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Make a wish

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Here's the deal: we are all allowed one wish

Maya longed for a proper dressing room, Ran was desperate for a meditation space, while the children wanted a playroom of course — with a climbing wall.

By **Philippa Stockley**

RAN ANKORY and Maya Carni expected the house they bought in 2015 to require a lot of work but they never planned to dis-

embowel it. Yet that's what they ended up doing, which is why one day Ran, 44, found himself standing in the basement staring up at the sky.

Often, boldness is the way to go and gutting their Victorian terrace allowed the pair to make spectacular changes. The house is scarcely bigger now. They only glassed over the existing side return and added a small bay window at the back, while a new brick face at garden level is refreshingly modest. But inside, the house feels twice the size because they connected the basement floor and ground floor into a multi-level, open family space.

What they bought was a fairly standard four-bedroom two-bathroom terrace with plastic windows and laminate floors. Now, it's a four-bedroom, five-bathroom family house; stylish and singing with light, with its vast split-level living floor, a dressing room, study, library and utility corridor. It has huge pizzazz and proves biggest isn't always best: it's how you use space to create your ideal home that counts, which is this couple's speciality.

They met at architecture school and went on to co-found Scenario Architecture, their London company. But Maya, now 38, had started out as an interior designer and Ran as a blacksmith, so they came to architectural design later, bringing extra skills. "We're probably a nightmare to work for, because we're absolute perfectionists and want every job done exactly like the drawings," they cheerily admit.

Around 2008 they bought an upper, two-bedroom flat in Stoke Newington where their sons Romi, now nine, and Leo, six, were born. Then they looked for a house in the same area with a south-facing garden. They'd been saving like mad. After two years, a sign went up on a house nearby. In the same family for decades, it needed work. They viewed it immediately. That night, they



Bright new home: Ran Ankory and Maya Carni with sons Romi, nine, and Leo, six



As if by magic: a corner of the ground floor, with glass-fronted library, seems to float

threw a design all-nighter of computer modelling, to see if their idea to join the basement level and raised ground floor into a linked living space would work. The next day they made an offer.

Each family member had a wish. "I've wanted a dressing room ever since I was a girl," Maya smiles, while Ran wanted a place for meditation. And they were determined to give their boys their own area for homework and play that was part of the living area, so everyone could be together, yet do their own thing. The solution? A bespoke bench/work table that slides out and slides away.

The couple initially planned to keep the existing floors but the joists were rotten and the roof was bad, so a total gut was logical. After two months drawing designs, they submitted them to the planners. They passed without objection and the stripout started in summer.

It took a gruelling six weeks. "Demolition is very expensive," Ran explains. "You must factor that in, because each skip costs about £400 and they fill so quickly." Lowering the ground level eight inches created lots of rubble, but the extra head height in the finished lower-level kitchen-diner, as sunny as a first floor, is worth it.

The kitchen-diner connects to the raised ground floor via a short run of oak stairs. A corner of the ground-floor level, which holds the glass-fronted library, seems to float in midair directly above. To invisibly support this, the couple designed a cranked steel structure. This crucial element of the build was delayed, forcing all work to stop.

That was a low moment. But in jobs this huge and complex, such an unforeseen event is common. Once the steel arrived, everything went smoothly.

The split-level living space is the focus of this house. From the kitchen area, folding glass doors lead out to a white-gravel garden with thyme, lavender and big white daisies. Inside, there's a polished concrete floor and a kitchen island with a super-thin white top. The exposed-brick side wall was rebuilt using bricks from the demolition, and the dining table can seat 20.

Attention to detail is all to Ran and Maya: in the upper level, with its parquet floor, working out the flowing profile of



Don't frighten the horses: right, modest exterior alterations to the Victorian house in Stoke Newington meant plans sailed through without a hitch. Folding glass doors lead out to the garden, while the side return was glassed over



Just for fun: far right, inside the house the boys got their wish — a climbing wall with a fireman's pole for the descent



the side wall, home to a modern fire, storage and TV, took two weeks. Perfectly judged storage includes a shoe drawer in the hall set above three stairs, while doors fold back flush into walls.

In the upper levels, bedrooms and elegant en suite bathrooms are airy and practical, not to mention Maya's walk-in dressing room. The boys' room is fun, with a "secret space" they requested, reached via a climbing wall, with a fireman's pole for the descent. And Ran's blacksmith skills came into play for a very svelte, steel-balustered stair.

"It was a huge financial strain," admits Maya. "Just like our clients, this was the single biggest expense of our lives, with a big emotional involvement. We stretched to the absolute limit, with no holiday and no garden for two years — but we wanted to get it right."

Well...they have.

Stylish and singing with light: with the basement and raised ground floor joined into one spectacular linked living space, above, a standard four-bedroom, two-bathroom terrace house is now a four-bedroom, five-bathroom family home with special places for everyone

Photographs:
Matt Clayton

LITTLE BLACK BOOK

WHAT IT COST

2,200sq ft house in 2015: £1 million
Money spent: £450,000, excluding all fees and with owners sourcing
Value now (estimate): £2.2 million

GET THE LOOK

Ran Ankory and Maya Carni of Scenario Architecture: at scenarioarchitecture.com
Garden design: by Adolfo Harrison (adolfoharrison.com)
Timber sash windows at front: by Windows & Glass Solutions (wgsLtd.co.uk)
Folding glass doors to garden: Yes Glazing Solutions (yesglazing.co.uk)

Parquet floor: by Solid Floor (solidfloor.co.uk)
Flori pendant lamps in kitchen: from Rowen & Wren (rowenandwren.co.uk)
Dining table: made by joiner to Ran and Maya's design
Belleville chairs: by the Bouroullec brothers for Vitra (vitra.com)
Ash veneer kitchen: by Pronorm (pronorm.de)
Ultra-thin profile worktop: from Silestone (silestone.co.uk)
Fire: by Bespoke Fireplace Designs (bespokefireplacedesigns.co.uk)
Windows in attic meditation room: by Velux (velux.co.uk)