

THE TIMES

MAGAZINE

MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR

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MY LIFE IN WARHOL'S INNER CIRCLE

By the man who
knew him best

GILES COREN

I'm a secret vegan

CAITLIN MORAN

I've got a dad bod

DOLLY WELLS

I wanted to be a nun
(for real)

A PIECE OF PARIS IN NOTTING HILL

Once a block of bedsits, a huge Victorian house has become a family home full of continental style for a former Vogue art director

REPORT Ian Phillips PHOTOGRAPHS Stephan Julliard



The living room, with Tumulte mirror by Berse Van der Straeten, table by Ado Chale and Tommaso Barbi lamps. Opposite: the hallway, with vintage Stilnovo chandelier and Calacatta Oro marble floor

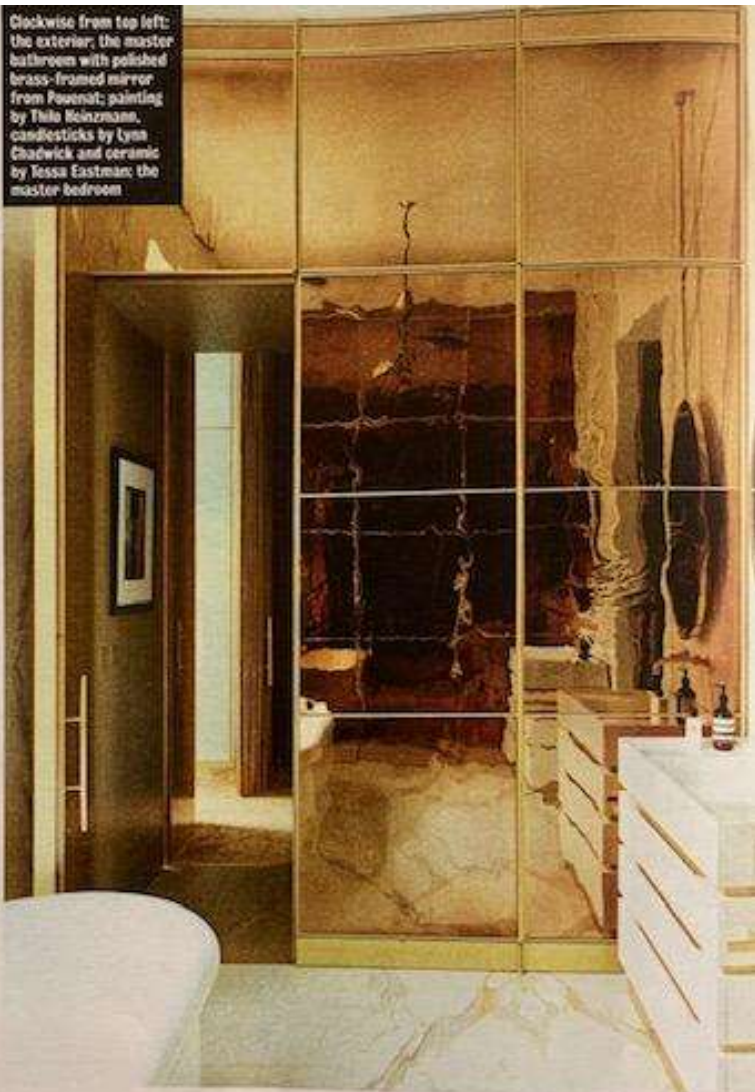
Home!





BELO WANCE

Clockwise from top left: the exterior; the master bathroom with polished brass-framed mirror from Pavenat; painting by Thilo Reitzmann; candlesticks by Lynn Chadwick and ceramic by Jessa Eastman; the master bedroom



When Caroline and Sébastien Breteau bought their house on a leafy street in Notting Hill, they envisioned a serious overhaul. Among other things, they had plans to install a lift and even thought of creating a swimming pool in the basement. The latter idea was scuppered by the presence of a 150-year-old oak tree in the back garden. "In London, you have a protective zone of six metres around the tree," explains Caroline. At the time, the couple were also expecting

their first child, Maia. So, they decided on something less ambitious and instead hired the French interior designer Damien Langlois-Meurinne to redecorate. Despite the fact that the only structural changes he made were to the master suite, the process still took nine months, during which the Breteaus decamped to Paris, travelling back and forth on the Eurostar. "We had a lot of fun trying out different hotels in London," recalls Caroline. The house is a majestic pillar-porched, sash-windowed property in one of the most coveted





Clockwise from left: the basement breakfast room, with custom banquette; the back garden; the study; Caroline Breteau

and expensive areas of London. It stretches over five storeys and has seven bedrooms. From the outside, it may look quintessentially English. On the inside, however, it now exudes a certain continental *je ne sais quoi*.

The furnishings bring together a selection of 20th-century designers: Tommaso Barbi and Gabriella Crespi floor lamps, a Jean Royère chest studded with brass nails and a pair of Vladimir Kagan swivel armchairs from the Seventies. There's also an Ado Chale coffee table from 2013. There are swathes of Calacatta

Oro marble, a straw marquetry screen that acts as a headboard in the master bedroom and a dressing room with curved lacquered limba wood doors and closets decorated with a trompe-l'œil sky. "It's a great way of bringing light into an enclosed space," notes Caroline.

Sébastien is an entrepreneur who previously spent 17 years in Hong Kong. Caroline worked for many years as an art director, most notably for the British and Indian editions of *Vogue*, before co-founding made-to-measure fashion label Gainsbourg in 2017. It employs a team ➤



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of couturiers and former Savile Row tailors with more than 100 years of experience between them. "We focus on impeccably fitted garments, which women will use and love and won't throw out after wearing just a few times," says Caroline. By her estimation, about half of Gainsbourg's clientele are European royalty, one of whom commissioned a dress for the wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle.

The Notting Hill property was the first home on which she and Sébastien worked together. It had previously been inhabited by the same family for 25 years. "I think my husband was keen to move into a place where there'd been happy vibes," says Caroline. Before that, it had been converted into a series of nine bedsits in the Seventies and stripped of almost all its original features. There was simply a "quite old and abused" mosaic floor left in the hallway and a traditional wooden stair banister.

Caroline admits that she had her husband didn't have a clear-cut style before teaming up with Langlois-Meurinne. "It was a mish-mash of things we'd picked up here and there," she says. "Damien threw more or less all of it out."

The brief they gave him was for something welcoming. "We didn't want anything too imposing or intimidating to guests," insists



Clockwise from top left: the dining area, with Paul Philp sculpture from the Willet gallery and Cherry Bomb Cage chandelier by Lindsay Adelman; Caroline's dressing room; Maia's bedroom, with pumpkin cushion by Yayoi Kusama

Caroline. They also requested that the rooms be fresh and light. Langlois-Meurinne used brass accents and golden tones to brighten up the spaces and also created custom rugs with shiny silks that reflect the sunlight.

One space stands out – the study, which has been decorated in moody green tones. "I wanted at least one dark room and for me the colour is typically English," Caroline says.

Sébastien, meanwhile, was insistent that the interior adhered to the rules of feng shui. "I was quite worried when he said he was going to bring in an expert," admits Langlois-Meurinne. "But almost all the suggestions were coherent with what we'd planned." The one exception is the red step at the bottom of the stairs. "That's supposed to be grounding," says Caroline.

The Breteaus recently bought another property in Paris and have once again hired Langlois-Meurinne, this time for a full-blown renovation. Perhaps it's the lesson of experience. After moving into their London home, they had a second child, Felix. "Going up and down the stairs with him has been a bit of a headache," says Caroline. "There are days when I've regretted not having that lift." ■

gainsbourg.co.uk; dl-m.fr