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AT A GLANCE
Names Niels and Erica Swinkels
Ages 42 and 34
Location Brackenhury, London
Property Victorian terrace with basement extension
Bedrooms 4 **Bathrooms** 3
Project started April 2014
Project completed June 2015
Size of house 180sqm
Build cost £490,000



When film studio executive Niels Swinkels and his wife Erica, owner of a concierge company, set out to buy a home in west London, they knew exactly what they were looking for: somewhere light, airy and open, with space for their family to grow. Forty viewings later, however, they still hadn't found the perfect spot. As fate would have it, they walked past this L-shaped, Victorian terraced house near leafy Ravenscourt Park just as its estate agent was leaving, and the couple requested an impromptu viewing. 'Erica fell in love instantly,' Niels remembers, 'but I was more cautious to start with.' He felt the property was too small for their growing family – a son, Dash, now three, and later a daughter, Margot, who was born in 2015 – and more gloomy than they had hoped. But when a quick investigation of a neighbouring home revealed a precedent for basement extension and renovation, the couple went ahead with the purchase on the basis that they would follow suit before moving in.

A friend put them in touch with architect Neil Dusheiko and they contacted him straight away, which meant that by the time the keys were exchanged he had already drawn up plans for an extensive refit. The partnership turned out to be the stuff of architects' dreams – Niels and Dusheiko were on the same page when it came to almost every aspect of the design. 'I've never had such an affinity with a client,' says Dusheiko, who bonded instantly with Niels over a shared appreciation of sci-fi films. It was this passion that informed their creative process – Niels made up a moodboard of his favourite film sets to use as inspiration for the remodel. The one that stuck out was *Ex Machina*, which Niels was working on at the time, filmed at a modernist mansion fitted out with futuristic accessories in the heart of a Norwegian forest. 'He was fascinated by the connection between the industrial and the natural,' says Dusheiko, 'and wanted to recreate that →

this picture
New styles and textures divide the kitchen from the living area

Hollywood star

Film executive Niels Swinkels and his wife Erica took inspiration from on-screen interiors to turn their London terrace into a bright, open home

Words Emily Seymour Photography Tim Crocker/Charles Hosea



A WORD FROM THE ARCHITECT

'The shortage of housing stock in central London has been a key driver for exploring ways of improving existing properties by gaining more space and light for their occupants. This project was a case in point. A basement conversion was the obvious choice, as the existing building had already been excavated and we could solve historic settlement issues by underpinning the house. As it is in a conservation area, extending down rather than out was a solution the local authority could support. Basements are hard to get right, particularly because they're difficult to light. In this case orientation was critical – aligning a glass floor against glazed doors to a south-facing courtyard garden worked perfectly in getting daylight below ground.' **Neil Dusheiko**

and top-floor refurbishment. Niels invested the money in removing the existing low ceilings in the bedrooms and bathrooms and installing skylights in the roof. 'It's amazing to lie back in the bath and see the stars,' he says. The couple agreed from the start that they wanted their home to consist of a series of bright, open living spaces that felt connected to each other, so that their family could interact as much as possible. Dusheiko came up with the idea of a glazed folding door to connect the kitchen and living areas, which has the added benefit of including the external patio into the ground-floor plan without actually extending that space. 'We quickly realised that with a glass floor up against the sliding doors, we could bring light down into the basement without losing any floor space,' says Dusheiko. The reinforced →

above Erica chose feature lighting from Heal's to create a link between the living and dining areas

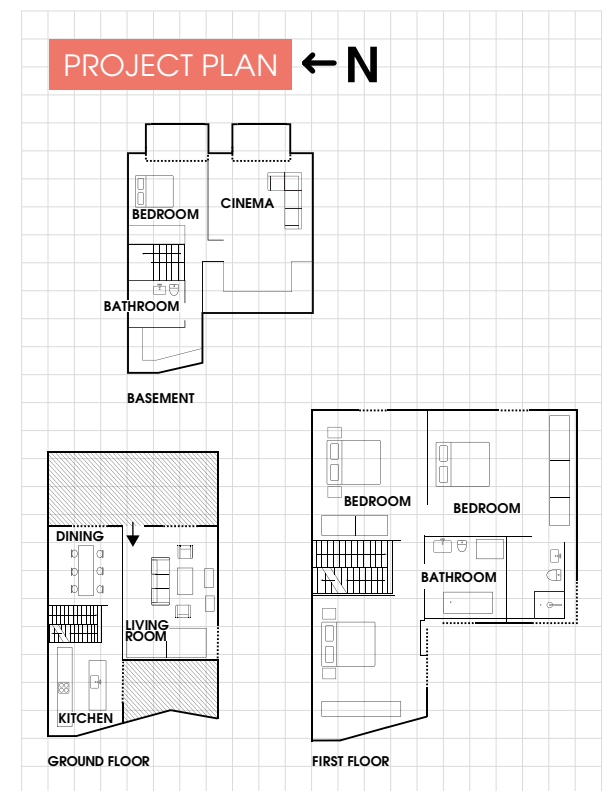
sense in his own house with plenty of raw finishes and large windows to the outdoors.' Erica, on the other hand, has Swedish heritage and was keen to incorporate a pared-back, Scandinavian feel into their interiors. She was also determined to retain some of the property's original fabric by recycling its materials back into the build. 'Where Niels would ask for concrete, Erica requested bricks,' says Dusheiko. 'It was brilliant that they both had such clear ideas, but they weren't always complementary.' To keep both parties happy, Dusheiko decided to divide the property by its storeys into three themed zones. As the basement houses a cinema room for Niels, it makes the most of his sci-fi aesthetic with a polished concrete floor and a moving blackout screen. At the top, Erica brought her Scandi influence to the bedrooms and bathrooms and gave them a soft, neutral look, with natural fabrics and warm wood floorboards. For the ground level in the middle, Dusheiko married the two styles in a mixture of materials and textures, combining bricks they recycled from the original back wall with pale wood, a neutral grey kitchen, a touch of polished concrete and a large glazed floor panel. In order to keep an eye on costs, Dusheiko split the project into two stages. The basement extension came first, with a budget of £120,000 and a 10 per cent contingency. Luckily, that part of the build went so well that it finished a month ahead of schedule, so once the excavation was complete the extra funds were reallocated to the second phase – the ground

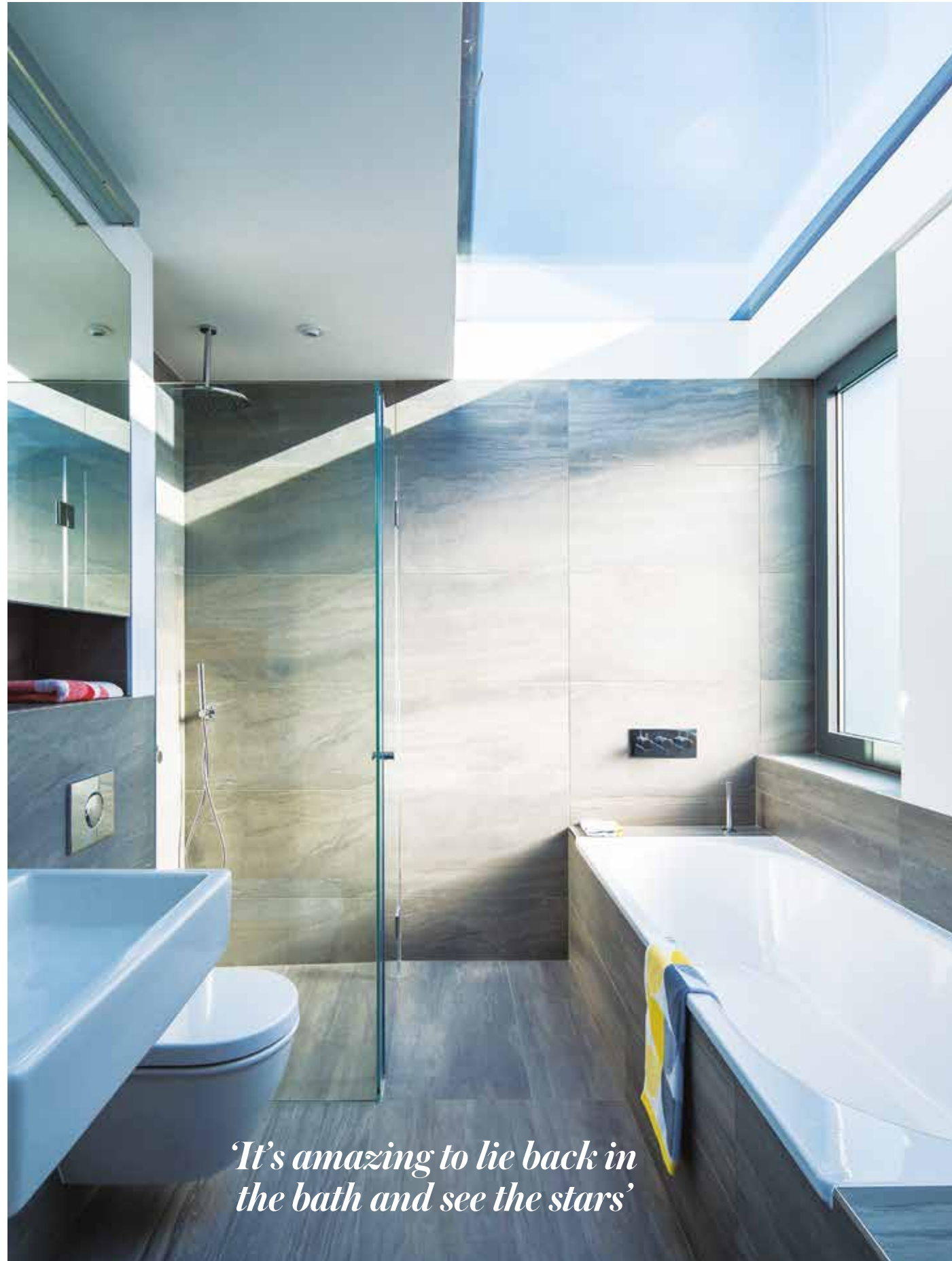


this picture A new double-height wall, made with bricks from the original back wall, runs from the playroom to the living space above



this picture A blackout screen mounted in the wall can be pulled across to create a dark cinema space in the adjacent room





'It's amazing to lie back in the bath and see the stars'



left Skylights in both bathrooms make for bright, airy spaces

below The renovation raised the bedroom ceilings into open, church-like arches



ETERNAL SUNSHINE

Glazing recessed into the raised ceilings across the top floor brings rays of sunshine into the Swinkels' bedrooms. For something similar, head to Sunsquare; it can install flat rooflights from £610 for a 60x60cm square. (01284 846 596; sunsquare.co.uk)



glazed panel has been a huge success, not least with three-year-old Dash, who loves to lie on the floor with his parents waving up from below. 'It's one of our favourite design features,' says Niels. 'It's lovely that we can be cooking in the kitchen and still keep an eye on the playroom beneath.'

As the house was originally built in 1879, it was draughty and inefficient when it came to its energy use. Niels and Erica were keen to update its eco-credentials, not just to cut down their heating bills but also to bring the house into the twenty-first century. New insulation and piped underfloor heating were added throughout, which enabled a much larger area of glass at the back of the house. The skylights are all oriented towards the south and east to maximise solar gain, which means the family hardly need to use the new heating system at all. Plus, as the glass floods the basement with sunlight, it doesn't rely on artificial lighting during the day. In fact, Dusheiko's design has carefully positioned lightwells, windows and panels so that no matter where you're standing in the building, you can always look up and see the sky. It's a welcome change from the dark rooms that were there before. 'Our favourite thing about the house now is how light it is,' says Niels. 'It has completely transformed the space.'

It's a testament to the strength of Niels and Erica's original ideas that if you compare Dusheiko's original 3D drawings with the finished article, they match almost exactly. While the family lived off-site during the build, they visited every day so they could follow its progress in painstaking detail. 'We loved showing our friends and family the finished house,' says Erica. 'It felt like the final stage in a very organic development.'

An exciting but unfortunately timed promotion for Niels meant that almost as soon as work was finished, the family moved to Los Angeles, so Niels and Erica have rented their home out while they are away. 'When we move back I'd love to add some finishing touches to the interior design,' says Erica. 'But mostly we just can't wait to live in it again.' **GD**

Suppliers

PROJECT TEAM Architect Neil Dusheiko Architects (020 77298 884; neildusheiko.com) **Engineer** Fothergill (020 8948 4165; fothergill.uk.com) **Contractor** Space Cube (020 8905 8358; space-cube.com) **Quantity surveyor** Geoff Tyler at Brooke Vincent + Partners (020 8202 1013; brooke-vincent.co.uk) **Basement works** Structural London (020 8249 9366; structurallondon.com) **FIXTURES & FITTINGS Timber floor** Parkwood (020 8878 6377; parkwood-interiors.co.uk) **Concrete floor** Lazenby (01935 700 306; lazenby.co.uk) **Kitchen** Schmidt (020 3714 6000; schmidt-kitchens.com) **Glazing** Alcoglass (01923 246 600; accordial.co.uk) **Lighting** Heal's (020 7896 7451; heals.com); Mr Resistor (020 8874 2234; mr-resistor.co.uk) **Tiles** Pentagon Tiles (01279 626 662; pentagon-tiles.co.uk) **Sanitaryware** Just Add Water (020 8370 6430; justaddwater.co.uk) **Ironmongery** SDS (020 7228 1185; sdslondon.co.uk) **Heating** Timoleon (01392 363 605; omnie.co.uk) **Brass switches** Sparks (020 7263 8007; sparksdirect.co.uk) **Blinds** Interiors of Chiswick (020 8994 0073; interiorsofchiswick.co.uk) **Pocket doors** Portman (01462 444 466; portman-pocketdoors.co.uk)

STYLE *finder*

Recreate Niels and Erica's chic space with Scandi-inspired surfaces and modern furnishings

Compiled by *Emily Seymour*

IN
DETAIL



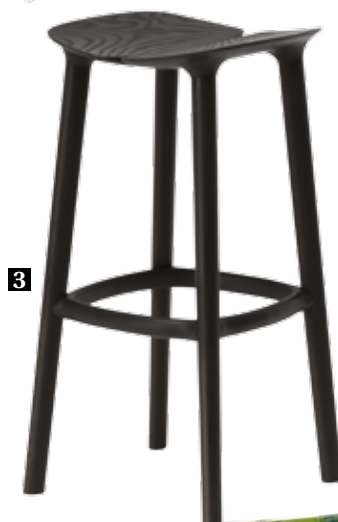
Wide expanses of glazed flooring characterise Niels and Erica's Hammersmith home, adding a modern feel and providing much-needed light for their basement extension. It's a stylish way to ensure an open, light-filled space – for advice on recreating the look in your project, contact architectural glazing specialists Culmax (020 8896 0700; culmax.co.uk) or Trombé (020 7688 6670; trombe.co.uk).



1



2



3



4



5

Get the look

- 1 Metallic lighting** Cohen small pendant in copper, £95, Heal's (020 7896 7451; heals.co.uk)
- 2 Soft touch** Large herringbone throw in wool in grey, £126, Avoca (020 3627 7960; avoca.com)
- 3 Classic style** Osso bar stool in ash in black, £536, Mattiazzi at Nest.co.uk (0114 243 3000; nest.co.uk)
- 4 Botanical textile** Passiflora linen cushion in chartreuse, £65, Amara (0800 587 7645; amara.com)
- 5 Curved design** Selena side table in mango wood in black, £99, Swoon Editions (020 3137 2464; swooneditions.com)

Swatch watch

- 1 Smooth finish** Polished concrete floor tiles, from £100 per sqm, Lazenby (01935 700 306; lazenby.co.uk)
- 2 Warm tone** French grey dark matt emulsion paint, £38 for 2.5L, Little Greene (0845 880 5855; littlegreene.com)
- 3 Industrial look** Brick-effect wallpaper in brown, £19.99 per 10m roll, Albany (01323 430 886; wallpaperdirect.com)
- 4 Nordic effect** Primrose floorboards in oak, £59.85 per sqm, Ecora (020 7148 5265; ecora.co.uk)

Editor's view

'Every space is bathed in light thanks to the ingenious use of glazing. It's very impressive'