

UK HOUSE & GARDENS MAGAZINE - MORETON YARD, LONDON - 1992

Photographs by Clive Frost



- 1** Derek Frost steps into the garden of his new house. To the right of the pedimented façade, at a 45-degree angle, is the drawing-room with its dramatic double-height window.
- 2** Light floods into the hall through a tall window that follows the curve of the stainless-steel staircase. The floor is oak parquet de Versailles. Ian Brice's drawing, 'Church Spire', hangs above a DFA design marquetry console.
- 3** Derek Frost's dining-table has a one-inch-thick glass top on a base wrapped in stainless steel, and is surrounded by his 'Racing' chairs.
- 4** A mirror creates an illusion of depth, reflecting the curved pond that divides the courtyard. The stone table was made by Marcus Taylor.

Innovative enclave



Inconspicuous from the outside, light and contemporary inside, Derek Frost's house is full of surprises, not least in terms of furniture. Sally Griffiths reports, with photographs by Clive Frost

Two years after starting work for a firm of picture dealers, Derek Frost decided to take his rucksack and explore Bali and Indonesia. 'I had always had a yen to play the hippy,' he says. 'And, looking back, I think that time was probably the most important part of my visual education.'

He returned with inspiration to pursue a career in the field of design. With no qualifications, he

began by selling wallpapers, worked for a designer, and ended up as a director of Mary Fox Linton's interior design company. Today, he runs his own company, Derek Frost Associates, which, in addition to interior design, provides a vehicle for his own furniture designs.

'As an interior designer, I found that quite often a client had visualized a particular piece of furniture which simply could not be



found,' he says. 'On one occasion, we were having problems finding a suitable art deco desk, so I asked if I might design one, adding a touch of contemporaneity. It was a success, and the start of an exciting new venture for me.'

Frost's pieces are highly sculptural, often influenced by natural objects and the Orient. 'I love sculpture, and for me furniture design is a way of playing at being a sculptor in my own medium. The technical process of making furniture fascinates me. I am interested in designs that are incredibly testing of the craftsman, but with a complexity so concealed that the end product is all line and simplicity.'

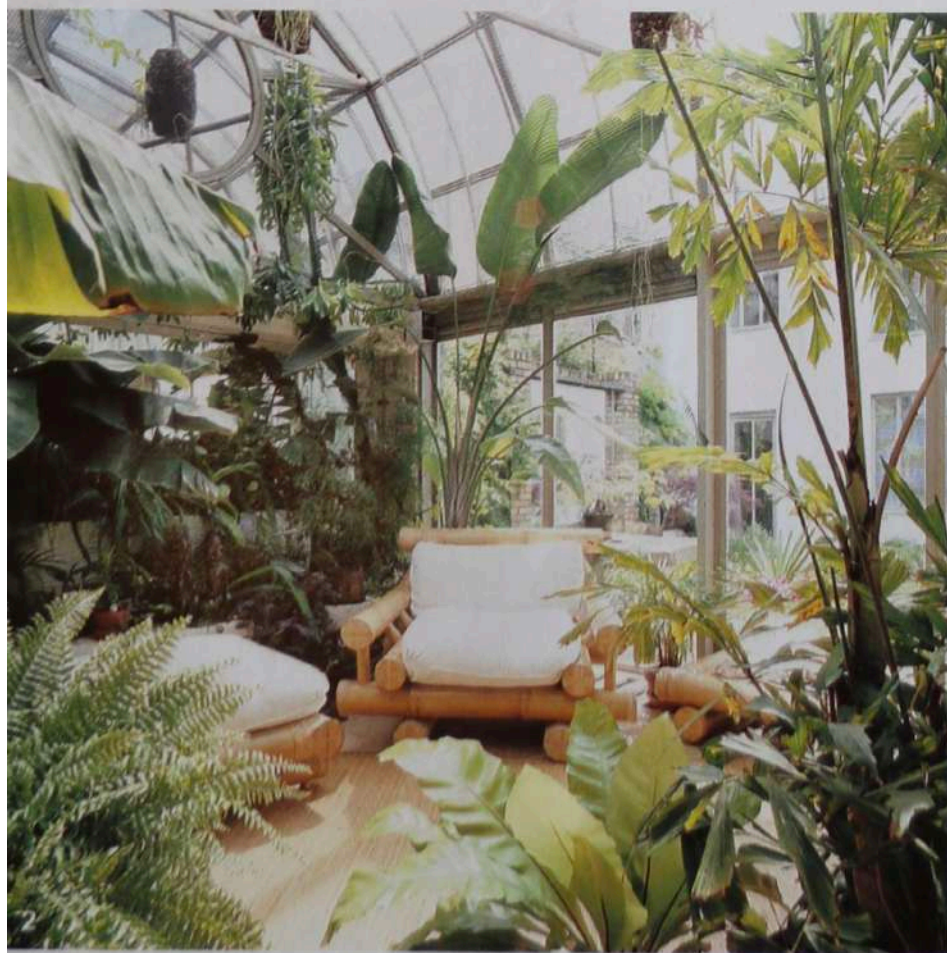
Derek Frost's house – light, spacious and innovative – is an environment which corresponds well with his furniture designs. The house was designed in conjunction with architects, Jestico and Whiles, as one of three dwellings on the site of a derelict







1 and 3 A diagonal crosses the double-height drawing-room from its vertical mirror (1) to the opposing windows and balcony reflected therein (3). In the centre of the room is the 'Pebble' table, designed by Derek Frost, whilst dramatic two-dimensional works by Gwen Hardy and Robert Lowe hang either side of the chimneypiece (1). **2** In the tropical conservatory, bananas, palms and ferns surround oversized bamboo furniture by Bali-based designer, Linda Garland.



mews. It is separate from the two smaller terraced cottages, however, having been built in a U-shape around its own courtyard. 'Stylistically, we were free to do what we wanted because the structure didn't belong to the terrace,' Derek Frost explains. 'But, at the same time, we had to match the depth and height of the rest of the mews.'

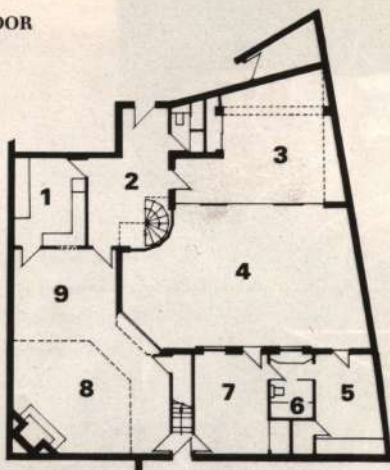
The drawing-room occupies a double-height space which is the main pivotal point of the house. A diagonal runs across the room from the eighteenth-century marble chimneypiece, which cuts across one corner, to the window, positioned at a 45-degree angle and sliced horizontally by an internal balcony. Above the chimneypiece, a long vertical mirror reflects the opposing window and the view through it to the courtyard and conservatory beyond.

The drawing-room is open-plan with the dining-area, and the whole is overlooked by the upper-level balcony, which houses an office and a second sitting-area. Each room appears to be visually connected to the



PLAN OF GROUND FLOOR

- 1 Kitchen
- 2 Entrance hall
- 3 Conservatory
- 4 Courtyard/garden
- 5 Utility room
- 6 Steam room
- 7 Bedroom
- 8 Drawing-room
- 9 Dining-area



next, promoting a sense of space and continuity. Even the hall is splendidly light, with full-height glazing following the curve of the skeletal steel spiral staircase.

Within this open-plan layout, it is Derek Frost's sculptural furniture designs which define the function of each area. The dining-area has a chunky glass-topped table on a steel base, coupled with idiosyncratic horse-leg chairs: 'The idea was inspired by the Tutankhamen exhibition, then I added the stripes which are a cross between the racy seam on a stocking and a military stripe.' In the drawing-room there is a

coffee-table resembling a huge pebble, whilst the main bedroom contains the 'Chrysler Day-bed', painted, like the room's doors, in metallic car paint.

The garden has been landscaped by Derek Frost and garden designer, Jeremy North. It is Japanese in style, with a gravel 'beach' leading down to a curving pond filled with water-plants, its length doubled by a sheet of mirror on the far wall. It is the courtyard that makes this, as Derek Frost says, 'the perfect hidden house' - inconspicuous from the outside but open to light and greenery □

1 The first-floor balcony looks down on the drawing-room from three angles. Here, from the library end, one can see the first-floor sitting-room/office and the dining-area below. Sunlight floods onto the central drawing-room area from a high-level skylight. **2** Mirrored display cabinets face each other across a DFA design dhurrie in the first-floor sitting-room. The sofas are covered in greysuiting wool. To the left of the desk is a blue and gilded 'juke box' that contains the television and sound system. Surveying the contemporary scene is a portrait by Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646-1723). **3** and **4** Innovative paint ideas in the bedroom include using silver spray car paint on the doors and metallic paint sponged on cornices and skirtings. Beneath a nineteenth-century Japanese screen is DFA's marble-topped 'Quilted Commode'.



2



3

Each room appears to be visually connected to the next, promoting a sense of space and continuity



4

