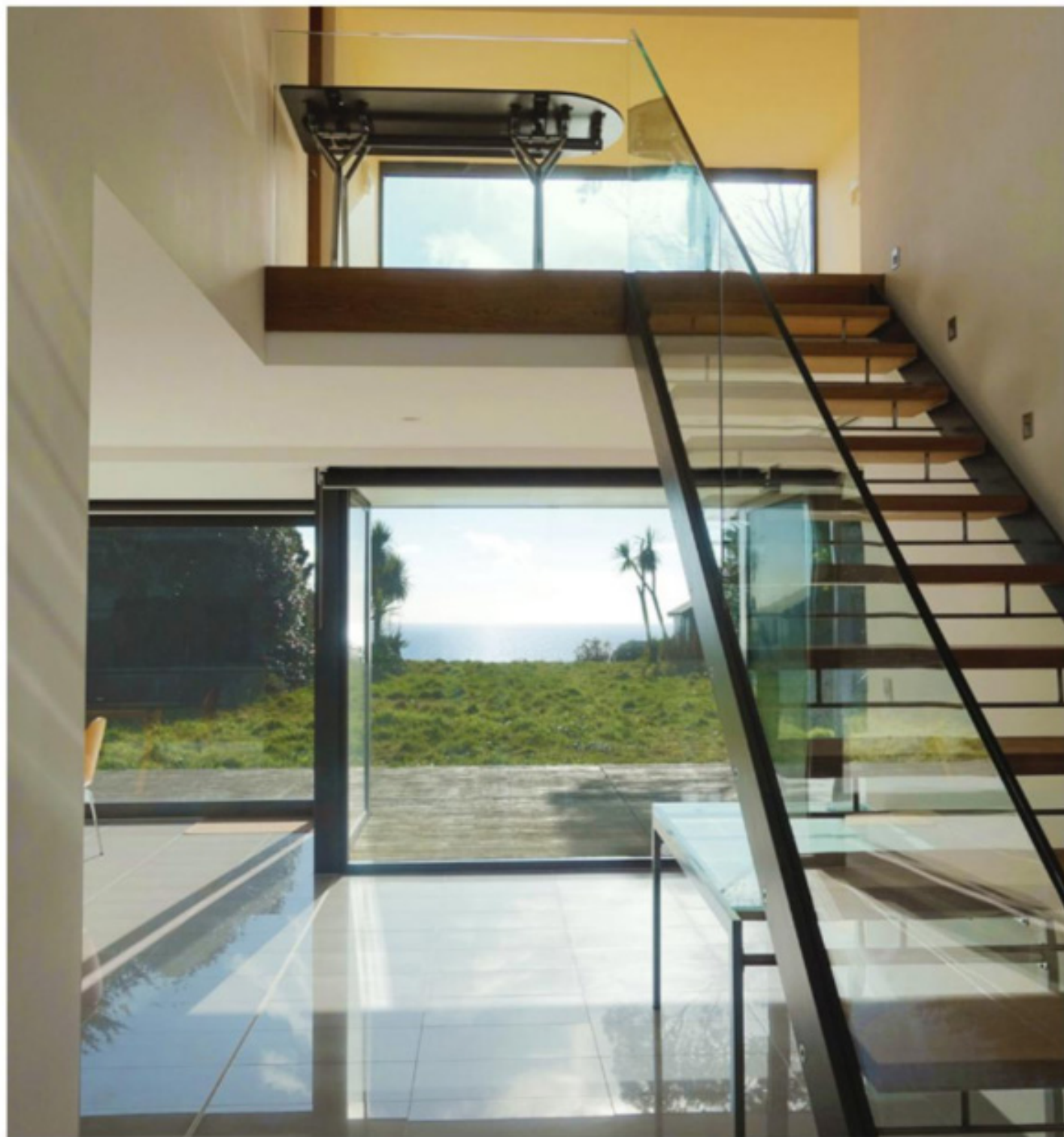


# Space

Annie Martin | Q&A with Miranda Hackett | Shopping for space



The work of Annie Martin, architect  
See page 114  
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# Realizing the potential

We all like to think we can spot potential, but a bungalow on a suburban street in Polperro, Cornwall, didn't look, at first sight, all that, until you realized what sat behind it. Architect **Annie Martin** describes how she transformed this single-storey dormer bungalow into a modern, stylized home that made the most of its setting, while giving nothing away to passers-by. Interview by *Imogen Clements*.

## **Tell us a little about the brief – was it always going to be a replacement build?**

The clients saw the potential of the house when they bought the property in 2014. The site and location of the house are incredible. It looks very conventional from the street, but it has a south-facing rear garden that backs onto the coastal path with what seems like a vanishing edge to the sea.

The original house didn't take this into account and embrace the views, such that, for example, the kitchen, the most frequented room in any home, was located to the north (the street side).

The original intention had not been for a new build. The first plan was to alter and extend the existing house by converting the garage and lifting the roof, retaining the existing fabric of the building where possible. Planning was granted on this basis.

A quantity surveyor was then employed to assess the costs of the proposal; through this, it was realized that to rebuild the property would be financially more attractive, especially as VAT would not be applicable and the fabric of the building, services (kitchen, bathroom, and so forth), could all be modernized to today's standards. A revised planning application was submitted and approved.

## **When drawing up the initial plans, what considerations did you have to take on board with this property?**

In this case the site defined the proposal. The position of neighbouring properties and the long narrow nature of the site we were working with meant the orientation of the building had to be to the rear, south-facing garden.

We needed to ensure that the replacement building would sit on the same footprint as the house that it replaces but we were looking to address many of that building's shortcomings – specifically its lack of views, its aesthetics, the awkward layout and the outdated fittings and services.

The client wanted to increase the accommodation of the building while not extending the footprint deeper into the garden, so we raised the eaves to the existing walls to provide a first floor. A sloping roof, zinc-clad, allowed us to ensure the height of the building on the road side was kept low and no more imposing than the original house.

The street front was kept deliberately modest and simple, and the kitchen, living room and master bedrooms were all arranged on the private south-facing side of the house to take advantage of the panoramic views overlooking the rear garden and sea beyond it.

On the south-facing side of the house we could be more playful, with timber cladding, a projecting, covered balcony and glazed sliding doors to allow the garden to be an extension of the ground-floor living areas.

The main living areas, along with two ground-floor bedrooms, were located on the ground floor so potential future needs of the owners, were they to become less mobile, were allowed for.

With the whole project we were looking to raise the design standard of suburban living without being in any way imposing or ostentatious.

## **The house seems very minimalist – how do you balance the practicalities of storage with the aesthetic?**

There is plenty of built-in storage. The clients are very tidy and particular, so were looking for a minimalist approach.

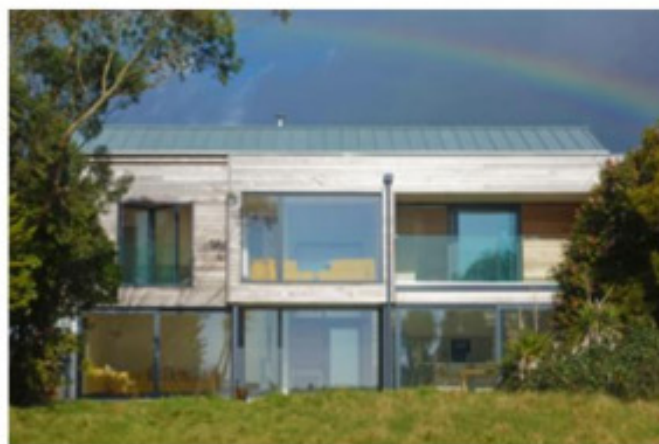
## **Beyond the plan and build, how do you go about creating the home?**

We worked as a team on all aspects of the fit-out. We used David Amos of Amos Lighting to install the lighting, and Jam Interiors to help with blinds, curtains and lighting. The clients had a clear idea of what they wanted and selected the tiles, kitchen and bathroom fittings.





Before...



...and after



Before...



...and after



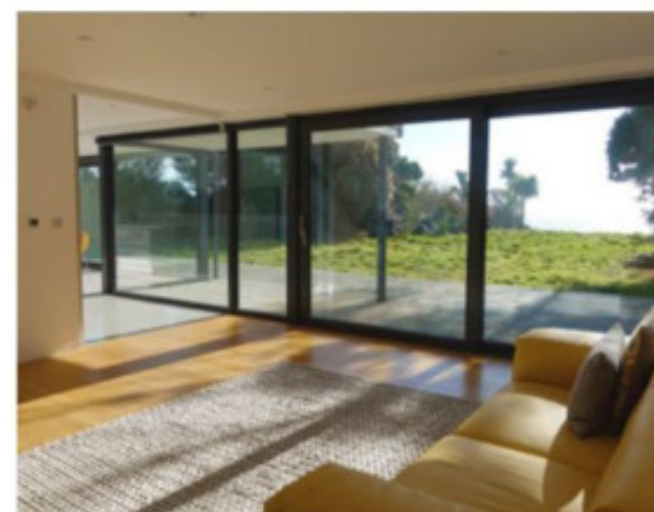
*The street front was kept deliberately modest, while on the south-facing side we could be more playful with timber cladding and a projecting balcony.*



**What in your view are the key ways of assessing potential? What specifically should we be looking for?**

Right from the start, consider the full brief from end to end. So, what are the site characteristics? Think about where the terraces would best be located, where the best views are, where the evening and morning sun areas are. Then, which rooms do you want to be private – such as bedrooms and bathrooms – and how open-plan do you want them to be? Ultimately, consider where your sofas will be and how they will be oriented – to the TV, the view, or the fireplace, for instance.

It is best to have a variety of spaces. Consider both drama and tranquillity aspects. In the case of this property, we created a dramatic double-height entrance space, leading through to an open-plan living, dining and kitchen that looked out onto the spectacular views. But big sliding doors meant the living could also be separated from kitchen/dining areas, and a first-floor viewing area away from main



open-plan space provided a small, central but tranquil area from which to enjoy the panoramic views.

**How do you ensure the build is as efficient and hassle-free for everyone as possible?**

Good regular communication is key between all parties. There was, with this project, a good working relationship between the builders, client, design consultants (many of whom I've worked with a lot) and myself. We had regular site visits and meetings, so all aspects of the work were discussed before they were undertaken, and items ordered when necessary. A full tender package was produced prior to commencement on site so the majority of works were priced and agreed before the work commenced.



Annie Martin is a RIBA Chartered Architect who set up her own practice in Devon, near Exeter, in 2006, having worked for practices in London, Australia, Sussex and South Devon. Annie has won numerous awards, including the RIBA Town and Country Sustainability Award, RIBA Arnold Sayers Award for House Design and Housebuilding, and Renovations Magazine's 'Home of the Year'. She lives in Dartmoor with her husband and two children.

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