

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT The wall-mounted flying mallard ducks were originally made in the Beswick Factory and considered an affordable design feature during the Sixties and Seventies; Gillian sources her table lamps from Harvest Moon Lamps. Vintage orange and green floral wallpaper from Vintage Wallpapers has a similar look to this; in the long living room, the main wall is decorated in chocolate brown, and large doors fold back to reveal steps up to the roof terrace; a friend made the rectangular dining table in a classic Seventies design, with a laminate top and tubular legs. **FACING PAGE** Gillian in the living room. Indoor and outdoor plants provide a vibrant green backdrop with a hint of bohemian.

Kaleidoscope LIVING

Rich colours and bold patterns enhance the original interiors of this one-off 1970s house, which Gillian and Richard Milner found just too unusual to resist

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Gillian Milner had the urge to buy an unusual property infused with character back in 2004 when she and her husband, Richard, decided to move out of their Battersea flat and buy a family home. Their children, Jack and Lola, are now 17 and 14. 'I was put off by the narrow proportions of typical Victorian terraces and went looking for an old warehouse or factory building in east London, with big open spaces and lots of light,' Gillian explains. 'Then, by chance, we spotted this house on a random property website. It's one-of-a-kind, built by a property developer in the 1970s.' ▶

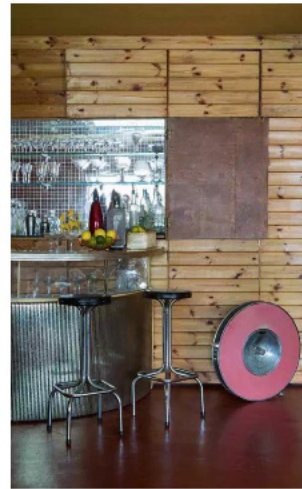




Although Gillian was unimpressed with the 'blocky' appearance of the brick and brown-tiled building – tacked onto the end of an urban street and surrounded by Thirties houses – she pressed on to see if the inside was as good as she'd hoped from the photos. Arranged over four floors, the house had nearly all of its original fixtures and fittings: a Formica kitchen, avocado and canary-yellow bathroom suites, wood panelling, slatted wardrobes and huge windows.

'We were able to buy lots of the original furniture, too,' Gillian adds. 'There were so many great pieces – a battered leather sofa, G Plan coffee table and sideboard, leatherette bar stools and bed frames with built-in bedside shelves.' However, it was the ground-floor disco room connected to an indoor swimming pool that really blew the couple away. 'It was absolutely incredible,' says Gillian. 'The whole of the downstairs looked frozen in time, as though a Seventies pool party was about to begin.'

Having so much space was a huge step up for Gillian and Richard and, at first, they hesitated about committing to the purchase. However, the intact 1970s interiors had been attracting interest as a film and photographic



ABOVE FROM TOP Red walls enhance the mood of the disco room, where the curved tan sofa is typical of Seventies design – it still has a built-in record player and revolving wine cooler. The sunburst clock is from Crystal Palace Antiques; Gillian couldn't believe that the mirrored tiles in the built-in bar shelves only needed minor repairs. Cocktail and Babycham glasses were sourced from vintage shops, and the couple were given the curved bar by a friend.

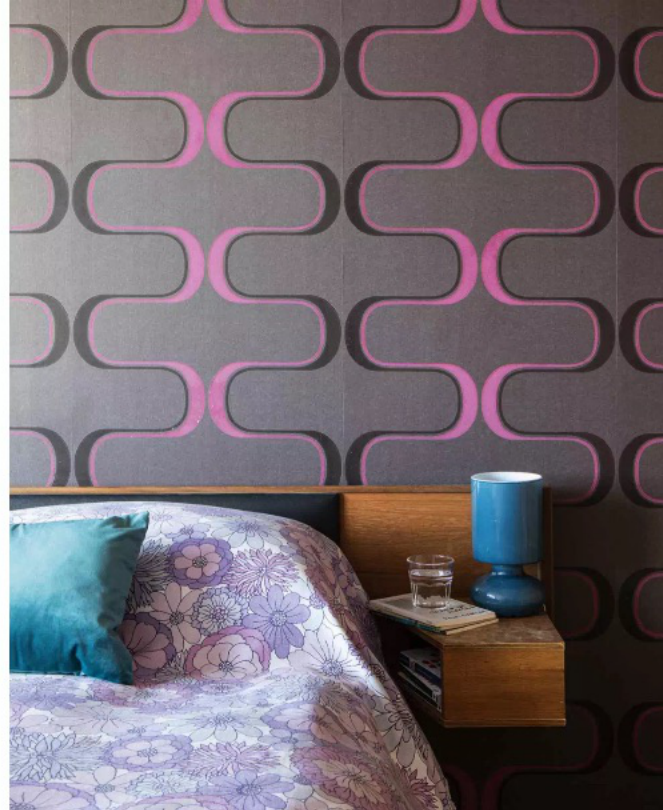
shoot location and sometimes the property was hired out. 'We fell in love with the house because it was different from the norm and, at the same time, I could see its appeal to clients,' says Gillian, who runs Location Creation, promoting properties for use as a location for film shoots and photography. 'Richard and I decided to go for it in the hope that, as a shoot location, the house would help pay for itself – which it has over the years.' But beneath the excitement of the unusual property find, Gillian noted work needed doing. Some 40-odd years on, parts of the house weren't wearing well – cracked bathroom tiles and a perilous swimming pool and roof, for instance. 'We rebuilt the swimming pool to a safer depth, added a new roof and completely revamped the garden,' says Gillian. 'In doing so, we created a new roof terrace for the living and dining rooms above, which we gave a leafy, Seventies, American Palm Springs vibe.'

Magnolia walls didn't feel in keeping with the era, so wallpaper became one of the major transformations to roll back time. 'The Seventies was an exuberant, fun era with gorgeous patterns and rich colours, and what better way to show ▶



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT The family often eat their evening meals at the counter, where the brown Formica worktop is original, along with vinyl and chrome bar stools. Similar can be found at Vinterior; large windows bring in lots of natural light and were an instant hit for Gillian and Richard when they first saw the property. The kitchen remains largely unchanged, with Formica cupboards and laminate flooring; Gillian repainted the panelling and bought a new range cooker. Le Creuset pans in orange remain in keeping with the colour scheme; among Gillian's favourite pieces are these Crown Devon floral canisters featuring the Carnaby Daisy design, bought from Alfies Antique Market. The coffee pot set is by Thomas of Germany.





CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT Horizontal wood panelling enriches the vibe in the disco room, which has an original record player and a swivel chair. Similar can be found at 1stDibs. Gillian's mum made the cushion with vintage fabric from Midcentury Modern, and the rocket lamp is from Harvest Moon Lamps; the vintage floral Marks & Spencer bedspread was given to Gillian by a stylist after a photoshoot and inspired the colour scheme in the guest bedroom. Fresca Retro Ogee wallpaper in Blossom from UK Wallpaper is similar to this one. The original bed frame has built-in bedside shelves and is fixed to the wall; the ground-floor indoor swimming pool was a luxury bonus for Gillian, who loves swimming.



that off than with bold wallpaper,' says Gillian. 'We've got different colours in each room – oranges, yellows, browns, greens and pinks – and they also make a great backdrop for photoshoots.'

Another big change came about when a client asked if they could paint one of the living room walls a dark brown for a shoot. 'The wall is something like seven metres long and wallpaper would've been too much, so we didn't really know what to do with it,' says Gillian. 'When we saw how fabulous it looked painted a rich brown, we kept it like this. In fact, over the years, quite a few interior changes have evolved from the input of stylists from music and magazine shoots, such as how they moved furniture around or arranged a plant or a lamp.'

Gillian bought shag-pile rugs and has added to the furniture that was already here, looking out for G Plan design – a 1970s favourite – in vintage shops and markets and being given pieces by friends. 'We seem to be top of the list when someone inherits a piece of Seventies furniture they don't want,' she says. 'And everyone knows I'm happy with anything from the Seventies as a birthday or Christmas gift – I've asked for another disco ball for my birthday.' One of her favourite gifts was a full Denby dinner service with a brown flowery pattern; collectable crockery she doesn't hesitate to use on a regular basis. 'I also have a bright yellow melamine coffee pot set, which I love,' she adds.

As well as popping into local charity shops and mid-century shops in nearby Crystal Palace, Gillian visits Bexhill-on-Sea and Hastings, known for their antiques shops. She loves to style her finds with vases, plants, and cushions and lampshades made from vintage fabrics. The arrangements add depth and authenticity to rooms, enhancing the style that first drew her and Richard to the property.

'I love that people come over and light up when they recognise a sideboard that their grandmother had, or an avocado wash basin they had growing up,' says Gillian. 'The house captures nostalgia for everyone.'

Simon Turner/Alamy Stock Photo

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Gillian's Little Black Book of FAVOURITE PLACES



• Bad Marriage Mid-century Modern Interiors, Rye

'This is a large antiques emporium (left) and one of my favourite places to go. Not everything they sell here is Seventies, but I'll nearly always find something from the era, like a vase, a clock or piece of kitchenware.'

• Enter Gallery, Brighton

'My favourite photographer is Slim Aarons – Enter Gallery in Brighton has a great collection of his work. I particularly love his swimming pool photos from the 1970s featuring various socialites: *Poolside Glamour* in Palm Springs, *Eden-Roc Pool* in Antibes, *Keep Your Cool* in Acapulco.'

• 180 House by Soho House, London

'The club (below) has a wonderful 1970s decor with parquet flooring, shag-pile rugs and amazing furniture and lighting, as well as a rooftop pool.'

• Crystal Palace, London

'We live near Crystal Palace, which has wonderful retro and antiques shops, where I find vintage lamps, clocks and fabrics for cushions. We got our sunburst clock and vintage disco ball from Crystal Palace Antiques.'

