



THIS PAGE The sitting-room features a table designed after an Ionic capital, a German Biedermeier chair and an Indian stone lion. The bronze head is by Anthony Stone. *OPPOSITE ABOVE* Remise Game Wrang, by Julian Trevelyan, hangs above the chimney-piece in the dining-room. The chairs are from Global Village. *INSET* Salt and pepper grinders by Alessi. *BELOW* Fabric by Timmy Fowler covers a nineteenth-century Biedermeier-style sofa.



LOCATIONS EDITOR LWINIA BOLTON



A CONSIDERED ACHIEVEMENT

The confident conversion of a London house was led by the owners' good taste. By Dinah Hall

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SIMON UPTON



There are some people who really do not deserve to own nice houses. They are the ones with endless money and a kind of passionless desire to acquire art and furniture that send out the right 'social signals', which together create an atmosphere of sterile materialism. When you walk into the house of a genuine art lover, on the other hand, you can sense immediately the passion involved, and instead of feeling envious or covetous you can actually enjoy their enjoyment of their possessions. Of course, it helps if they are nice as well, and the couple who own this house qualify on both counts.

Today the dining-room also looks particularly nice, dressed up as it is for lunch. I tell you about the smoked halibut and crisp white wine not just to make you salivate,

but to demonstrate how, in its detail and efficiency, this lunch is typical of a couple who have the smooth running of their house and lives down to a fine art. Both are on lunch-time errands from their jobs in the City, but surreptitiously stolen glances at their watches are the only indication that they don't have all the time in the world to talk - with infectious enthusiasm rather than possessive pride - about the paintings which jostle for space on their walls, and the Biedermeier furniture which furnishes their rooms. And, above all, to heap praise upon their architect, Giles Quarme.

Quarme himself looks somewhat bemused by this eulogizing. Perhaps, after all, for a good architect there is something a bit backhanded about being praised for getting the proportions right; it's rather like a



When you walk into the house, you sense immediately the passion involved



TOP The kitchen was designed by Giles Quarme and made by John Elliott. **LEFT** The study has a desk from Rapert Casanoldi Antiques, a 'wing' chair from Abruzzi, and a bronze bust by Anthony Stokes. **ABOVE** The framed plaster relief (right) is from Rapert Casanoldi Antiques

stockbroker being congratulated for not losing money. Or perhaps architects are just so unused to anyone being nice to them. Whatever, he is equally unimpressed in his praise of them as clients. Not just because they paid their bills on time without quibbling (only other architects will appreciate the beauty of that), and because they were knowledgeable about what they wanted and organized in going about it, but, above all, 'because they allowed me to use my skills'.

Now, if you were to ask: 'What skills? What's he doing?' Giles Quarme would



probably take it as the ultimate compliment, for as an architect specializing in historic buildings he does a lot of the sort of work that you don't notice unless it has been done badly. But that would be to underplay his skills, for there are plenty of architects who, while respecting the proportions of a typical flat-fronted London terraced house, would somehow not allow the twentieth century to breathe in it. The third-floor room that Quarme has added, with its south-facing roof-terrace, invites the kind of relaxed hanging-out that the rest of the house was not built to accommodate.

That the clients already knew the architect and his work was an advantage, but, mindful of the adage that you should never work for friends, the relationship had to be carefully handled. 'You have to keep slightly at arm's length, so that you can be professional,' explains Quarme. 'If you're too chummy the honesty isn't there and resentment builds up; it's difficult for the client to say, "sorry, I don't like that."'

Quarme's role was restricted to the architectural; he admires the uncluttered, incredibly organized interiors the couple have created. Both share a passion for art and pottery in the Leach tradition, and the simple, greenish-white walls were chosen as



TOP The drawing-room has a charcoal drawing (left) by Elizabeth Frink, two nudes by Clifford Pugh, Twenties Swedish Greek-Riviera chairs and a bronze by Leon Underwood. **ABOVE** The Quarts, by Rex Friesborn, hangs above an 1820s Swedish Biedermeier sofa



ABOVE LEFT The main bedroom has a painting by Marzia Calvosa. The jug is by John Leach. ABOVE RIGHT A detail of the tapestry, by John Piper, that hangs above the Biedermeier-style bed, BELOW, designed by Rapert Cavendish. The paintings are by Mary Feilden, and an Elizabeth Frink bronze stands on the 1820s Swedish Biedermeier table. OPPOSITE ABOVE AND BELOW Shelving in the bathroom houses twentieth-century vases in the Leach tradition. The framed Archer scarf is a limited edition, based on a design by Ben Nicholson



the best background for 'heavy hanging'. It's unusual to find a couple so absolutely united in their tastes and so equally committed to the decoration of their home; it wasn't just the lunch that was so impressive, it was the participation of the husband in the interview - sexist though that may sound. Quarme, too, found this refreshing. 'Often with clients you find it's the wife who decides, the husband who pays, and then the husband who pulls the carpet out from under your feet. But these two listen to each other, they teach each other, and everything is shared, whether it's visits to art galleries, antiques shops or the theatre.'

The couple have been collecting modern art for about ten years but their interest in Biedermeier furniture was sparked off by their search for a bed. 'We wanted something distinctive and had scoured antiques shops and department stores to no avail,' they explain. Then they discovered Rapert

Cavendish's Biedermeier antiques shop, and loved the golden veneers typical of the style. But Cavendish told them that the bed they wanted simply did not exist. His solution was to design one for them, based on Biedermeier style, and this, which was 'not much more expensive than buying a good, ready-made bed', was to be their introduction to a consuming passion. Next came the Biedermeier sofa, then a set of four unusual Swedish Greak-Rivival chairs in the style. 'Then one day Rapert rang in great excitement to say he had spotted two more chairs; there are very slight differences, but they obviously came from the same maker.'

The house looks finished and in perfect order now but, they point out, it took six or seven years to put together. 'You have to build up gradually, and choose your pieces well.' This they have done, and have got the house that they deserve □

