

LONDON M B

After relocating from New York, Sheena Murphy and her family have made a mark on their new home

Photography Renee Kemps



A big fan of working with stone, Sheena was keen to use this throughout the build. "It's an amazing natural material that can do wonders for a space visually, and it's a reminder of the incredible beauty produced by mother earth," she explains

"It truly takes a village to pull off a project like this and we've always known the value of having a team you know, trust and have a shared process with. I decided to work with all new people on this project and so the dynamic had to be established real-time."

HOME PROFILE

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

Squeezed between two Victorian houses in London, this post-war property hadn't been renovated in over fifteen years. Over this time it had tired and lost its sparkle, though its charm remained apparent. Ready to take on the challenge, Sheena worked with deDraft to reorganise the layout, moving the kitchen to the back of the house and digging down to create lofty ceilings. Catering for the needs of the family, the new design saw reconstruction to the staircase to remove a bathroom from the first floor landing while a bedroom was replaced with a larger closet and bathroom for the master suite.

LOCATION

Queens Park, London





"WHILE I APPRECIATE COLOUR AND PATTERN, I HAVE NEVER BEEN ONE TO WANT TO LIVE AMONG IT"

Sheena Murphy of design studio *nune* is no stranger to the pages of *enki*. Her work is both classically timeless and yet wonderfully exploratory as neutral palettes are heightened by textural play and her natural instinct for styling a space. Whatever the brief – you can trust the outcome will be unfathomably gorgeous. So when her latest project dropped onto our desks, a project in which she was not only designer but also the acting client, the entire office was clambering for a first look – and wow, it didn't disappoint. After almost eight years living under the bright lights of New York, Sheena and her family returned to London looking for a place to call home. And though an abundance of polished Victorian dwellings lined the street, patiently ready and waiting to go, the designer was looking for something a little more offbeat. "I have long been drawn to what I call the ugly beauties in life," she admits nonchalantly. "I love the mid-century council buildings that are more prevalent in east London and the brutalist architecture seen across the city." Eventually Sheena found what she had been looking for, a quirky post-war abode that was craving a little love and care, but this was only half the battle won. It then took months of persuading her less than convinced husband that this was the perfect fit for them – it seems not even the professionals get to veto when it comes to house buying! And if house hunting wasn't exhausting enough, the Murphys immediately began renovations. "We wanted to open up the ground floor, create a seamless transition to the exterior, maximise light and create lots of smart storage." Walls and floors were ripped out, windows were replaced with energy efficient alternatives and the kitchen found a new sense of belonging at the back of the plan, endowed with much larger ceilings than its previous occupancy had offered. All new insulation was recycled and worked with natural materials to create a home that truly feels as good as it looks. Once paired with Sheena's iconic neutral treatment, the sanctuary was finally complete. "It's so calming and enveloping," Sheena beams, "like a gentle hug every time you come home." Now, isn't that the dream.

To provide respite from Sheena's busy lifestyle, the interiors have been left purposefully neutral – creating a relaxing base in which she can come home and switch off

"WORKING ON YOUR OWN HOUSE
ISN'T ALL RAINBOWS AND UNICORNS"



"There is a steam shower in the main bathroom, which was a total headache to install and the plumber was unsure if it would even work, but it does and it's probably my husband's favourite part of the house!"





MEET THE DESIGNER

Sheena Murphy

As both the client and designer, Sheena, founder of nune, shares her unique perspective on the project

What inspired the calming palette?

Although I loved NY and left part of my heart there, it was tiring; the pace is relentless and expectations are high. I was running a business, trying to be the most present parent possible, stay in contact with people back home, have time for my marriage and my friends, not to mention time for myself. It's the story of so many working women, and the one thing I knew I needed if I was going to keep my lifestyle was to create a sanctuary at home.

Was it important to integrate built-in furniture? Built-in furniture establishes a sense of permanence in a space. While I think you can go overboard, if done correctly, built-in joinery will always maximise the space you have and so, particularly in smaller spaces or homes with busy families, the investment makes sense. I love that it's like an extension of the architecture that has a direct relationship to the furnishings, like the glue that holds the two together.

Tell us more about the insulation.

All insulation is recycled and works incredibly well. Traditional insulation is incredibly toxic, negatively impacts air quality and is very bad for the planet. There are a number of different materials you can use from sheep's wool to old denim scraps to recycled polyester and the price range is huge, but the product we used was only marginally more expensive than a conventional rockwool and I recommend it to everyone.

"WE MADE DECISIONS THAT WERE GENTLE ON THE ENVIRONMENT"



PROJECT NOTES

ARCHITECT
deDraft

INTERIOR DESIGNER
nune

BUILDER
JJC London

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER
Structures Made Easy

WINDOWS
Schneider; Steel Window Surface

FLOORING
Hørning; Natural Wood Flooring Co

LIGHTING
Architectural, Astro; kitchen wall, vintage Raak; hallway, Mokoto Ishii; desk lamp, Egg Collective; bedside lamps, Workstead

KITCHEN
Design by nune fabrication by Sustainable Kitchens; tap, Studio Ore

HARDWARE
Studio Henry Wilson

NOTABLE FURNITURE
Dining chairs, reupholstered vintage Luigi Saccardo; sofa, Slagelse Møbelværk; kitchen sketch, Ben Nicholson; curtains, Nest Design; main bed, design by nune fabrication by Another Country; living room artwork, Ekun Richard