

METRO Property

Such stuff architects' dreams are made of

One of the architects behind this trio of bespoke Clapham homes loved them so much he moved in, says **Alison Tyler**



Modern yet modest: The three Clapham townhouses

A MICRO-DEVELOPMENT of just three townhouses in a quiet, leafy Clapham street by world-renowned architects Squire and Partners, famed for their flagship projects Chelsea Barracks and One Tower Bridge – it's an intriguing combination.

So when I met Henry Squire at one of the contemporary interpretations of a Victorian villa one sunny morning last week, I wanted to find out more. It turned out that he hadn't had far to come; his father and business partner, architect Michael Squire, lives just two doors down.

'This is the street where I grew up... and Dad moved here 30 years ago. So when we saw this old Eighties office block was up for sale – which never made sense on this very residential street – we just had to buy it,' explains Henry.

Who better then, to take on the project of creating three new family homes than someone who already knows all the neighbours – and knows what people in the area are looking for.

While they are undoubtedly 'wow' homes, they don't look out of place and don't overshadow or bully any of the neighbouring properties. There's a modesty and simplicity about them from the outside – the huge picture windows still feel discreet – while the bespoke metalwork on the balcony has been designed to mirror detailing that can be seen elsewhere in the road.

Inside it is huge, with clean lines and confident oversized parquet floors

to match the spacious hallway, cloakroom, living room and library spaces on the upper ground floor. But there is still a sense of the Victorian villa here – in the drawing room there's a real stone, marble-plinth fireplace; rich American black walnut timber has been used for all of the windows; the staircase curves up through the entire building and you can look up through the three floors to the top of the house.

'We could have put in a lift, but I was just against it,' explains Henry. 'I know we might lose a couple of buyers because of it, but a family house like this shouldn't have a lift – and you'd rarely climb all six floors at once.'

The same goes for comfort cooling. I don't believe a house like this needs it – you can just open the windows.' However, Henry does admit that they have installed comfort cooling in the bedrooms – these are the kinds of demands that international buyers want, and it is changing the shape of development in London.

At the top of the building, three storeys up, a top-floor media room has balconies on either side of the building, while below it are six bedrooms, three of which have balconies. The master suite is luxuriously generous in size, with a large dressing area and a vast en suite where Filetto marble combines with porcelain tiles by

Domus to create a serene, contemporary but not-too-cool finish. 'We've deliberately kept it feeling neutral with room to personalise the space,' says Henry. 'If we'd tiled it wall-to-wall there's no opportunity for a buyer to make it theirs, so as the architect you have to hold back and restrain yourself a little.'

The real selling point of this home, beyond its fantastic proportions and high-quality finish, can be found on the lower-ground floor. A separate, glass-sided staircase leads downstairs and is a taste of what to expect.

Once downstairs you arrive at an entirely open-plan super room that houses the kitchen, dining room, family snug, and a light-filled garden living room, separated from the rest of the room by a glass 'sock' as Henry calls it. Sliding floor-to-ceiling glass doors span the entire back of the house, opening up the garden and living space seamlessly, while the walnut floor running the length of the inside gives a feeling of continuity. It is incredibly impressive without feeling brash, smug, or over-the-top.

'We could have put in a £250,000 kitchen, but again I just don't think the house it needs it,' says Henry. 'There's not that much difference between a £50,000 kitchen and a £250,000 kitchen and it was important to us that it blends with the space and functions well – this one is from SieMatic.'

The Ceaserstone Osprey worktops and Filetto marble splashback feel as expensive as they look, while the copper pendant lights by Tom Dixon add a dash of



Stylish: The SieMatic kitchen has Ceaserstone Osprey worktops, a Filetto marble splashback and contemporary copper pendant lights by Tom Dixon



Blending in: The homes, with their huge picture windows, are still simple enough to fit in with the other houses on the leafy Clapham street



Spacious: The open-plan 'super-room' features a light-filled living area and snug with sliding floor to ceiling windows opening on to the garden

contemporary colour into the mix. But you can see it would make a hard-working family kitchen in what is the ultimate family space. This super-room is a 21st-century version of knocking through the walls of a Victorian home that so many families have done up and down the capital – 'Our interpretation of the bourgeois break-through,' says Henry.

Is it every architect's dream to build their own home, I wonder?

The answer, if this project is anything to go by, is 'yes'.

Henry's father Michael Squire has actually moved into one of the three houses, leaving just two left for sale. And if it's good enough for one of the world's leading architects...

■ The houses at Macaulay Road, Clapham are priced at £6.75million, savills.com.



Loving his work: Architect Michael Squire has moved in