

**Practical magic:**

Chiswick-based architect Rodrigo Moreno Masey designed his home to be stylish but totally liveable, suited to the needs of himself, wife Suzanna and their three young daughters

Centrepiece:

right, the huge, bright living/dining space has a glass skylight and folding glass doors. Rodrigo designed the kitchen, utility room, cloakroom and dressing room to precisely fit Ikea measurements. "Every cupboard and drawer fits to the millimetre, and looks bespoke. It saved us thousands."

Left: the useful and much-loved garden room of reclaimed oak, set at the end of the long plot which has been replanted with young crab apples, daisies and hydrangeas and has had a new lawn. It's all a treat to look at from the main living/kitchen/dining space



Unlock the space and the house works

Over three years, an architect totally redesigned his Edwardian home in Richmond for family life — creating more space, moving staircases and even adding a garden room, discovers **Philippa Stockley**

PEOPLE worry that architects only design expensive houses that they couldn't imagine living in. Rodrigo Moreno Masey isn't like that, for though he spent a decade doing top-end luxury residential before going solo in 2010, the total redesign of his own Richmond house centred around family life with his wife Suzanna and their three girls.

It was done in three phases, with the couple saving up between. The centrepiece is a huge living-dining space looking out to the long garden. There are smart bathrooms, masses of streamlined storage and heaps of style — but the sort you aren't afraid to touch or sit on. Even a little office next to the master bedroom isn't off-limits to the children.

On the original Edwardian attic floor, two of the girls' bedrooms are linked by a circular crawl-through cut-out. The sisters chat through it, and Bode the dog loves jumping through it. When Rodrigo and Suzanna, both



44, bought the place in 2015, it had been in the same family for 35 years. It had a long dogleg and a side return, and a garden with old walnut trees, in a leafy area near the river. But it needed updating. The couple, who met in 2000, married in 2004 and rented flats, then bought a house in Sydenham. But with three children, now aged 13, 11 and nine, it was definitely time for a special family home.

Rodrigo was looking for somewhere he could enlarge, and this was ideal. He loves making spaces better, is passionate about design and full of good tips. He looked for a wide house "because their halls are generous", so at 22ft, this ticked the box. He also looked at the neighbours' houses, which told him what the planners might allow. And he was happy not to be in a conservation area, as planning rules are generally less strict.

What he most enjoys is "being able to unlock a space. For example, move the staircase, and the house works better." Here, the ground floor had a pretty, sun-filled front room linked by an arch to a small, darkish kitchen, while the very long, narrow dogleg





Master bedroom: with dressing room and en suite bathroom



Perfect blend: the Edwardian sitting room's contemporary makeover



at the back was underused. He visualised a complete opening up and enlargement of all this into an amazing and practical family floor connected to the garden. But it would be the final phase in a lengthy transformation, because everything except the roof needed renewing.

STARTING AT THE TOP

Phase one was the attic bedrooms, putting in extra skylights and renewing the windows, resulting in two airy children's bedrooms. The front room cornices were repaired and a fine salvaged fireplace was added. This initial phase didn't need planning permission, and took six months.

Phase two was to reconfigure the middle floor and rewire and re-pipe everywhere. "I took it all back to studwork," Rodrigo says. "People get frightened about that, but what's the worst that can happen?" He shrugs. "If

Man cave: the garden room with space to read, relax and enjoy time out with a movie

WHAT IT COST

- 2,200sq ft house in 2015: £1,195,000
- Value of 2,700sq ft house now: £1.95 million-£2 million.
- Architect's estimate for similar works, exc fees and VAT: £250 per sq ft

GET THE LOOK

● Architect: Rodrigo Moreno Masey (morenomasey.com); structural engineer: elliottwood.co.uk; garden: landscapeassociates.co.uk; folding windows: slimlinealuminium.co.uk; polished concrete: steysonsconcretefloors.co.uk; Circus pendant light: studiowarm.com; master bathroom fittings: waterworks.com; walnut woodblock floor: naturalwoodfloor.co.uk; Silestone worktops: marble-city.co.uk; Ambit pendant lamps: muuto.com; units and cupboards: ikea.com; reclaimed lab stools: retrovius.com.

something goes wrong, you do it again." Now there's a sunny master bedroom leading to a bespoke dressing room and en suite bathroom, both cut from a former second bedroom, plus a third child's bedroom and little bathroom. The family camped on-site throughout, sleeping in the attic. "It was fun, despite the dust."

For the final phase, the couple borrowed money. But this year-long push from 2017 to 2018 made all the difference. The builders made them a temporary kitchenette in the hall, so they used that, living in the front room and upstairs bedrooms.

"Demolition is fast, then it all seems slow," Rodrigo says. He watched his design progress each day. It was both radical and straightforward: since the dogleg was long, he only added three metres, but built sideways across the whole 22ft width, creating a huge room with folding glass doors spanning it, and a sedum roof.

A glass skylight runs right down one side like a swimming lane, ending not in a steel corner but a magical glass one, enabled by

an inset steel column supporting a mighty 33ft steel going front to back. This is no bog-standard glazed box. The planners passed it without a hitch.

THE BIG REVEAL

Beneath the long glass skylight runs an oak wall with in-built flush cupboards. The floor is polished grey concrete, with swirls and footmarks.

Finally, a garden room of reclaimed oak makes a visual treat at the end of the garden, which has itself been replanted with young crab apples, daisies and hydrangeas, along with a lawn.

"When the glass doors finally went in after a 20-week wait, and the blue film was peeled of the glass roof, it was a glorious moment," says Rodrigo.

For the girls, a big play space appeared — in which, as their parents cooked in the huge white kitchen area, perhaps with a deserved glass of wine, they sensibly and immediately built a toy village.

What more could a family want?