

TELEGRAPH
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The style of designer Jonathan Tuckey's house in Kilburn, north London, in a former stainless-steel workshop, is a beguiling blend of the raw and the polished. On the richly textured, exposed-brickwork walls in the cavernous kitchen are the time-worn scribbles of workmen. Running down the front of the Elastoplast-pink walls are copper pipes for gas and electricity which, though shiny and new, look slightly retro. In contrast to these is an undeniably modern, spotless beech-ply-and-Douglas-fir island – a 'butcher's block-cum-chopping board' – as well as vertical beech-ply struts spaced at regular intervals to break up the space rhythmically. These are a skeletal reference to the studwork that separates plasterboards which normally encase gas pipes and electrical wiring, and are both compositional and structural.

There's a neat parallel between the house's many-layered look and what Tuckey says about the rationale behind his design: 'Our practice's

philosophy is to retain a lot of what you start out with, then layer on top of that. It's like a collage. We haven't plastered over walls or papered over cracks. And anything that's new is defiantly new in stark contrast to the old bits.' The clinching statement in his manifesto: 'To make something new look old would be anathema to me. We like to use ordinary, everyday objects innovatively.'

Even the history of the main part of the building is multi-layered. Built in the 1850s, it was first used as a laundry (there was once a high concentration of laundries in this area, devoted to servicing the homes in wealthier parts such as Notting Hill) and finally as a stainless-steel workshop specialising in kitchen fittings. 'I'd bought stainless-steel worktops from here. One day I discovered the business was relocating. That's when I became interested in buying it.' Now he lives here with his wife, Annabel, and daughters, Tamasina, four, and Thea, two.

Despite Tuckey's romantic predilection for

conserving some of a building's original features, he has changed the layout of the shed considerably. 'I didn't feel precious about removing some bits.' He did away with a roof covering the back garden, although he is in no hurry to erase one of its traces – a grey line running along the garden wall showing where roof and wall once touched. Out, too, went a wired-glass skylight above the kitchen area (now replaced by clear glass to allow more light in). But the rafters are still largely in place, and the walls were left unplastered.

However, the garden, in which only edible plants grow (lettuces, chives, mint, strawberries), adjoins a completely new extension housing a corridor leading to the kitchen, bathroom and two bedrooms. This wing is fronted by alternating rectangles of glass and larch, in an echo of the vertical struts indoors.

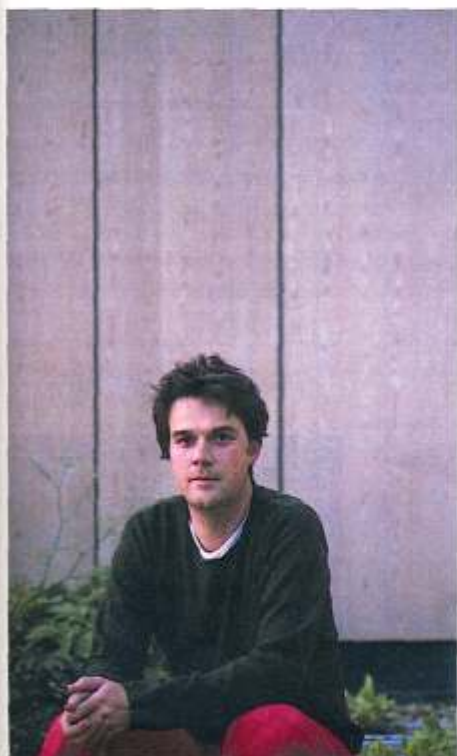
After studying interior design at Kingston University, Tuckey worked for Fletcher Priest Architects (where he designed the restaurant for

Rough diamond

The north London home of the designer Jonathan Tuckey has had various incarnations, from laundry to steel workshop. Its working-class past has now been polished – up to a point. By **Dominic Lutyens**. Photographs by **James Brittain**

Left the huge kitchen, where walls were left unplastered and many of the original rafters retained, was once a workshop specialising in kitchen fittings. **Below left** Tuckey in the garden.

Below right the facade of the modern wing enclosing the garden is faced in alternating rectangles of larch and glass. The wood panels can be opened to allow more light in or closed for more privacy



the *Economist* building in London, among other projects) and later David Chipperfield, before setting up his own practice four years ago. (Conveniently, his office is next door to his house.)

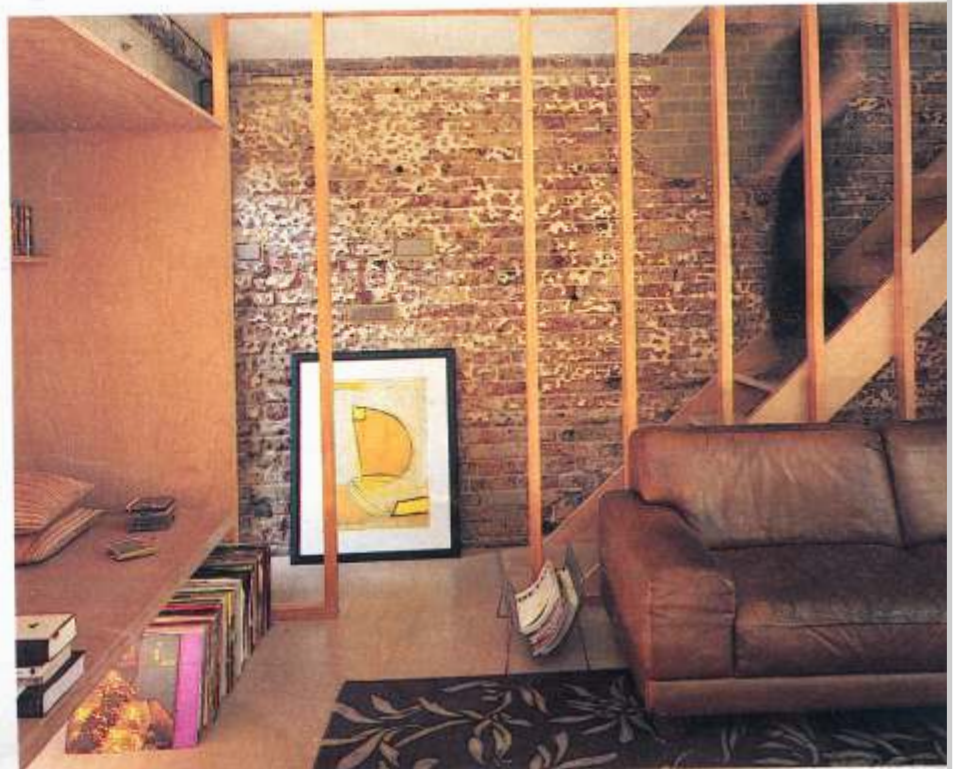
The practice has several quirky projects under its belt. These range from the reconnection of two flats into an original house following the marriage of their occupants – its focus being a staircase housing their shared collection of 100,000 books – and the interior of the nightclub Fire in south London.

Tuckey doesn't just love everyday materials, he also thinks laterally about how to use them. The kitchen's sleek, wafer-thin sink and worktop – a large homogeneous surface spanning almost an entire wall – is made of the enamelled sheets used by London Underground for its station signs. The pipes are made of ordinary but very decorative copper. **Right** in the small, cosy sitting-room the vertical Dutch-fir struts mimic the studwork that normally separates plasterboard panels



'Our philosophy is to retain a lot of what you start out with, then layer on top of that. It's like a collage'

Above made of pigmented concrete, the chimney, which appealed for its scale and proportion, soars ceilingwards. **Above right** the kitchen sink and worktop are made of the same enamelled sheets used by London Underground for its station signs. The pipes are made of ordinary but very decorative copper. **Right** in the small, cosy sitting-room the vertical Dutch-fir struts mimic the studwork that normally separates plasterboard panels



wholesalers to find unusual bulbs, which dangle from the ceiling free of fussy shades. Where bricks have disintegrated in places in the kitchen walls, he has inserted brand-new bricks that look old-fashioned for being imprinted with their maker's name ('Brockleys'). You can imagine Tuckey going to a traditional ironmonger or builder's merchant and getting as excited as a child in a sweet shop.

He delights, too, in Heath Robinson-esque elements. A pulley system hoiks dirty laundry up from the large bathroom in the new wing to an upstairs washroom. Such touches as a Teasmade in his bedroom, his daughter's collection of 1930s prams and an abundance of Tupperware and Bakelite tableware suggest a fondness for cosy, almost suburban pre- and postwar utilitarian design. But put this to him and he denies it.

The bathroom, at least, supports his view that he is firmly rooted in the 21st century. A wet-room with no basin but a large bath and a ledge you can sit on so hot water shooting out of a copper pipe pummels and invigorates you, it's used by the whole family together at weekends. 'Annabel and I used to spend hours in Porchester Baths [in Bayswater]. Now we can bathe here instead. There's a sloping ledge for sliding toys down. I like the idea of a bathroom being a playroom, entirely geared to relaxation.'

Jonathan Tuckey Design (020-8960 1909; www.jonathantuckey.com)



Above Jonathan and Annabel's sparsely decorated bedroom overlooks the garden and leads to an upstairs washroom where laundry is hoisted up by a pulley system.

Right barriers between spaces are dissolved in the bathroom, or wetroom. The sloping ledge is for the children to slide their toys down



Sources for the Jonathan Tuckey look

Timber floor and wall linings Multi-ply, Unit 5-7, North Industrial Estate, New Road, Newhaven, East Sussex [01273-515115; www.multiplywood.com]

Enamelled kitchen units A.J Wells & Son, Dischops Way, Newport, Isle of Wight [01983-537766; www.a.wells.co.uk]

Plumbing components John Goslett, 200 Latimer Road, London W10 [020-8969 3466; www.johngoslett.com]

Tiles Villeroy & Boch, 267 Merton Road, London SW18 [020-8871 4028; www.villeroy-boch.com]

Rugs The Rug Company, 124 Holland Park Avenue, London W11 [020-7229 5148; www.therugcompany.org]

Chairs Eatmyhandbagbitch, 37 Drury Lane, London WC2 [020-7836 0830; www.eatmyhandbagbitch.co.uk]; Retrouvius, 2A Ravensworth Road, London NW10 [020-8960 6060; www.retrovius.com]

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