

FAMILY HOME

Inner peace

As a counterbalance to their busy international lifestyles, the owners of this south-west London home find a sense of serenity in its immaculate design

WORDS NATALIE WAIN PHOTOGRAPHS JAN BALDWIN



CINEMA ROOM

The windows in this room (left) have been left unadorned to allow light to enter, but at the flick of a switch, a blind creates complete darkness, so films can be enjoyed in cinema-like surroundings.

Verneuil II sofa in Littoral Ecru linen, from £9,480; LNA coffee table, from £11,100, both Liaigre, liaigre.com.

Photograph by Adam Fuss, Cheim & Read, cheimread.com.

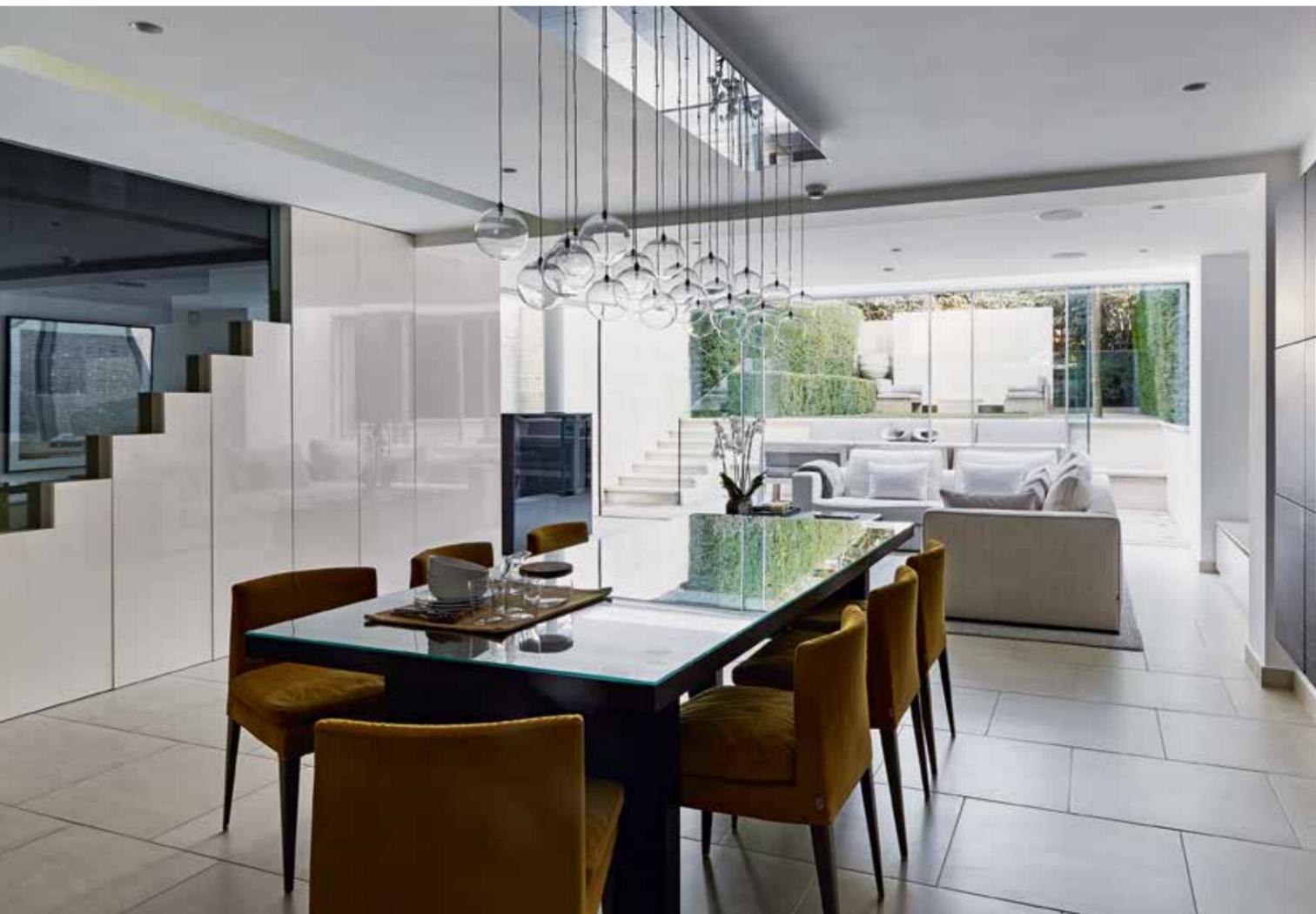
SITTING ROOM

Here, the polished bronze stool has been used to artful effect, introducing interesting reflections without the need for bright sunlight, a crucial consideration for the display of the delicate Chinese Imperial robes.

Naja coffee table in Polished Bronze, £18,890, Liaigre, liaigre.com.

Interior design, Juliette Byrne, juliettebyrne.com.





The art of elegance owes much to the power of simplicity, a theory demonstrated by Jacques and Arianna Fontaine in their exquisite home in south-west London. Zen-like tranquillity infuses every inch of the skilfully decorated space, which the couple shares with the younger two of their four children, Laurent and Colette, providing the family with a welcome respite from their peripatetic lives. “We’ve lived in several countries over the past ten years,” says Arianna, “but our design principles never waver.” The beautiful home they have created is testament to this: a masterclass in strong creative vision combined with impeccable good taste.

FINE TUNING

Jacques and Arianna bought this house three years ago, having been drawn immediately to its clean, contemporary aesthetic, reminiscent of their own. “You could say that this house found us,” says Arianna. “It’s so rare to find a home that ticks so many boxes. Even the garden, designed by Luciano Giubbilei, felt familiar, as we’ve worked with him before.”

Fortunately for the Fontaines, an extensive renovation by the previous owners had already opened up the Victorian property at the back, so few structural adjustments were needed. One of two bedrooms on the top floor was sacrificed to make way for an adjoining bathroom; otherwise, the layout remained the same. Meanwhile, the various fine finishes, such as the leather joinery of the bespoke office cabinetry and the leather-clad balustrade of the staircase, were painstakingly refurbished and repaired to satisfy Jacques’ enduring quest for excellence. “My husband is a perfectionist,” Arianna says.

OPEN-PLAN BASEMENT

This impressive space (above left and above) incorporates kitchen, dining and living areas. Glossy surfaces, including a layer of glass to protect the surface of the lacquered dining table, capture and bounce around the light that floods in at both ends of the room. For a delicate touch, to counterbalance the strict lines of the dark-stained wood storage cupboards and pristine white kitchen, above the table Juliette installed the pendant light, with its eye-catching, transparent glass globes. **Eunice dining chairs**, from £975 each; **Omnia sofa** in Spora 200, from £5,476, both Antonio Citterio for Maxalto at B&B Italia, bebitalia.com. **Bespoke kitchen**, Poliform UK, poliformuk.com.

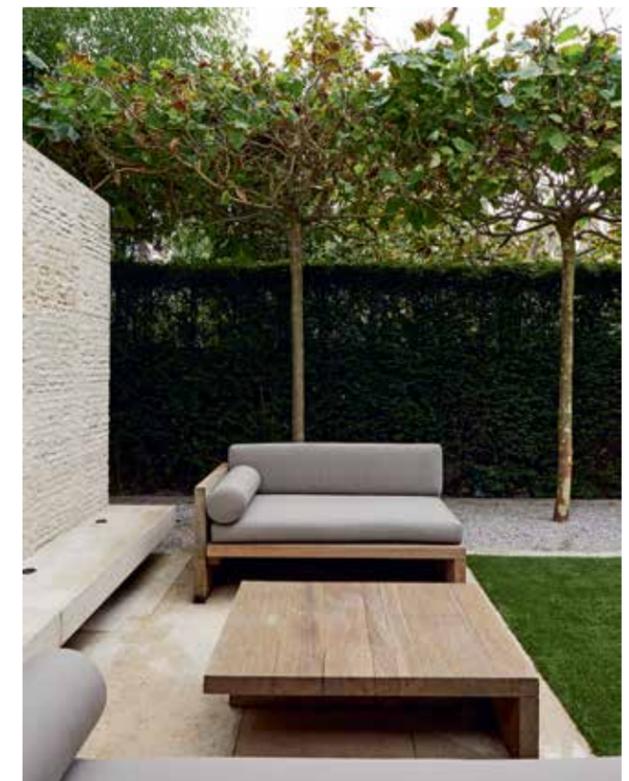
STUDY

The bespoke shelving (above right) behind the Christian Liaigre desk and chair was made

for the previous owners and has proved to be the perfect showcase for the Fontaines’ treasured collection of antique Chinese ceramics. The bonsai tree in the window has also been with the family for years. “I had the table on which it stands built ten years ago,” says Juliette.

GARDEN

Sliding doors on the lower ground floor extend the relaxed living area into the garden (far left and right). The artful combination of textures, clean lines and neutral tones is the work of landscape designer Luciano Giubbilei, who had created a garden for the Fontaines at one of their previous homes. “As soon as we saw this design, we knew it was by Luciano,” says Arianna. “It’s one of the main reasons we bought the house.” **Garden design and bespoke furniture**, Luciano Giubbilei, lucianogiubbilei.com.





CAREFULLY CURATED

When it came to decorative matters, Jacques and Arianna turned to interior designer Juliette Byrne, with whom they had worked on a project several years ago. After completing a detailed survey of the couple's existing furniture, Juliette was tasked with incorporating the collection into the new interior, as well as helping to source further complementary pieces to enhance the scheme. "The precise placement of furniture, and how it exists in its surroundings, is very important to both of them," Juliette explains.

With this in mind, Arianna selected a canopy bed, one of a number of Christian Liaigre designs in the house, to add height to the narrow dimensions of the main bedroom. She also found a polished bronze Liaigre table for the sitting room, to reflect light around the space and to add warmth and life to the restrained palette. In the cinema room, a pair of low leather stools provides extra seating for guests without compromising the field of vision from the sofa when they are not in use.

ARTISTIC LICENCE

It is this masterful combination of materials and subtlety of detail that allows Jacques and Arianna's treasured collection of art and antiques to shine. The clean, crisp palette of white walls, glossy surfaces and dark-stained floorboards in the sitting room provides a tabula rasa for a pair of Chinese court robes, which are family heirlooms, while photographs by Adam Fuss in the room beyond were chosen specifically to add colour and textural complexity to this space. It is, agrees Arianna, a graceful home that revels in nuance and excels in the art of the sublime.

LAURENT'S BEDROOM

Wherever possible, Jacques and Arianna have used organic, natural materials and the bunk beds in both children's bedrooms are made using solar energy, from 100 per cent organic, recyclable materials. Amber in the Sky bunk bed, from €3,000, Perludi, perludi.com.

COLETTE'S BEDROOM

Versatile furniture and a subtle shade of pink on the walls ensure this room (left) will stand the test of time as Colette grows up. Juliette converted the alcove into a mini studio for the budding artist and installed a magnetised board where she can display her latest artwork. Walls in Middleton Pink estate emulsion, £45 for 2.5L, Farrow & Ball, farrow-ball.com. Altay armchair in natural Mongolian goatskin, around £2,450, Coedition, coedition.fr. Magnetic Parakeet wallpaper, €74.95 for a small roll, Groovy Magnets, groovymagnets.com. Zebra Peruvian llama

flat weave rug in Pink, £1,195, Jonathan Adler, jonathanadler.com.

MAIN BEDROOM

Reflective lacquered wardrobe doors and polished wenge wood wall panels (above), from the previous owners' renovation, were embraced by the Fontaines to enhance the light in this long, narrow room. RE bed in Bari oak, from £9,500; Galerne table lamp in Bronze Medaille, from £1,530, both Liaigre, liaigre.com. Photograph (between windows) by Peter Beard, peterbeard.com.

GUEST BATHROOM

The architects responsible for the original renovation were called upon to design and build the extension required for this new bathroom (right) on the top floor of the house. The mirror is the same size as the window and makes the room feel as if it has two transparent glass walls. Architect, De Matos Ryan, dematosryan.co.uk.

