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*Introducing Georgie Henley -  
a star in the making*

Clockwise from left  
Interconnecting floors  
in Zog House | Exterior  
patio | Living room

# *the house of* **ZOG**

Gus Zogolovitch wanted to develop a new concept for housing design. But there was one problem – he lived in a north London terrace

WORDS CATHERINE JARVIE

Whichever way you look at it, Zog House is extraordinary. Of course, the contrast of the sleek box-like lines of its white and grey, glass-fronted exterior against the Victorian terraces it shares space with commands a degree of attention. Step inside, however, and the building really sets itself apart from the pack.

Designed by architectural practice Groves Natcheva for Gus Zogolovitch and his young family, it came with a very specific brief. Zogolovitch is managing director of building company Solidspace, which believes that the relatively rigid structure of the standard British terrace doesn't meet modern homeowners' needs.

Rather, Solidspace promotes a vision for a new housing concept in which the inside is separated from the outside. This allows the exterior to meet planning dictacts – Zog House's brownfield site on the edge of a north-west London conservation area came with a history of four prior planning refusals – while simultaneously allowing the interior to exactly meet the owner's needs for space and flow. The latter is achieved by Solidspace's signature split-section design, in which a building's floors are placed at half-levels to deliver a mix of connected yet independent spaces, better



reflecting, they argue, the way modern Britons want to live.

You would imagine it a challenge for the architects to meet not so much a brief, but a philosophy. On the contrary, says Adriana Natcheva, their shared vision allowed the project to develop.

Groves Natcheva took the trademark split-section further, she says, than previous Solidspace projects, opening it to create what she calls "three-dimensional open-plan living" in which up to three levels of the property interconnect at any one time, opening it

*You have to DECIDE  
if you want to live  
in a VICTORIAN  
HOUSE or an  
OPEN-PLAN house*



up – in places – to double or triple-height. The wide stairways required by such a design, meanwhile, encourage areas that are more generally used as mere corridors to become part of the living area. "Because it's transitional space, you kind of end up hanging around on it," she explains. "It's great, it's very relaxed."

That is all well and good, but what about the practicalities of heating, noise reduction and good, old-fashioned privacy in a home like this?

"It's not any different to living in an open-plan modern flat," insists Natcheva. "You have to decide if you want to live in a Victorian house or if you want to live in an open-plan house. Closing doors and opening doors from one little room to another is not how this particular client wanted to live."

The "envelope" of the building is very well insulated, featuring a pre-fabricated concrete and clay shell manufactured by a German company named Kastell and erected on-site within three weeks. UK builders, baffled by the ground-breaking design, had either declared the job impossible to complete or quoted "crazy prices", says Natcheva. Solar thermal panels, triple glazing and harvested rainwater for the toilets and garden are further examples of the project's eco credentials.

Five long years in the planning and execution, the hard work has been worth it: Zog House was shortlisted for a RIBA London Award and featured as a property in last year's annual Open House weekend. Best of all, it serves as a place, for Zogolovitch and Solidspace, where both personal desire and professional philosophy meet perfectly. ■

→ [grovesnatcheva.com](http://grovesnatcheva.com) | [solidspace.co.uk](http://solidspace.co.uk)

