



Emma and Ross Perkins

Architects, and co-founders of Emil Eve Architects
Stoke Newington, London, UK



Through the giant sliding doors, the courtyard is wrapped in Petersen Tegl bricks, which pick up the tones of the oak used inside. 'They are all handmade, with slightly wobbly surfaces, so they also complement the aged Victorian brick on the original part of the house,' Emma says.

'WE'RE ALWAYS TRYING TO LISTEN to the building: to uncover what it was, work out what's important to keep and where we can refresh,' says architect Emma Perkin of the ethos she shares with her husband Ross. They co-founded Emil Eve Architects, a London-based agency that draws on his background as a conservation architect and their shared love of modern angles. Their aim is to lovingly and respectfully blur the line between period buildings and contemporary ideas.

Nowhere is this better demonstrated than in their own home. A plant-filled, carefully renovated Victorian end-of-terrace house near Stoke Newington, London, its staircase is a shining example of the Emil Eve touch. On the lower run, leading up from the open-plan kitchen-diner extension, a blue Valchromat rail rises sharply, meeting the original banisters on the turn. 'We wanted to mark the difference between new and old,' Emma says. 'The two diagonals weave together like layers, telling the story of the house.'

Next to the staircase, telling its own story, a four-metre plant climbs between the floors. 'Ross bought it about two years ago, and it must be so happy in that spot,' Emma says. 'A case of right plant, right place. You can almost see it growing.' Curiously, for someone so meticulous about everything that has gone into her home that she knows the name of the bricks used in the extension (Petersen Tegl, chosen because they complement both the oak inside and the aged Victorian brick of the main house), Emma doesn't know what type of plant it is. 'I never know the names,' Emma says. 'Though I just couldn't live without them.' About 80 per cent of the plants in her home are cuttings from her mother's plants, or from

those of their friends, and are chosen and positioned in order to perform different functions. In the bathroom, smaller, darker plants are placed to pick out the dark tones of the tiles and create a calming space, while in the main bedroom, there are lighter, more uplifting plants. In the extension, plants help to bring the verdant outdoors in, framing the picture window and creating a connection with the courtyard. 'You can see them as you walk in the front door, and it links the feeling of greenery all the way through the house,' Emma says.

Emma and Ross are particularly interested in joinery, and designed the kitchen, dining table and sliding doors to the outside themselves. The windows flow around two sides of the home, and finding doors that didn't have beams in the middle was impossible, so the couple had to create a system bespoke. The concrete floor is, Emma says, a really 'basic aggregate of concrete, but instead of polishing it, which has become the norm, we decided not to, bringing out the material's texture. We love it! Not only is it the most forgiving floor in the world – our children can happily drop cereal on it – it was another chance for us to work with a simple material and find a way to elevate it.' Texture is always important, and exposed oak was purposefully used: 'We use timbers like paint colours, and this had the natural warmth we were after for this space.' Leaving the wood untreated stemmed from a desire to appreciate its raw beauty. 'It's a family home,' Emma says, 'and you have to accept it will age and mark. But again, those scratches tell the story of our life here, and so we enjoy the process of aging gracefully.' An ethos that truly accepts that a house should also be a home.

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In the open-plan extension, Emma and Ross designed the oak dining table and bookcases themselves. The chairs are vintage, and the concrete floor was left unpolished so as to truly enjoy its texture. The pendant light is by Viabizzuno.

Contemporary design meets period detail as the Valchromat lower level intersects with the original bannister. The creeping plant, whose name Emma doesn't know, is over four metres tall.



Ross designed the kitchen, and the island is made in Valchromat. Its surface is oak, to match the table and bookcases that line the wall, and it is illuminated by lights from Tala. The tiles behind the sink are from Grestec. Chinese money plants, cheese plants and spider plants line the shelf above them.



Here, the dark green plant was kept small, as Emma thinks it helps to create a cocooning, enclosed, relaxing feel. It was chosen to complement the dark green tiles from Johnson Tiles. The floor tiles are from Mink Interiors.

In the living area, pots and plants line the mantle. 'I don't think of myself as a collector, as they need to have a specific passion,' Emma says. 'I think we just accumulate things we like.' A lot of the pots were picked up from local makers on trips to Scottish islands. 'They're all different, but reflect the culture of each place.'



Painted in Paint & Paper Library's Slate I, the plants here are purposefully lighter, chosen to feel both calming and uplifting.

