

ELLE DECORATION MODERN COMFORT

This month we're exploring the theme of comfort: what it is and how to achieve it at home. We hope the houses and features on the following pages will inspire you and fill you with ideas, because every home needs a little modern comfort. Turn the page and indulge...

PS: and if we can entice you away from your armchair, take a trip to Liberty, London's best boutique department store, to see a special exhibition of the products that won our 2005 Design Awards (featured on page 152) – you could even take one home!
21 September-20 October, Liberty, 214 Regent St, W1 (020 7734 1234, www.liberty.co.uk).



MODERN COMFORT

UPSTAIRS DOWNSTAIRS

Sleek social space meets cosy private lounging in architect Eric Guibert's London home: a tale of two moods set over three storeys!

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THIS PAGE: a classic Charles and Ray Eames lounge chair and ottoman (available from Vitra) takes pride of place in the living room of French architect Eric Guibert's London home. The built-in storage unit below the TV houses a multiple-room sound system (try Bose). In the alcove are two casts of Louvre sculptures – one of Christ and one of a cherub, both inherited from Eric's grandmother. The 'Baikal' mirror by AV Blanderier is from Aram. 'It reflects back different angles of the room like a Cubist painting,' says Eric.





The kitchen is black, but the surfaces are so reflective that they bounce back light and glimpses of the garden

ERIC'S COMFORT RULES

1. Use solid, good-quality materials.
2. Intimacy is key. Before revamping your space, consider the psychological relationship you have with different parts of the house (it helps to think of buildings you've felt happy to be in before and why).
3. Rather than just relying on technology, consider the space's relationship with the elements – create a flow between inside and outside and exploit natural light. Anticipate where light will come from and work with that.
4. Create space for everything you need to do so that you never feel limited.



THIS PAGE: to create a sense of continuity, Eric went for a black Dalsouple rubber floor throughout the downstairs area. 'It's cool in summer and warm in winter, so it's beautiful when you're barefoot. It also reflects light around the space without being too glossy,' he explains. The kitchen flows into the dining room thanks to custom-made glass double doors (for similar try Sun Paradise), which also prevent cooking smells from wafting all over the house.

OPPOSITE: the kitchen, situated between the dining room and lower roof terrace, was made to Eric's specifications by Unit 5 Furniture. Inspired by Renaissance paintings, it mixes polished black granite worktops with shiny black lacquered cupboards: 'Some Italian painters used to paint a view as seen reflected in a piece of black glass; here, all the different reflections create a kaleidoscopic effect,' explains Eric. ➤



THIS PAGE: Eric designed the suede sofa, circular ottoman and cushions in collaboration with his good friend Alessandro Clima, an Italian interior and furniture designer working in London. 'This set-up is pretty versatile; it can feel quite relaxed and loungey, but you can also use it more formally,' says Eric. On the ottoman is a highly polished stainless-steel bowl from Alessi. The 'Glo-Ball' ceiling light is by Jasper Morrison for Flos (available from McInnes Cook) and the floor lamp and magazine rack are from Purves & Purves. ▷

When French architect Eric Guibert and his partner, Robin Pembroke, a business planning director for Yahoo!, moved into their three-storey London house, it wasn't exactly home sweet home. Situated above a shop in vibrant Waterloo, its original higgledy-piggledy layout included a warren of small rooms, awkward angles and a distinct lack of symmetry. Eric's response, inspired by the couple's way of life, was to create a bright open space for lounging and entertaining on the first floor and a more intimate series of rooms on the two floors above. The result is a modern reworking of the upstairs-downstairs lifestyle.

DOWNSTAIRS

The task downstairs was to open up the cluster of boxy rooms, facilitating the flow of light and sense of connection between the living and dining areas, kitchen and roof terrace beyond. With more open-plan spaces in situ, Eric tackled the remaining ungainly corners by making the walls subtly curvy, thus creating a more unified, undulating continuity between zones. 'It's a simple gesture, which achieves the soft kind of effect we were looking for,' he enthuses. 'When you enter the house everything is very calm and quiet in the living areas; there are no harsh angles.' He even replaced his previous angular sofa system with a bespoke model whose curves echo those of the wall behind.

Pared-down, neutral colours were also key to setting a serene yet sociable tone. For example, the living room looks white, but on closer inspection proves to be a pale shade of grey, which 'means there's always a bit of warmth to combat England's often cold light'. By contrast, the kitchen is black, but the surfaces are so reflective that they bounce back light and glimpses of the garden. Eric also improved access to the lower roof terrace by putting in generous double glass doors, which add to the tranquil nature of the house by allowing the outdoors to flood in.



THIS PAGE: Eric chose a sombre grey-green for the halls and stairways to unify the neutral palette of the downstairs with the richer tones found on the floors above. The painting of an old oak tree is by Eric's grandfather, an artist who was taught to draw and paint by fellow prisoners of war during WWII.

OPPOSITE: the dining area lies between the kitchen and living room. Subtly curving walls have replaced the jarring corners in what was once a series of boxy rooms. The ceiling recess above the table conceals lighting that gently zones this area when it's in use. A wood-laminate and chrome 'Super-Elliptical' table by Piet Hein for Fritz Hansen (from Skandium) is teamed with polypropylene and chrome 'Maui' chairs by Vico Magistretti for Kartell (available to order from Selfridges).

UPSTAIRS

Upstairs the feel is more private and intimate. Here the couple have retained the cosy rooms: study, guest bedroom and bathroom on the second floor; main bedroom, wetroom and über-indulgent dressing room on the top floor, which also has its own roof terrace – 'our ultimate retreat', says Eric. But what really distinguishes the upper storeys is their rich palette, which oozes still-life serenity. Eric did a lot of painting while studying architecture at Nantes University in France, which has given him a good eye for colour. 'I tend to choose shades that are intense but not bright,' he says. 'I get inspired by something, then I'll just pick out a colour from paint charts. I wanted a red in the study, for example, but nothing as aggressive as oxblood. This pared-down red feels warm, like a drawing room.'

The holistic manner in which Eric uses colour heightens its impact. 'I decorate in a strong way, painting walls, ceilings, architraves and windows in an identical shade to create an intense ambience,' he explains. So in the bedroom, he's gone for a cosy greyish plum – 'It makes the skin look healthy, which means it's a good room to have no clothes on in!' – and then tracked down the perfect matching curtain fabric to continue the effect. Although Eric didn't consciously take his cue from the past, he admits, 'The Georgians and Victorians did colour well and I realised afterwards that they had inspired me.'

DECO ▷

To commission Eric Guibert contact his firm Sens Architects and Designers (020 7928 6260; eric@sens.co.uk; www.sens.co.uk).

STOCKISTS

Alessandro Clima (020 7229 7822; alessandro_clima@yahoo.co.uk).

Alessi (020 7518 9091; www.alessi.com).

Aram (020 7557 7557; www.aram.co.uk).

Bose (0870 741 4500; www.bose.co.uk for stockists).

Dalsouple (01278 727733 for information; www.dalsouple.com).

Habitat (0845 601 0740 for branches; www.habitat.net).

Kartell at Selfridges (020 7318 3791; www.kartell.it).

McInnes Cook (020 7258 0600).

Naomi Lewis (naomilewisuk@yahoo.co.uk).

Purves & Purves (020 7580 8223; www.purves.co.uk).

Skandium (020 7935 2077; www.skandium.com).

Sun Paradise (0870 240 7604; www.sunparadise.co.uk).

Unit 5 Furniture (020 7701 9425).

Vitra (020 7608 6200; www.vitra.com).

For full stockist details, including addresses, turn to page 187.