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Client: Howard Sacks / Jimmy Demetriou
Photographs by Clive Frost

Lighting as drama

The brief to designer Derek Frost for this Nash house in Regent's Park was simple but challenging, as Catherine Haig describes with photographs by Clive Frost





2 SIMPLE BRIEFINGS are apt to prove the most challenging that come the way of interior designers. Few requests could have been more simple – and challenging – than that given to designer Derek Frost of Derek Frost Associates by the owners of the house shown on these pages. 'Give us a domestic environment in which selected objects can be dramatically highlighted.' Simple-sounding, no doubt, but when the house is in a Nash terrace in Regent's Park, and when the objects range from an Elizabethan portrait to tribal artefacts, from antique to contemporary furniture, then such a brief can become a designer's dream – or nightmare.

'We wanted to enhance and express the period architecture,' recalls Derek Frost, 'using careful lighting focused on a few things perfectly displayed. Ideally, the house was to have something of a gallery ambience.'

The designer, who worked in

association with architects P J Carroll Associates, believes strongly that the function of lighting in a domestic setting is not solely to illuminate. Lighting can add interest with pools of light contrasting with cavernous pools of dark, and it can also point up different textures and colours, and give emphasis to different areas. Low-voltage recessed lighting was used throughout the house.

Colours were carefully chosen: variations of yellow and grey for the walls; a monochrome theme in grey marble or carpet for the floors. An innovative use of paint adds further drama to fashionable 'paint effects': from the softly textured glazed yellow of the drawing-room, to the play on silvers in the dining-room where the grey eggshell walls are finished with dado and cornice sprayed with cellulose car paint.

Brilliant Chinese yellow creates an immediate, vivid impression in the entrance hall, and the drama is

enhanced by the console and mirror designed by Derek Frost.

The size of the drawing-room was intimidating but remains undivided 'to make most use of the natural light from both sides of the house'. The room has an ordered, tranquil air, stemming from the witty, sometimes surprising, placing of objects and pieces. A fine Louis XIV chair sits easily with glass and Perspex tables; two rustic eighteenth-century arm-chairs face the cushioned comfort of a sofa by Kingcome.

This is a room for conversation, reading, relaxation, music. An L-shape of sofas in one corner faces shelves housing books, bar, video and television. Cards, too, perhaps, but the three left casually lying on the triangular table, draped with a red and gold cloth are deceptive. Cards and cloth are *trompe l'oeil* inlays in the table designed by Derek Frost.

The dining-room presents a dramatic contrast. Recessed downlight-



1 A ceiling-high ficus dominates the drawing-room. Derek Frost installed the chimneypiece with marble columns.

2 Louis XIV chair, Perspex table and Art Deco uplighter in striking juxtaposition. The pair of drawings was commissioned from Ian Brice.

3 At left, *trompe l'oeil* table by Derek Frost, inlaid by Tim Deans and gilded by Sebastian Wakefield. At right, a painting by Monamy.

4 Console and mirror in the hall designed by Derek Frost, marquetry by Tim Deans.





1 Sculpture by Elizabeth Frink reflected in the mirror wall of the dining-room. The pedestal and dado are sprayed in metallic-grey car paint. At right, console designed by Derek Frost and aluminium-gilded by Sebastian Wakefield.
2 Eighteenth-century mahogany cabinet in the bedroom conceals storage-space, television and video. Cushions on the bed are Zandra Rhodes designs.
3 The glass table is supported on triangular bases, edged in stainless-steel. The painting at right was specially commissioned from Michael Roberts.



ing through the chandelier illuminates the glass table, the reflection from the glass and from the stainless-steel edges of the triangular pedestals bouncing back to create a 'light painting' on the ceiling. Around this pool of light the rest of the room is a pool of darkness from which shine out individual objects: the bold form of a head by Elizabeth Frink; an abstract painting by Michael Roberts; aluminium-leaf console by Derek Frost, asymmetrically poised on its triangular Perspex support. Mirrored panels bounce light and reflections back and forth in never-ending play. The perfection of the set of Queen Anne marquetry chairs seems almost incidental in the drama of the setting.

The colour-scheme in the bedroom alters slightly, on the principle that bedroom and bathroom are separate areas which are shut off from the rest of the house. Against the sombre hue of the walls, a downlight illuminates the Victorian Arabic chair and the Elizabethan portrait above it by Cornelius Johnson.

'Many people might view this house as a modern interpretation of design,' says Derek Frost. 'To me it is a slightly different way of doing something really quite traditional' □











