

# 'My eclectic home is ever-changing'

Vintage dealer Lesley McNamee has complemented her period house in Brighton using her keen eye for collectibles

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*Corner display* Lesley made the most of this part of the kitchen-diner to showcase her collection of art and West German pottery. The 1950s French school map is from Retro Maps, the 1970s framed poster from the Mid-century Modern show in Dulwich, and she bought the solid oak table, sideboard and Ligne Roset chairs in a Heal's sale



► *Design details* The brick wall marks the origins of the old pantry, with a limited edition upcycled police riot shield by artist James Cauty a throwback to the nineties rave era. The French butcher's table is from Judy's Affordable Vintage Fair in Bethnal Green, and Lesley found the 1960s trolley at a Belgian flea market



*Step inside...*

**Meet the owner**  
Lesley McNamee, a vintage dealer, lives here with her husband Trevor, who runs Jalapeno Records

**House details**  
A four-bedroom Victorian terrace in Brighton

**Facts & figures**  
The couple bought the property for £390,000 in 2013, and it's now worth £800,000



**W**hen Lesley McNamee and husband Trevor began the search for their next home, they were, without a doubt, looking for a period property. With her own online shop, Retropolitan, selling vintage pieces and antiques, Lesley wanted an appropriate house to showcase her own collections. 'We mainly have Mid-century furniture and homewares, but there's a mix with other eras, so it was important we found a house with its original features intact,' she explains. 'My business is about making vintage accessible to everyone, and I live by that too. Nothing in our home has cost more than a few hundred pounds.'

Lesley and Trevor lived in west London before moving to Brighton in 2012, on the recommendation of friends, renting ►

*Kitchen* Lesley wanted an industrial look, so opted for a stainless-steel worktop and vintage metal machine factory lamps. 'The Balham Gloss grey kitchen cupboards from Howden's were the last part of the jigsaw,' she says, and tie in well with the Neisha Crosland floor tiles from Harvey Maria







► *Savvy shelving*  
This display is a good example of who I am,' says Lesley, of her 1950s Ladderax shelves found on Gumtree, which holds records, coffee table books on design and interiors and vintage glassware. 'I love Mid-century modern glass for its innovative design and quality.'



**STYLE STEAL**

Rather than conceal the beauty of period windows with curtains that can feel bulky, blinds are a more streamlined, space-efficient option that can be fitted inside or outside a recess. Choose a shade to blend in with the wall colour or, like Lesley, go for a bold hue. If privacy isn't an issue, voile or linen creates an understated look, while blackout fabrics are ideal for bedrooms



a flat for a year before making the decision to buy. 'The Kemptown area of the city felt right for us,' says Lesley. 'We like the bohemian feel and although this property was a complete wreck when we viewed it, it was instant love.'

The house had been in the previous owner's family since it was built in the late 1800s, with a hotch-potch of alterations added over the decades, including a basement, a partially converted loft and a 1980s double-storey kitchen extension. 'The bathroom was from the sixties

and there was an old steel boiler downstairs that heated the whole house,' recalls Lesley. 'I loved the original fireplaces and all the architraves, but it wasn't until we walked through the door that we realised the house actually had all the space we needed.'

Like many Victorian terraces, Lesley and Trevor's three-storey home is deep rather than wide – and felt rather closed-in. It was immediately obvious how the couple could create a more open layout, so instead of using an architect, they ►

▲ *Living room* Lesley picked out the red in the antique Persian rug her mum gave to her as an accent against the low-key grey walls, which let her vintage pieces come into their own. The 1950s Pierre Guariche black leatherette chair is from a Belgian market, and the cushions from Vintage Cushions; Lesley framed her artwork, including the poster of artist Keith Haring's 1982 show. The glassware and pottery on the Victorian white marble fireplace (right) are vintage Scandi from Metropolitan





‘It may have been a wreck, but when we walked through the door it was instant love’

◀ *Hallway* The cupboard (which also hides the fuse box) is painted in Fired Earth’s Amber Gris and gives Lesley another place to display her finds. Above, the vintage library ceiling light is from eBay and the ‘Versailles’ poster print by Menguy is from Mid-century Modern



relayed their ideas to an architectural technician who did drawings for the builders. The changes involved removing the wall between the dining room and front room to make a much larger living room, and creating a big kitchen by knocking through the pantry and rebuilding the 1980s extension. Upstairs was a similar story, knocking two awkward bedrooms together and pinching a bit of space to add a shower to the main bathroom. ‘Our front bedroom was so big we were able to create an en suite in there,’ Lesley adds. ‘We also put in a proper staircase to the loft as there had only been a ladder there before – and now this is Trevor’s DJ room.’

Work got underway soon after Lesley and Trevor bought the house in May 2013, with their builder friends Pierre and Eddie running the job. ‘Trevor and I had never done a project like this before, so they were brilliant,’ says Lesley. ‘The finishes are fantastic.’ ▶

▲ *En suite* Lesley picked chartreuse tiles from Topps Tiles. ‘I’m a little bolder with my schemes upstairs, and knew I wanted a bright colour in here, so these were just right,’ she says. The blind is from John Lewis & Partners





**COLOUR TIP**

To make a room with a high ceiling feel cosier, paint the walls in a warm, bright shade up to picture rail height, with the area above it in white to match the ceiling

**< Main bedroom**

Lesley used Fired Earth's Hummingbird to set the deep turquoise tone in the couple's bedroom, complemented by the blue and yellow Wolseley tartan car blanket, which belonged to her grandfather

**> Vintage teal**

The bedside drawers, sideboard and bureau are all furniture pieces typically seen in downstairs rooms. 'I'm not keen on modern bedroom furniture,' says Lesley. The over-sized West German vase is from Retroopolitan, and the 1970s mirror was a find from France



The whole house was stripped back to the bones to make way for new electrics and plumbing, and the team zipped through the work; however, a stumbling block arose when the stairs to the loft went in. 'We had a structural engineer do the drawings for a proper staircase,' recalls Lesley. 'But it didn't go quite to plan, as the stairs had to come in and out a couple of times until they were fitted correctly.'

Within six months, Lesley and Trevor's house was ready for them to move into, but it took another year before it started to

feel like home. 'We didn't want to think about anything "house" for a while,' says Lesley. 'We gradually bought key bits of furniture and worked out where to hang pictures and display our pieces.'

Most of the couple's furniture is original – with the odd modern-day collectible thrown in, like the Heal's dining table and sideboard in the kitchen. Shopping for the house went hand-in-hand with Lesley's day job sourcing for her business, as she did her usual rounds of the antique fairs. Her favourites are Newark and Ford, as well as brocantes in France and >





▲ *Guest bedroom*  
Lesley painted the walls in Little Greene's Obsidian Green. 'I don't tend to follow trends but I really like this dark colour, which goes well with the pairing of wood furniture with florals in here,' she says

◀ *Colourful accents*  
The tasselled wool throw, a vintage kilim from the 1960s, is one of Lesley's favourite pieces. 'I found it hidden away in a side-street shop in Turkey,' she says. The original painting is from the Brighton Marina Boat Fair, as is the colourful Italian 1960s lamp

Belgium, such as Jeu de Balle and Zandfeesten. 'Over the years, I have a few regrets about some of the pieces I've owned and then sold,' admits Lesley. 'Now when I do a big buy, I keep a couple of key pieces back for myself.'

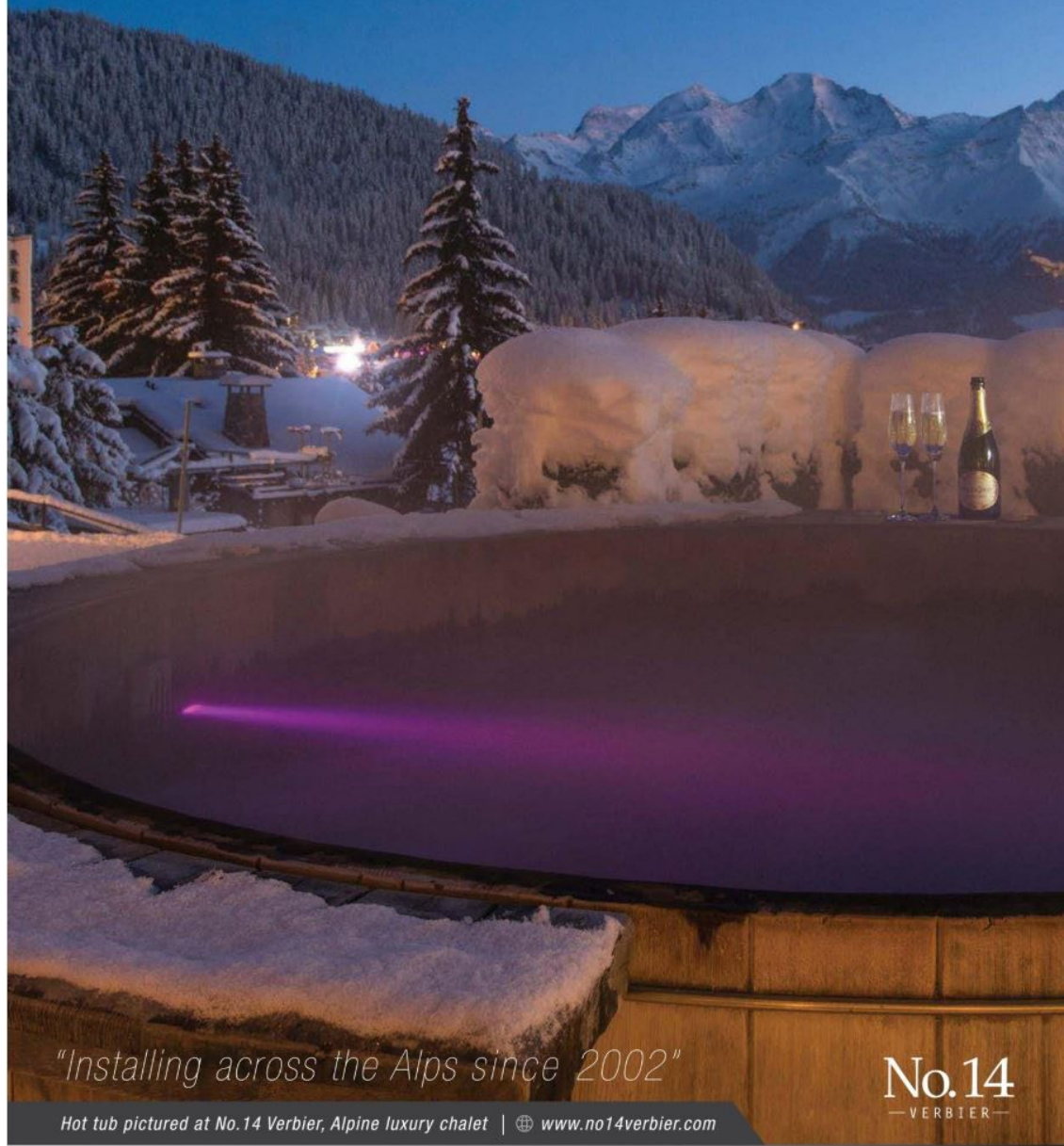
Lesley is an avid collector of vintage tins, fabrics, books and ceramics, as well as being an expert in antique and vintage glassware, so surfaces of any kind in her home have formed an important framework to each room for displaying these collectibles. 'I'm really drawn to colour and texture,' she explains. 'I'm a big fan of vintage West German pottery. Post-war living encouraged amazing design and innovation to homewares made during this time.'

Rugs, pictures and lighting are all vintage too, and some are bargains Lesley's found on eBay – like the steel machine lamps in the kitchen that came from an old factory. 'They were perfect for starting the industrial look of the kitchen and only cost £90 each,' she says.

Now finished, Lesley's very happy with her home – and the basement is full of furniture and accessories for her online shop, which she also uses to swap around in the house if she fancies a change. 'In this business, it's all about your eye and how you curate your collections,' Lesley explains. 'I only ever buy pieces I'd have in my own home, which can be a nightmare sometimes because I can't decide what to keep and what to sell!' ☺

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