,' he says with a shrug. 'All those blingy-type situations; trying to look rich or successful – it's something we try to avoid. To be honest, I don't find it particularly interesting.'

Instead, informed by design heroes ranging from the Viennese Secessionists and the Glasgow School to Carlo Scarpa, Bartlett prefers a more cerebral approach. The starting point of his design process is to cross-examine his clients – to the point where they occasionally 'get quite cross' – to gain a profound understanding of their desires and aspirations. 'Personality is very important in a house,' he nods. 'Rather than the blandness of good taste. Within architecture you have to have a thesis that informs and directs each project. I like to find a story and carry it through – right down to choosing the cushions – while also occasionally being a bit arch at some point to break the serious rigour.'

Nowhere is Bartlett's professional philosophy expressed more eloquently than in his latest residential project – for a classical music-loving Englishman and his French wife. The couple contacted him after combing through interior-design magazines, singling him out because of his work's 'graphic clarity'. As the parents of five sons, they were searching for an interior architect who would bring some order and serenity to their lives and, more specifically, to two floors of their four-storey, 19th-century Notting Hill villa. 'They're really quite amazing people because in some ways they're very old school,' explains Bartlett, showing me round the library and drawing room on the first floor. 'They like to sit and listen to music and play the piano. So we looked at rhythm and musical ideas, and started to develop a kind of language that runs through these two spaces.' Although separated by the landing, there is a strong sense of interconnectedness between the rooms, thanks in part to the large sliding doors that replace traditional doorways on this level, but also because of the lacquered reeded wall panelling that echoes throughout the first floor as a subtle architectural motif.

Bartlett refers to this textural feature as 'rilling'. Inspired by the visual effect of bass sounds on water, the grooves – computer-cut in MDF – vary in depth, growing deeper and shallower as if representing the rhythms within a piece of music. The grooves feature more prominently in the library, which centres on an upright piano; appearing on the Memphis-blue cupboards with brass handles that conceal the audio-visual system at one end and, at the other, lining the discreet floor-to-ceiling bookshelves, which face sideways to reduce visual noise. They fade out in the drawing room, although they also appear as a focal point in the beautifully cut, fluted statuary marble of the custom-designed fire surround. This simple intervention transforms the room into a calm and contemplative space that takes its cues from Josef Hoffmann and the Viennese Secession – the fluting calls to mind the linear ornamentation used on façades during this period – with Bauhaus-inspired furniture organised in classic symmetry on either side of the fireplace.

The primary purpose of this room – to listen to music and enjoy adult conversation away from the children – is reinforced by Bartlett's confident use of colour, with a forest-green-and-cream 'Kilkenny' rug by Eileen Gray at the centre flanked by a pair of upright sofas in similar shades. These high-backed sofas from German company Anthologie Quartett, which he also used for the Smythson store on Bond Street, dictate the genteel composure of this room. While clearly intended as a place of repose, it's defiantly anti-lounging – with high side tables and a pair of 'Chinotto' fire-side armchairs by Luigi Caccia Dominioni adding to the deliberately formal, drawing-room ambience. 'Most people want to lie on their sofas, but the homeowners here really don't,' he explains. 'They want to sit upright and read.'

If Bartlett opted for the intrinsically calming qualities of clean lines and natural tones here, he segues to the Postmodernist period in the library, mixing things up with a liberal burst of the Memphis aesthetic (a favourite 'because it breaks a few rules'), with that same intense blue as the dominant shade. Primary shapes and colours alter the mood in a space designed for both playing music and also kicking back and watching TV, with Sottsass's 'Callimaco' floor lamp and a low 'Claudine' sofa by Arflex edging towards a *mise en scène* that's more playful and relaxed. The custom-made circular pouf in black patent leather suggests Bartlett has very different ambitions for this room: 'I'm really pleased with this piece, because you can spill your drink on there and it doesn't matter – and it kind of looks like a full stop.'

Bartlett's multilayered approach is equally apparent on the top floor, the former attic, where he's applied a similar split sensibility to the two spaces. Bringing rigour and order to the existing bedroom in the eaves – formerly a 'complete mess' – by installing custom-designed wraparound storage in warm smoked beech that incorporates a dressing table with a bespoke copper-framed Fairlie vanity mirror, bookshelves, bed and bedside storage. At dado height, sitting just below the windowsill, this low-lying intervention maximises views and light, giving the room an inescapable air of Zen.

'This is their eyrie above the whole house,' he says, leading the way into the capacious ensuite bathroom, which you might reasonably expect to be a vision of soothing white marble. Instead, with Max Lamb's oversized 'Marmoreal' terrazzo for Dzek lining the walls below dado height, it imparts a surprising jolt of energy, mirroring the way the library downstairs contrasts with the drawing room. Far from feeling disjointed, however, the rust tones in the terrazzo and unlacquered Kohler brassware echo the palette and details of the neighbouring bedroom, which is anchored by a rust mohair rug.

Although this is a relatively small-scale project for Waldo Works, whose CV includes the beauty and scent floor at Fortnum & Mason, the recent 51-bedroom Laslett hotel in Notting Hill, and several shops for the aforementioned Smythson, Bartlett has enjoyed the process. 'It has allowed us to explore things we like exploring,' he says with satisfaction. 'And for me, the most rewarding thing is seeing an end product that really suits the owner of the house. After all, apart from having a suit made, having your house designed is one of the last bespoke things people can do for themselves that's still relatively normal. So the most vital thing is that it has meaning and personality and above all, is relevant to who they are' ■

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The beech-veneer storage in the master bedroom incorporates the vanity unit signalled by the Fairlie mirror, which sits in the surface at an angle. It features a lighting panel with a copper trim, in keeping with the Edelman leather-upholstered copper vanity stool. The bedside lights, from the Willer gallery, are 'rather sculptural', explains Bartlett. 'They break all this rigour.'