

St Saviour's Road A Brixton Bombshell

Russian For Fish reveals top-to-toe transformation for an ageing Victorian



A spectacular space for entertaining is directly connected to the kitchen

Just off the major South London artery of Brixton Hill, St Saviour's Road is a short residential street lined with stately detached Victorians. Three floors, five bedrooms and a comparatively generous slice of garden – on paper, the perfect London family homes. The owners of one such property, however, were keen to enhance theirs with a rear extension that would extend their living space and make the most of the light from the south-facing garden. With their clean, contemporary aesthetic and track record for intelligently and sensitively transforming historic properties such as this, Russian For Fish were the obvious choice

As the owners and the architects began planning the project, however, it became clear that, rather than limiting the work to a simple ground-floor extension, the best way to optimise the layout of the house for modern-day family life, without compromising its period character, would be a complete, ground-to-gable refurbishment and reorganisation.

Rethinking the space

The existing ground floor was a typical arrangement, comprising an entrance leading to a narrow kitchen, with a connected living room and dining room off to the side. A glazed orangery to the rear of the house provided a brightly lit alternative dining space, but the vine it housed had long since died, and the owners felt that the space would be better used if it were extended and reintegrated into the body of the house.



A garden view from the living room, through the kitchen/dining spaces

Russian For Fish co-directors Pieren D’Avoine and Nilesh Shah drew up plans that rationalised the ground floor, expanded the kitchen area by repositioning it in the space occupied by the former dining room, and also incorporated a new cloakroom, a downstairs WC and a glass-roofed study where the kitchen used to be. This now offers a clear unbroken view through the house from the front door through the cloakroom to the study, and the garden beyond.



The orangery has been replaced and extended, becoming the new dining room

The floor itself was entirely rebuilt. New joists were fitted to allow for the installation of underfloor heating throughout, and to ensure the entire ground-floor is completely level. A utility room was added to the basement, and additional storage space was introduced to the ground floor.

The orangery has been replaced and extended, becoming the new dining room. This opens onto the patio, with steps to the garden, through huge Crittel-style garden doors from Maxlight. One of the most ambitious features is the dining-room roof from the architectural glazing specialist Cantifix – a complex pitched glass construction fitted with a piston-driven system that allows it to be opened on warm days.

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Russian For Fish optimised the layout of the home for modern-day family life, without compromising its period character

This spectacular space for entertaining is now directly connected to the kitchen, now the heart of the house – a life-enhancing change for a modern family for whom cooking and entertaining are among the great pleasures of life.

Restoration and renewal

One of Russian For Fish's priorities was to ensure that the refurbishment and extension were true to the house's Victorian origins. Hand-moulded Con Mosso bricks were used on the new exterior walls, matching the existing look, and incorporating pop-up panels to improve ventilation. Russian For Fish redecorated the front of the house to match the high-quality look of the extension, and the owner even found someone to repaint the house's original nameplate on the door.



In keeping with Victoria origins, the home even includes the original nameplate above the door

Inside, new cornicing and ceiling roses appropriate to the period of the property were installed, paired with clean, contemporary fittings that complemented the property's period character. The owners are both strongly visual, design-orientated people – one a specialist in modern art for an auction house; the other an events and exhibitions professional – and both have an exceptional eye for colour and detail, so the process of developing the interiors was highly collaborative.



Accents of black with stunning artwork throughout this Brixton home

The base of the colour palette is a strong off-white monochrome, juxtaposed with black accents in the window and door frames, banister, and bathroom taps and accessories.

Natural materials are used throughout, including Carerra marble in the bathrooms, an engineered oak floor in an oversize chevron pattern by Waxed Floors, and Richlite recycled-paper composite panels for the kitchen joinery and island worktop.



Carerra marble used in bathrooms creating a bright and calm space



A kitchen full of contrasts

The kitchen itself was designed and installed by bespoke specialists 202 Design, with a soft grey background colour, teamed with a dark-toned Richlite for the drawers and cupboards. Countertops and splashbacks in Neolith sintered stone contrast with the darker shades. The kitchen thus shifts from dark at the lower levels and lighten higher up – the reverse of the effect in the dining room. This shift from dark to light is echoed in the overall house, as the bedrooms on the upper levels are much lighter in tone than the ground floor living areas.

As a whole, the project ranks as one of the most extensive and ambitious renovations and extensions that Russian For Fish have embarked on in the practice's 14-year history. The owners and their children have now returned to their home after over a year, and are now living in a house transformed – a property that retains its period identity, but has been rationalised and reconfigured to meet the needs of modern family life – and reflect the lifestyle and character of the family that lives there.



The perfect space for working from home life

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About Russian For Fish

Russian For Fish is an award-winning London-based architectural and design practice founded by RIBA-chartered architect Pereen d'Avoine in 2006. Now run by Pereen and co-director Nilesh Shah, the firm works on extension and new-build projects for both residential and commercial clients, and is especially adept at transforming compact spaces while striving for sustainability. Their work is characterised by simplified material palettes, contemporary and minimalist detailing, and a cohesive, sympathetic approach to surroundings.

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