

..... DESIGN FOR LIVING

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*AN EXCEPTIONAL NEW YORK DUPLEX / EVGENY LEBEDEV'S ITALIAN CASTLE / SOUTH AFRICAN DESIGN
ROLEX AND THE LAND SPEED RECORD / KELLY WEARSTLER / BOLD BRAZILIAN STYLE / PATRIZIA MOROSO
BEAUTIFUL JEWELLERY / LORO PIANA / THE BROTHERS BEHIND BREMONT / ARTISTIC ADVENTURES IN URUGUAY*

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Effortless beauty is the hallmark of interior designers Philip Vergelyen and Paolo Moschino of Nicholas Haslam Ltd. Their work displays a deftness of hand that confidently mixes English antiques with industrial lighting and fine linens with punchy design surprises.

This home in Holland Park, west London's oasis of white stucco and tree-lined avenues, is a fitting backdrop for a series of breathtakingly composed tableaux. Ranging from a vast bronze bar beneath utilitarian lights to pure monochrome geometry, the effect is as polished as an artwork. However, as Philip Vergelyen says with a smile, "Effortless perfection actually requires a huge amount of effort, but you must never let that show."

This was the second time that Vergelyen and Moschino had designed the interior of this five-storey home, having created an era-appropriate look for their client some 15 years ago. But times change and the house needed an update. "It felt rather traditional, with muted colours and lots of beiges and browns - a very fabric-rich look," remembers Vergelyen.

To revitalise, the designers took a pared-back approach: "Stripping away, honing and refining can reveal the pure, essential elements of a design," explains Vergelyen. This project started life with a smaller remit, the creation of a hip hangout for a basement excavation. The clients have four teenage sons and "like any parents, they >



IMAGE: Symmetry and order are the key traits of the living room. The sofas and the pair of vitrines are by Paolo Moschino for Nicholas Haslam Ltd



ABOVE: The black and white bedroom features antiqued-mirror drawers and a bespoke trophy lamp

OPPOSITE: An adjacent seating area is similarly monochrome; the 'Pagoda' lights and 'Torino' tables were designed by Paolo Moschini for Nicholas Haslam Ltd



would prefer their sons to have friends over rather than be out clubbing," says Vergeylen. The basement therefore needed to be cool, inviting, and as light as possible.

One of the biggest hurdles was persuading the owners to sacrifice floor space for a terrace. "It seemed counter-intuitive to reduce the square metreage, but we knew that vast windows would let in a sense of the outside and transform the space," says Vergeylen.

The design scoops maximum sunlight into the lower-ground floor and, with frosted glass screens, a polished cement floor and the back-lit bronze bar, this space feels anything but subterranean. "The look is very clean cut," says Vergeylen.

The clients were delighted. In fact, the only problem was that, now, the whole family loved the basement so much they didn't want to head back upstairs to the untouched rooms...

The solution was to return to Nicholas Haslam Ltd, based in central London with three showrooms – and the expertise of Vergeylen and Moschino. "So," laughs Vergeylen, "having started at the bottom, we worked our way up." The clean-cut ethos was ushered up the staircase, smoothing away the dissonance between

the basement and the rest of the house. "We were brimming with new ideas, so it was wonderful to have the freedom to take them throughout the home," says Vergeylen.

Simplicity, invigorated by strict editing and striking contrasts, remained the overarching theme, but expressed in different ways. "We wanted to create various looks, but without the house feeling disjointed," explains Vergeylen.

For example, the living room, with its symmetry of tones and shapes, is more traditional than the basement. In the hallway and guest bedroom, black contrasts with ice white and antiqued mirrored surfaces – notably the Nicholas Haslam Ltd chest of drawers – to create architectural lines of beauty. "What unites all the spaces is a brightness, sharpness and lightness," says Vergeylen, a result of the duo's repeated refining. "To some, it might look quite sparse, but I'd prefer to have nothing than something that hits an off-key note."

However, there are also healthy dashes of humour, such as the lamp fashioned from a sports trophy and the Nicholas Haslam Ltd bench with its animal feet. "Humour is absolutely essential to design," says Vergeylen. "Just as with people, if you take yourself too seriously, it's not

particularly attractive. But if you raise a smile, it adds charm."

That penchant for humourous touches takes us back to the streamlined basement, with its giant red chair in the shape of a hand. However, the designers have carefully counterbalanced that cartoonish shape with a delicate bronze sculpture of hands by Lorenzo Quinn. Equilibrium is restored and, as Vergeylen says: "Contrast creates personality."

Similarly, when a wall in the basement needed impact, the designers suggested borrowing two old master paintings from the living room ("If a space is entirely modern, it can be too cold. If it's all traditional, you risk it feeling like a museum"), heightening the contrast between old and new by encasing the paintings in chunky Perspex boxes.

This home, rich in antiques, has undoubtedly benefited from the designers' sophisticated edit. As Vergeylen says, "In interior design terms, sophistication is reaching that point when literally everything is perfect, where you can step back and say, 'that's it.'" Until the next time they are called upon, of course. ■

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OPPOSITE: The monumental bronze bar is a sculptural addition to the basement living space. It's topped by a row of Nicholas Haslam Ltd's 'Loft' pendants, designed by Moschino