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SPACE & TIME

Designer Suzy Hoodless and architect Thomas Croft have created a home with the bandwidth for a burgeoning family in the heart of Hampstead

TEXT **JACKIE DALY** | PHOTOGRAPHS **MICHAEL SINCLAIR**



'The house required a lot of imagination as to what it could be,' says interior designer Suzy Hoodless, as she passes coffee cups around the dining table of the Hampstead home she has transformed for a young family of five. We're in the kitchen conservatory on a glorious summer's day in June, sunlight streaming through the colossal doors framing the garden. The family's chef, noting our intrusion with a nod, rustles up lunch in the kitchen behind us – a moment of calm before the family's return, when the space will ignite with activity.

Sitting beside Suzy is the architect Thomas Croft, who joined the designer when she first viewed the 1907 property with the owners eight years ago – the pair having been asked to lend their expertise on whether it was a good fit for a fast-growing family. 'It had lovely Arts and Crafts features but was a muddle of rooms, which had been extended over time. We're sitting in what was formerly a 1950s dormitory block, which was used to house visiting monks and missionaries – real monks stayed here at one time,' Thomas says, smiling. Generous square footage, wrapped by a mature-tree-lined garden that transports one out of the city, sold the property.

The two make a formidable team – Thomas overseeing work on the structural bones of the house and Suzy conjuring interior alchemy. 'We're both Geminis,' Suzy jokes, at which Thomas roars with laughter. 'We decided the Arts and Crafts elements would work well throughout, ensuring newer parts of the house felt comfortable. We wanted to lend the impression this had always been in place,' he continues, pointing to the panelled walls and a magnificent staircase flanked by a solid-oak pillar as we finish our coffee and make our way to the entrance of the house. The property has been entirely reconfigured – beginning with the staircase, which had been the first thing one encountered when stepping through the front door. 'We created an axis for the house,' Thomas says of the grand hallway that now greets guests and, in turn, flows into the main reception rooms. A sense of arrival is created by the dramatic flooring, which is inset with Moleanos limestone and black Belgian-fossil cabochons. From here, the house opens up fully, providing a clear sightline to the rear garden, glimpsed through glass doors. Statement antiques, large enough to fill the void, are muses en route: a 19th-century Gothic Revival marble top meets a central Philip Webb walnut table from Robert Kime, and a pair of large English Gothic Revival mirrors.

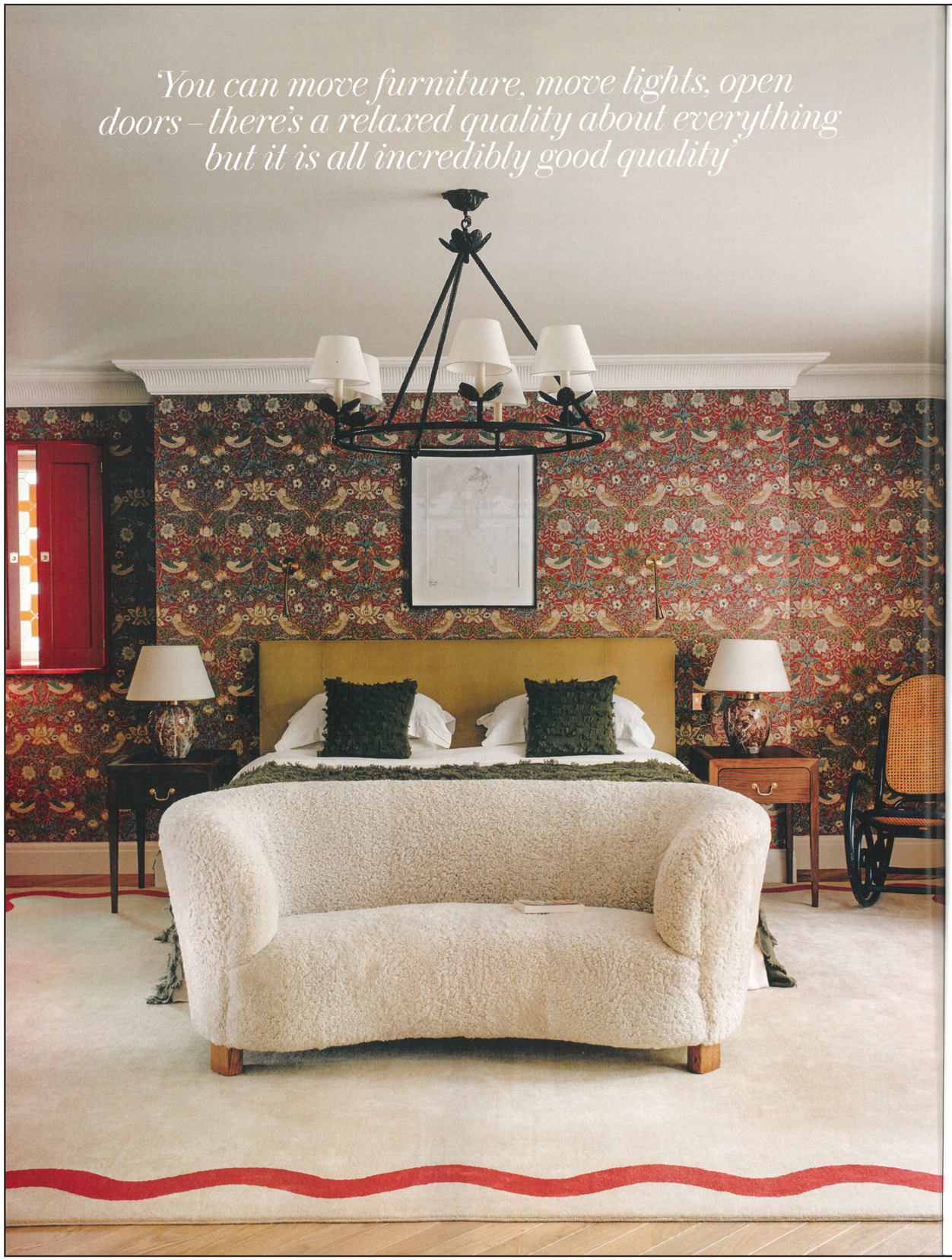
Rooms for entertaining had been high on the owners' list of priorities, in addition to a series of versatile family spaces, and the entrance leads into the formal dining room on one side, and the main living space on the other. The dining room's red walls, transformed to flickering shadow by candlelight, are ▷

ENTRANCE HALL (*top left and right*) Suzy and Thomas 'created an axis for the house' with this space. The **floor** is Moleanos limestone with black Belgian-fossil cabochons, from a Thomas Croft Architects (TCA) design. The convex **lights** are from Jamb. GARDEN ROOM (*left*) A Murano **chandelier** (1970), from 1stDibs, hangs above an **ottoman** by Sedilia, upholstered in Schumacher's 'Guepard Stripe Velvet Red'. The vintage Paolo Buffa **armchairs** are from 8 Holland Street; the **stained glass** was designed by TCA. SITTING ROOM (*previous page*) The striped **sofa** is by SHS and upholstered in Kravet's 'Black Tie – Penguin' fabric from GP&J Baker. The antique **fire surround** was sourced from Westland London

KITCHEN (*opposite*) Designed by TCA, and manufactured and fitted by deVOL. The 'Plaster Cone' **lights** are from Rose Uniacke. The **dining table** and **bench** are by Valentin Loellmann, while the **dining chairs** were designed by SHS and made by Knuckey Furniture. A vintage **dresser** from 1stDibs has been resprayed with 'Tomato Red' (internal) and 'Black Red' (external) RAL colours that contrast with the pale Moleanos-limestone **flooring**. KITCHEN CONSERVATORY (*this page*) **Walls** painted in 'Park Walk White' from Papers and Paints are juxtaposed with dark-framed steel **windows** by Secco. The **sofa** is upholstered in '1000 Hallingdal 65 0657' fabric from Kvadrat







suitably atmospheric, and Suzy has conjured a sense of occasion here too: the Gillows of Lancaster 'Imperial' dining table is overlooked by a bespoke medieval-style wrought-iron chandelier designed by her team – pieces suggestive of Bacchus-like feasting. 'The clients spend a lot of time as a family in the kitchen conservatory, but they also entertain, and this room seats 14 to 16 people,' Suzy says.

The designer's passion for mixing pattern, texture and colour is evidenced in the eclectic living room across the hall. Patterned cushions jostle for space on bespoke and vintage sofas under a mid-century Italian Murano glass light – the floor laid with a vintage Ziegler Mahal carpet. An original Josef Hoffmann Jugendstil Vienna Secession chair sits beside a hand-veneered side table in ebonised Japanese ash from Rose Uniacke. And treasured pieces embellish every surface: a classical bust rests atop a shelf next to a stained-glass window, and a collection of 1950s decorative ceramics by Elio Schiavon adorns one of two marble chimneypieces.

Suzy incorporated several of these treasures but is relaxed about how rooms are used. 'We wanted this home to become better with age, so you can put your cup of tea down on this rare table and it's fine – it's just going to create a patina,' she says. 'Nothing here is precious. You can move furniture, move lights and open doors – there's a relaxed quality about everything but it is all incredibly good quality.'

The living room runs from the front to the back of the house, its length divided visually by classical-style columns into a sitting and garden room. And it's this clever division of volumes that is the signature of the house. 'It was so big, you had to give areas functions so it all worked properly,' Thomas says, citing the downstairs family floor, where there's a gym, a screening room and a wine cellar/room. 'The owners like order,' says Suzy. 'There's a place for everything and the kids know exactly where to put their coats and scooters when they come in. We've created a home with the bandwidth for their lives.'

Upstairs, the master bedroom sprawls into a bathroom boasting the proportions of a small London flat, which in turn sweeps into a dressing room of *Sex and the City* dreams, clothes neat in rows behind glass-lined doors. It's an indulgent adult zone. 'This entire floor, bar one room, is their master suite,' Suzy says. 'There's also a children's floor.'

Details are considered to a minute level, including the installation of mirror insets below several windows in the house, which Thomas designed to funnel light into the spaces, and while most of the floors feel capacious, there are intimate escapes offering cosy refuge. The music room at the end of the formal dining room, wrapped in Morris & Co 'Indian' wallpaper, is one retreat, as is the home's snug, its walls adorned by Apothecary's 'Garden' print, originally designed by CFA Voysey – both papers nod to leading lights of the Arts and Crafts movement. Thomas smiles as I note the simple, functional beauty that underpins Suzy's eclectic design. 'We were lucky enough to have a big canvas,' he says □

suzyhoodless.com | thomascroft.com





MASTER BEDROOM (*left*) The **walls** are decorated with 'Strawberry Thief' wallpaper in 'Crimson/Slate', from Morris & Co. A curved 'Love Seat' **sofa** from Dagmar is upholstered with 'Moonlight' sheepskin and stands on a bespoke wool **rug** from Vanderhurd. MASTER BATHROOM (*top right and right*) The unlacquered brass **bath and shower mixer** by Drummonds and 'Paris' **bath** by The Water Monopoly were both sourced by TCA, who designed the **vanity unit** and main **mirrors**