



## COMMON THREADS

While restoring a west London terrace, textile lover Helen Magowan and her husband, Andrew, found out that they shared more than just space with some former residents, a family of turn-of-the-century drapers. Today, bespoke ribbons connect up the rooms and pay tribute to that lineage. Dominic Bradbury unravels the wraparound story. Photography: Rachael A. Smith

Left: originally a draper's shop, the Magowans' late Victorian terrace retains its Maxwell signage from the 1960s/1970s, when it was briefly used as a launderette. The sign was hidden behind a wooden cover, which was removed as part of the restoration process. Top: in the elegant entrance hall, this distinctive window screen was created by Helen Magowan out of coffee filter papers





Above: in the open-plan 'winter room', the fireplace surround is made of reclaimed snooker-table slate from Retrouvius. Below left: this cabinet of curiosities was created by architect Patrick Lewis to evoke moments in the life of former resident William Roberts, a card-maker and the grandfather of the clan. Below right: the kitchen's Belfast sink and brass taps were sourced online from Ebay



Above: a 1960s-vintage Ladderax from Heal's keeps the library in order. Farrow & Ball's 'Stiffkey Blue' matches the hue of the building's façade. Below: these Plain English kitchen units were adapted to suit the space then custom-painted, with colour consultation by Anna Glover. The work counters, from Retrouvius, are made of reclaimed chemistry-lab iroko, which recurs throughout the house







Left: a new, Patrick Lewis-designed staircase leads up to extra living space, featuring Danish armchairs from Max. Above: the dining table and benches are made from yet more iroko - still with its graffiti intact. Below: Anna Glover and Jennifer Hollidge's ribbons are threaded through the building, adding a sense of fluidity







Above: the master bedroom features bespoke bedside lights by Urban Cottage Industries. Below left: Deepa Panchamia's silk-and-linen ribbon snakes up across the double-height space. Below right: Anna Glover's digitally printed ribbons evoke the lives of the Roberts patriarch and matriarch. Opposite: Helen Magowan's hidden 'sewing box' studio is fronted with bands of larch and oak







**BEYOND** the midnight blue of their front door, Helen and Andrew Magowan share their late Victorian terraced house with a welcome family of ghosts. This highly individual and seductive home is beautifully tailored to the couple's needs. Yet it also celebrates the heritage of the Roberts family, who lived here for 30 years in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A clan of printers turned drapers, the Robertses fascinated the Magowans and their architect, Patrick Lewis, and their stories are told in a series of textile ribbons winding through the house from top to bottom. This adds to the multi-layered character of the building and introduces a sense of movement and delight.

'From the second that Patrick told us that this had once been a draper's shop, it was almost inevitable that we would do something with textiles,' says Helen Magowan, for whom fabrics and textiles are a passion. 'When we met Patrick it was clear from the start that he was interested in some of the same things as us, and in the heritage of the house. At the same time, he was asking us questions such as: "What do you do at night when you come home from work?" or: "What do you do on a Saturday morning?" Everything here is a product of those questions.'

The Magowans had been living in an apartment in Barons Court but hankered after more privacy and space. Looking for a house in west London, they found everything was neatly laid out for family living with four to five bedrooms. It wasn't a pattern that appealed, so they began to consider other options that might give them more flexibility. Eventually, they came across this Victorian terrace, which had been clumsily split into two apartments, with one arranged over the upper two floors and the other across the lower two floors and the basement.

'The house was horrific,' says Helen. 'It was owned by someone who had been here for years and then tried to sell off the top two floors as a separate flat. He had fitted it out himself to a very basic level. The first night in this house was the worst. I thought I would never be able to sleep again.'

'It was quite eccentric,' agrees Andrew Magowan, a lawyer who works for an online fashion retail company. 'I went to get the keys and as I opened the front door I thought, What have we done? There was dust everywhere and a bunch of little rooms, all cut off from each other, along with six toilets. What we have now is the antithesis of that.'

Untroubled by concerns of square meterage or maximising bedrooms, the Magowans wanted to create a home that suited them, with connections between the various living spaces. At the same time, they wanted it to be full of character, interest, warmth and personality, which began to evolve when they started their conversations and collaboration with Patrick Lewis.

'What really drives me is the story behind a space,' says Lewis. 'Here, our research connected us to the history of the house and the family of drapers that used to live here. But it also connected to Helen and her special interest in textiles and embroidery. So there was the architectural intent on the one hand and then the idea of integrating the textiles into the design.'

Lewis's design for the interiors was largely driven by a series of models, which show the fluid nature of the living spaces – with many double-height and open-plan elements – as well as the flow of ribbons across the four levels of the house (the basement still awaits conversion). On the upper two storeys, Lewis designed a double-height master bedroom at the front of the house, with a 'sewing box' coated in bands of oak and larch at the rear. This box contains a dressing room and bathroom on its lower level plus a modest sewing and art studio for Helen above, linking to the bedroom below via an internal shuttered window.

The 'sewing box' became the crucial generator for three of the textile ribbons, designed by Deepa Panchamia and Anna Glover, whose two digitally printed pieces tell the stories of William Thomas and Clara, father and mother of the Roberts family, through images and motifs. These pieces travel through the open space of the bedroom, with the Glover textiles then directed downwards via the new and bespoke staircase, complete with a steel handrail that morphs into a loom-like frame that gently steers the fabrics towards the floors below.

Here, the ribbons are introduced into the main, open-plan living area: a welcoming space with reclaimed timber floors, mid-20th-century furniture and a custom diner-style table that looks out onto the entrance hallway below. To the rear of the first floor sits a customised kitchen, with vivid bands of blue and white paintwork, while a fourth embroidered ribbon – by Jennifer Hollidge – celebrates Lily, one of the Roberts's children.

On the ground floor, the treatment of the interiors is very different. Here, Lewis designed a 'winter room' and library, painted in deep blues that echo the building's shopfront façade. Recycled snooker-table slate was used to create a fireplace surround, while Lewis designed a tapestry (made by West Dean Tapestry Studio) and a cabinet of curiosities devoted to the life of William Thomas's father, a card-maker.

In this manner, the house is devoted both to the Roberts family and their 21st-century counterparts. For Helen especially, who worked in the fashion industry before turning her talents to textile studies and experimentation, the collaboration with a carefully chosen team of artists, as well as Patrick Lewis, has proved particularly rewarding.

'It is a really successful home for both of us,' says Helen, 'and we want to be here for the long term, or at least until we can't manage the steps. It's intellectually engaging if you know that all these secret stories are there. But you don't have to know any of that to still be able to enjoy the space' ■

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Opposite: Jennifer Hollidge's beaded and embroidered ribbon, with symbols inspired by the life of the Roberts' daughter Lily, hangs over the stairs. This page: the master bathroom is squarrelled away under Helen's studio in the hidden 'sewing box' at the top of the house