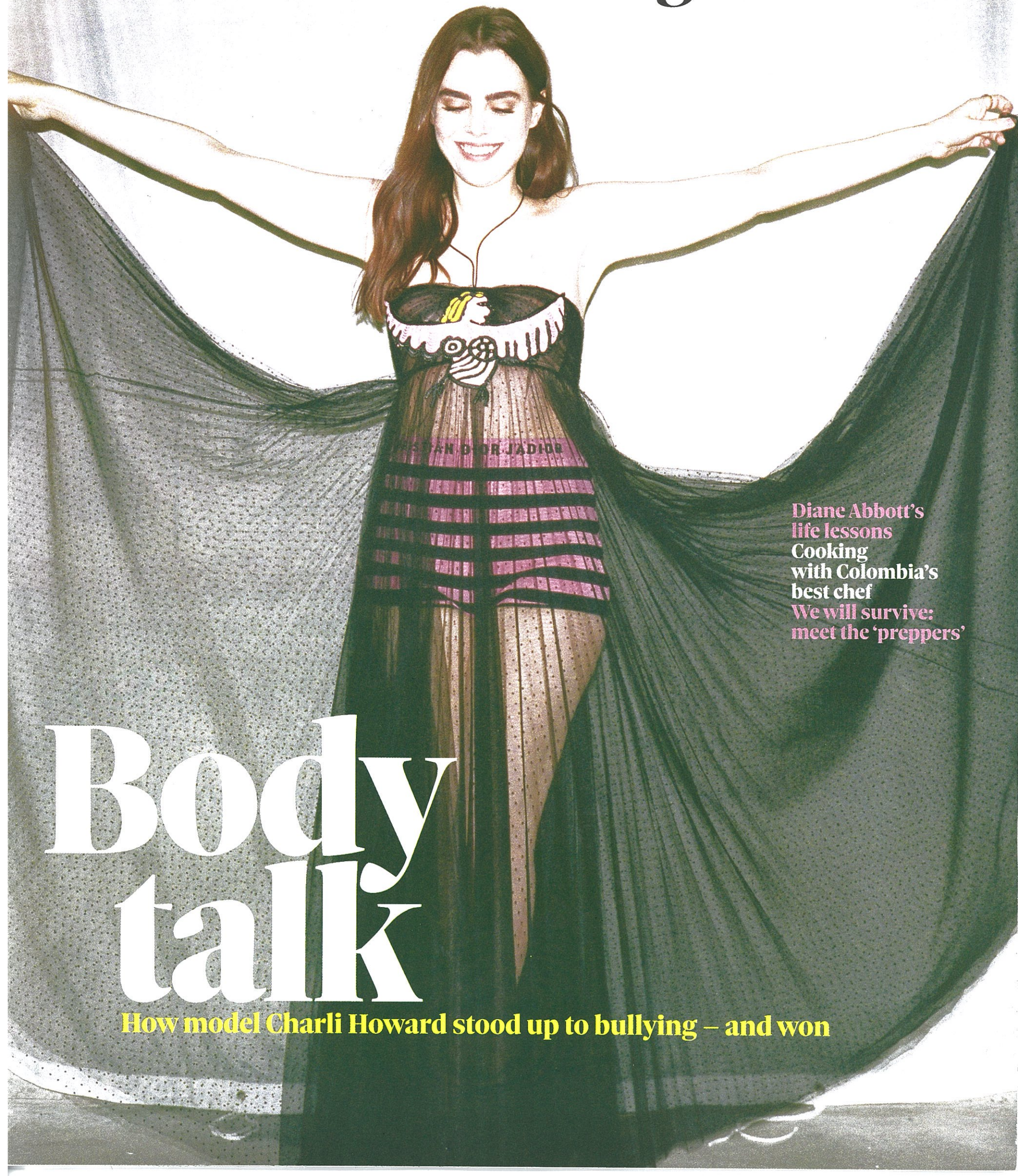


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The Observer Magazine



Diane Abbott's
life lessons
Cooking
with Colombia's
best chef
We will survive:
meet the 'preppers'

Body talk

How model Charli Howard stood up to bullying – and won

Journey into space

An empty plot gives an architect
and his family the chance to build
their perfect home from scratch

Words SERENA FOKSCHANER
Photographs JAMES BALSTON



Michael Squire points out the jewel-bright lights which glow against the minimalist setting of his south London home. "My daughter Miranda, who's a graphic designer, chose those." The lights are not the only evidence that all the family has had a say in the house which Squire, an architect, built from scratch. There are vivid paintings by Squire's wife Rosy, while grandchildren's toys piled by a designer chair point to a cheerful compromise between blueprint and reality. "This isn't an architect's mission statement, it's a family home full of colour and the paraphernalia of three generations," says Squire.

The house sits on the site of a former office block, a few doors away from the couple's previous home. When the plot came up for sale, Squire saw an opportunity to develop "three sensible townhouses". But when the bank proved reluctant to fund the whole project, he jettisoned caution, sold the family home and ploughed the proceeds into building one for himself. His son, Henry, a partner in the firm, had already drawn up detailed plans. "When I announced the news, Henry's head crashed on to the desk. 'You're going to change everything,' he said. In the end we did alter quite a lot, but this remains very much a family project."

From the outside, the house appears confident but uncontroversial: mellow brickwork and perpendicular bays giving a gentle nod to the neighbouring terraced houses. "I compare a building to a tree: the branches are the future, the roots the past. You don't invert the tree and replicate the past: a building should be connected to where it is. The materials, scale and detailing of this house sit in the setting, but it feels modern. Taxi drivers always say: 'Wow!' when they drop me here."

While most of their peers are downsizing, the couple, who have five children, have opted for a larger house where five storeys soar from a basement, complete with games room designed by Henry, and an eyrie-like office where Miranda does her graphic design. "We feel incredibly lucky," says Squire. "All the children have much smaller homes, of course, so they're always popping in. They like the space," he explains as we tread the walnut stairs to the top floor, which basks in shimmering views of the Shard.

Downstairs, Miranda designed the concrete-lined bathroom; toys perch on beds in the grandchildren's room, where Rosy "sneaked in and painted one white >

A family affair: (clockwise from left) the ground floor living room, where three-panel windows open out on to the garden; the splashback in the kitchen is a window to link inside and out; family photographs and books add colour to the minimalist palette

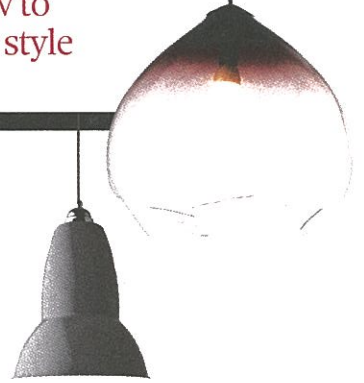




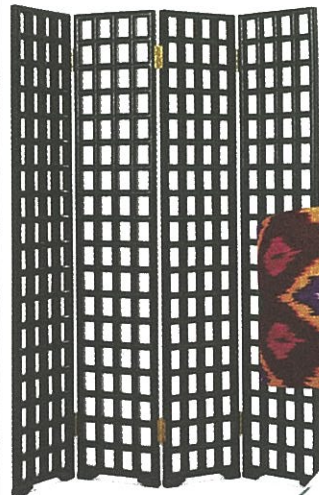
Get the look

Feeling inspired? Here's how to match the style

Original Maxi Anglepoise and Resident Parison pendants
£130.50 and £699, both nest.co.uk



Emury drawers £998, anthropologie.com

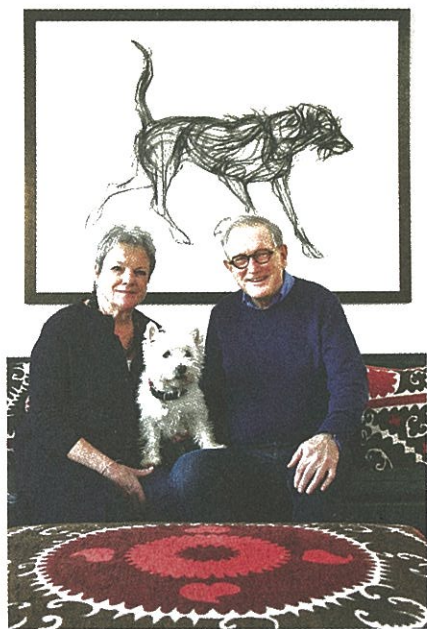


Folding rattan table
£120, kalinko.com

Lattice screen
£1,695, shimu.co.uk



Ikat lampshade
£38, punica.co.uk



Rooms with a view: (clockwise from top left) the walnut staircase; the main bathroom with its floating sink; Miranda's bedroom with four poster; and one of the niches that provide space for family heirlooms and souvenirs

> wall blue". Instead of conventional sash windows, light floods in through single panes of glass flanked by wooden panels which open for ventilation – a device, like the laser-cut screens, which is repeated through the house.

Ideas begin life in the study, where Squire designed the desk, inset with a lightbox. He favours drawing, a skill which his architect father, Raglan Squire, excelled at. His father's exquisite design for a mausoleum to Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan and leader of the All-India Muslim League until independence in 1947, hangs nearby. "My father combined a passion for design with an understanding of the commercial side of development; it's that bridging of the divide between design and business that I feel I've inherited from him," says Squire, whose projects include the Bulgari Hotel in Knightsbridge and Chelsea

Barracks. Squire has always opted for a low-key approach. "A critic once compared our buildings to a Paul Smith suit – classic with a twist."

He stops to admire the craftsmanship of the balustrade, painstakingly handmade on site, which glides down to the kitchen and living area where three generations of Squires converge. A toy kitchen sits next to a chair by architect Antonio Citterio; the coffee table came from another family venture, a now defunct Moroccan-themed bar. Rosy's workstation is flanked by holiday souvenirs set in niches. "I call it contained chaos," says Squire who also designed the kitchen splashback, a window which draws the garden foliage inside. The Aga was Rosy's choice. "The ruthless architect in me, which doesn't like ranges, resisted. But like everything else here, I'm learning to appreciate it," says Squire. ■



Fusion Manisa rug
from £70, johnewis.com

