

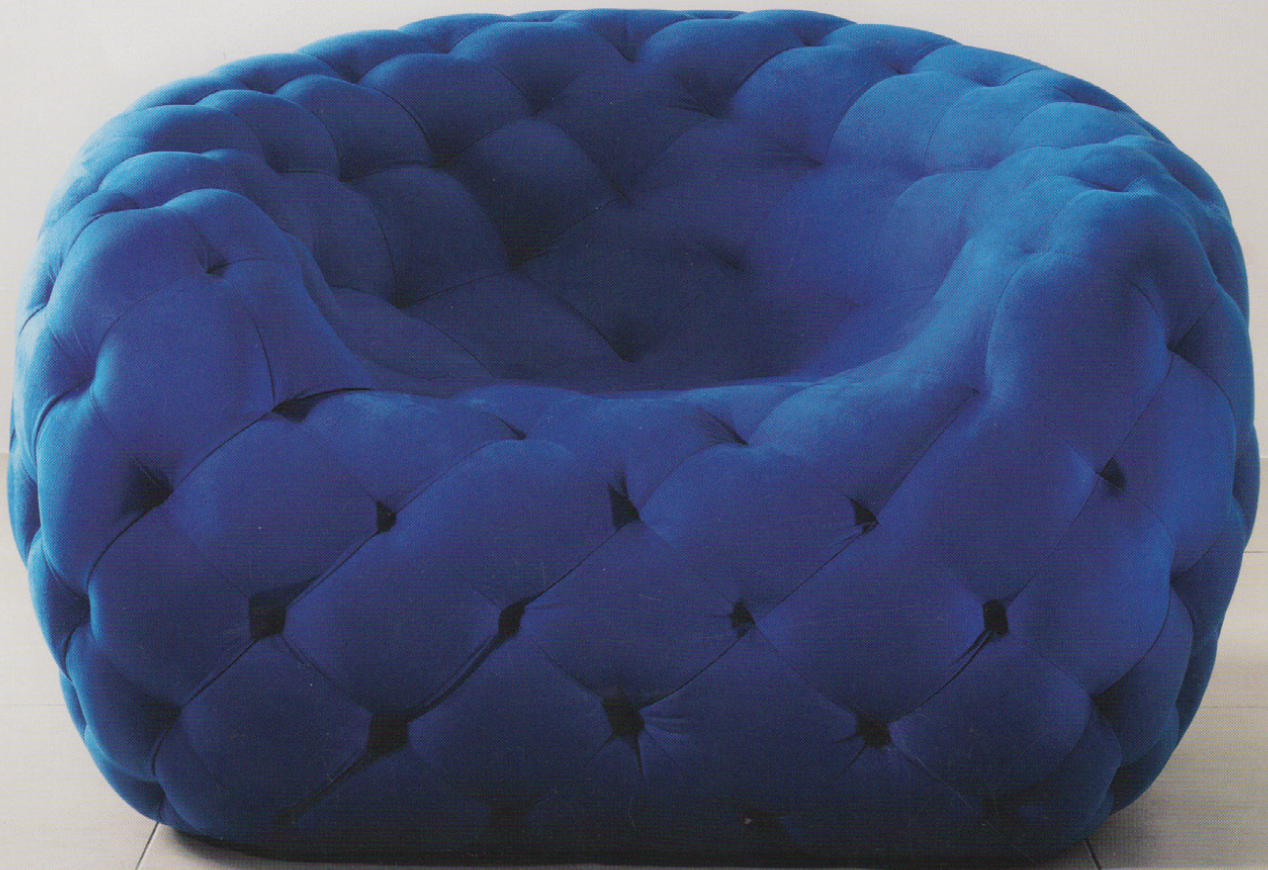
# idfx

INSPIRATION FOR INTERIOR DESIGN PROFESSIONALS

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## Out of the Blue

The Pavilion of Art and Design London  
pushes the right buttons



### **CELIA BIRTWELL**

David Hockney's muse  
unveils playful new designs  
and a reflective first book

### **QUESTION TIME**

Interior designers discuss  
professionalism, training and  
the relevance of industry bodies

OCTOBER 2011 / £5.50



**THINK BIG**  
Two George Smith Knole sofas, in Andrew Martin's Elemento fabric, are the perfect choice for the scale of this large room with its dramatic artwork



**FLEXIBLE FRIENDS**  
Left: Rademacher's designs have built-in flexibility to accommodate additions to the art collection

**SPACE RANGER**  
Below: looking down from above, it is easy to appreciate the generous volume of the living room, which is ideal for displaying large pieces

**A** couple with a passion for contemporary art chose this former girls' gym in a converted Victorian school as a suitably dramatic backdrop for displaying their collection. And they chose Mena Interiors to develop the space into both a home and their own private gallery. Melanie Rademacher, founder of Mena, has worked with these clients over the past decade to create the perfect blend of comfortable home and striking art collection.

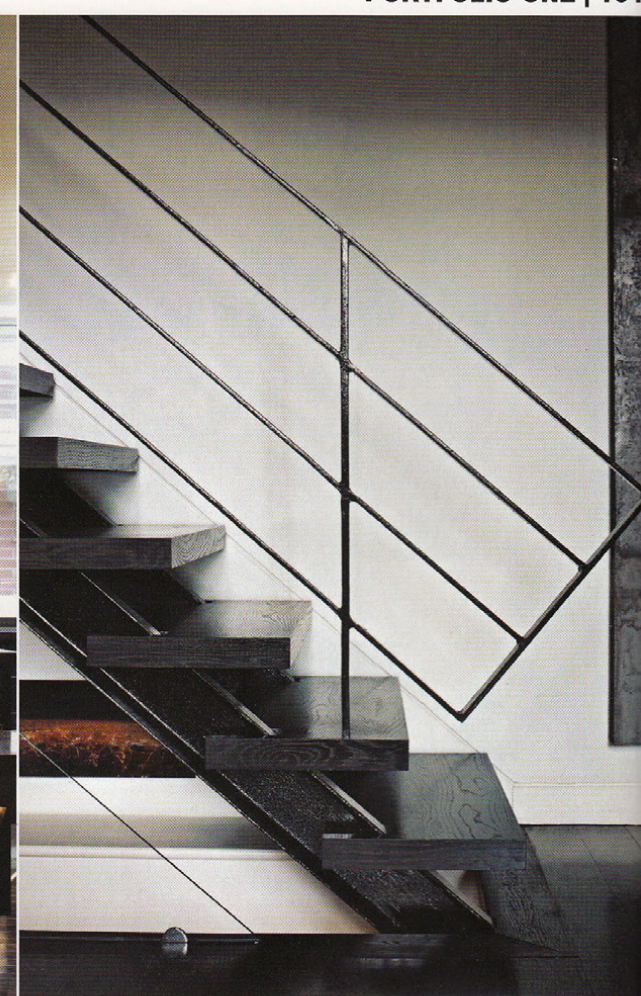
The most recent addition to the house has been a basement conversion, which has increased the overall space by a third. 'The basement was one of the bigger challenges of this project,' says Rademacher. 'The property is in one of the lowest parts of London and, of course, water and art don't mix very well! By digging down, the ceiling height in



Words KATE BURNETT Photography TOM MANNION

# THE ART OF LIVING

An empty Victorian school hall has been transformed into both a home and a showcase for the owners' growing art collection



the bedroom was increased from 2m to 3m. There's always a challenge with almost every project we do — it makes them fun and there is always a huge learning element. As well as the initial wow factor I get when I enter the space, looking round the home always makes me smile as I recall how we managed to get the pieces of art inside and display them.'

Pieces such as a huge Antony Gormley sculpture, which is 2m wide, had to be hung carefully from the ceiling. Luckily, the 5m ceiling height in the living room provided the volume to accommodate such a striking piece. The scale of the living room also demanded a response from the interior design team. By using bold pieces, such as the larger-than-average Knole sofas, the furniture does not appear lost in such a large volume of space.

'The clients have a very comfortable life here,' says Rademacher. 'We have deliberately created a comfortable balance between art and life and we're always very keen to maintain that balance. It should be a home with a lot of art in it, not an art gallery with sofas in it. The interior is generally quite contemporary. The Knole sofas are traditional by comparison but we needed something that was very high and wouldn't be dwarfed by the space.'

Rademacher's interior design training started in the US. She then studied at the Inchbald School in London. However, Rademacher credits her time at Kelly Hoppen as the most important in terms of experience. Rademacher headed the design department at Kelly Hoppen until 2003, when she left to launch Mena Interiors. 'What you learn on the job is more important than what you learn in the classroom,' she says. 'Kelly was a great teacher.'

Now Rademacher loves the independence of running her own show but she still puts her clients first. 'I like the freedom of being my own boss,' she says. 'I always enjoyed interaction with clients. I have extremely loyal clients who seem to really appreciate the effort I put in to create their dream homes. The most important thing about a home is the person who lives in it.'

Lighting art can be challenging, especially when the art itself — such as the pieces by David Batchelor — already incorporate lighting. However, Rademacher was happy to tackle the lighting here. 'It fell into my lap and I felt comfortable doing it,' she says. 'The lighting gives warmth to the space.' In many of the spaces, the lighting is incorporated subtly to let the art take centre stage.

#### DARK ARTS

Above left: the dark tones of the Campana Brothers sofa for Edra complements the artwork on the wall behind

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Above: the kitchen was supplied by Alternative Plans and contains a Habitat dining table

#### STEP UP

Above right: dark-stained oak treads and a black-painted handrail combine to create a sombre staircase

#### TAKE A SEAT

Right: a Tron chair from Cappellini adds a cartoonish touch to this contemporary setting



You might imagine that the bathroom was off-limits to art but Rademacher came up with a very creative solution that allowed her to make a very striking addition. She commissioned Graffiti4hire's artists to create an image of London's iconic Battersea Power Station, which was spray painted on to a bright yellow vinyl panel in the shower. Rademacher guessed that if graffiti on the outside of buildings can withstand the elements, then a shower would not pose a problem.

Having an ongoing relationship with the clients means that the interior evolves as the art collection grows. 'For me, the main part was to create a space that could accommodate different hangings without feeling we have to redo the whole scheme,' she explains. 'From my perspective, I try to keep it very strong and use the architectural features within to keep a strong sense of the building and the details it provides. We're always very keen to maintain that comfortable balance between art and life.' *idfx*

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**DREAM SCAPE**

Above: art also fills the bedroom, which has been arranged carefully to accommodate a variety of pieces without feeling cluttered

**OFF THE WALL**

Right: a vinyl panel in the shower features an image of Battersea Power Station, commissioned through Graffiti4Hire

