

Bricks & Mortar



In the pink

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Take a virtual tour of one of London's coolest homes, with candyfloss tones and its own trapeze. By Katrina Burroughs

The trapeze in the family room is a conversation starter. So we start the conversation there. It turns out Emily Murray, the woman behind the blog *The Pink House*, is a former competition gymnast, stuntwoman and parkourist.

“In my twenties, I took my gymnastic ability and decided to hang out in the streets with these teenage boys who were doing parkour. We used to train along by the London Eye — me always in my pink Lycra,” she says. “When I was decorating, people said, ‘Oh are you putting a trapeze in for your kids?’ and I would say, ‘No it’s for me.’”

The living room swing has come into its own during lockdown: “It doesn’t take much to keep up your upper-body strength. A few pull-ups a day.”

Pink House rules are: gymnastics aren’t just for kids, and pink isn’t just for girls. Murray’s sons, Oscar, ten, and Zac, seven, and her husband, Euan, 42, are fully on board with her decorative decision to colour their five-bedroom semi in every shade of the optimistic, uplifting hue, from blush to coral and fuchsia. The house is in Honor Oak, a leafy suburb of



Emily Murray’s kitchen features a pink tiled breakfast bar, pink and green wallpaper and pale blue cabinets with brass handles
SUSIE LOWE

south London, near the Horniman Museum, where the family can walk in ancient woodland or travel to Shoreditch in 20 minutes. They moved from Edinburgh three years ago this summer, drawn back to the capital by career opportunities.

They lived in the house for a couple of years before embarking on the renovations. The project started last summer and finished on Christmas Eve. Murray’s aim was to create a playful, joyful and above all colourful space, a unique backdrop to family life.

“Colour does have the power to make you happy, doesn’t it? Honestly, my house fills my heart with joy,” she says. “I just

walk through my hallway and see the patterned tiles and the pink and blue Rothschild & Bickers lighting, and it makes me feel genuinely joyful.”

Murray transformed the front of the house to make a more inviting approach. “Now you arrive, you come up the path, and get to the front door and see the pink extension — and you feel happy things are going to happen. You’ve got that wonderful open-the-front-door moment, and you go wow.”

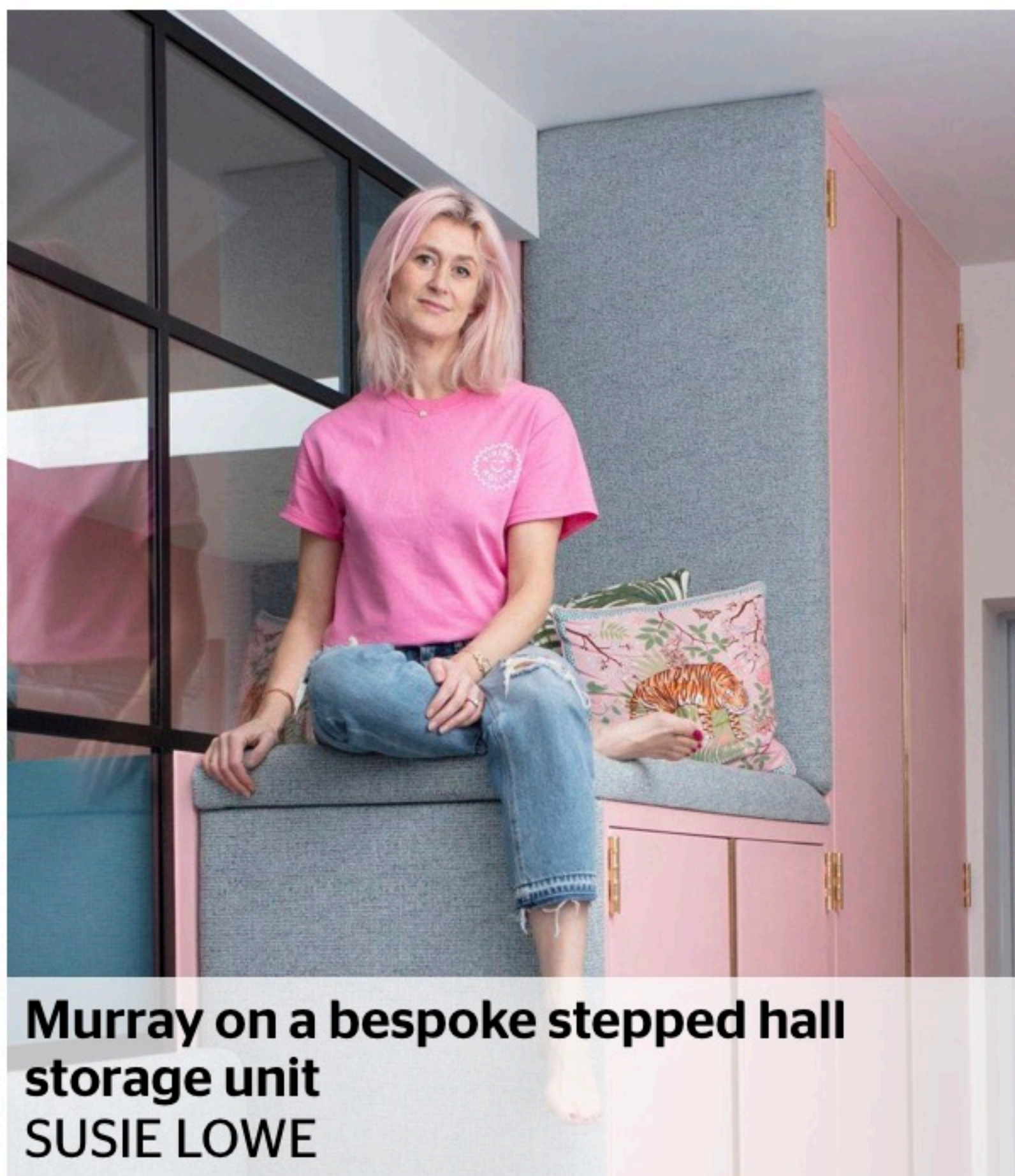
The small extension to the right of the pink front door (painted in Pink House Pink, which Murray developed in collaboration with Mylands) is the pink shower room. Its exterior is clad in pink steel, with panels of bespoke pink

terrazzo, made to her recipe by Diespeker, and trimmed with brass. The wow moment, as you enter, is largely courtesy of her hyper-decorative hallway floor: Sakura Encaustic Cement tiles by Otto Tiles. “Those tiles are heaven,” Murray says.

“Everyone who comes compliments the tiles. Not that there have been many visitors. It feels like we went on lockdown soon after we’d finished.”

Despite a following of 77,000 on Instagram, avid for her deco tips, Murray does not count herself as a decorating expert, but someone who enjoys turning her hand to anything. “There are so many lives to live. I am quite a jack of all trades. I want to try all of it,” she says. Her stint as a stuntwoman led to a period as a journalist “because I found I had something to write about. I started out as a business journalist and moved into sports, then *Condé Nast Traveller* and *Brides* magazine.” At *More!* [which closed in 2013], where she was features editor, Murray wrote about men, sex and relationships. “I did a story called ‘Naked for 24 hours’, where I went to Costa del Sol to a nudist village.”

Before she became pregnant with Oscar, she had a shortlived fashion blog called *Kate Loss*, “for girls with Miu Miu tastes and Topshop money”. The *Pink House* blog represented her post-kids pivot away from clothes towards interiors. “Cheating on fashion with furniture is my way of



Murray on a bespoke stepped hall storage unit
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describing the life stage of spending less time going out and more time at home, the fact you want to nest and make the place you spend time in more beautiful.”

Beautification started with a spot of demolition. “We knocked down a lot of walls. We basically knocked out the middle of the house, and got rid of a utility room and shower room, and created an open hallway. We put in internal windows [instead of some walls] so you can look from the hall right through the building, straight through to the kitchen and out into the garden. You’ve not just got the colour inside the house, you can see the bright greens outside the house.”

The increased daylight adds extra vibrancy to already vivid interiors. The new shower room in the extension, with gleaming polished brass fittings from Perrin & Rowe, is Murray’s pride and joy. The walls are waterproof pink plaster from Chrysalis and the sink is from London Basin Company. “The

room really glows from the inside. A window runs all the way up and wraps around the ceiling, so that even though it is north facing, it is always really light.”

The kitchen, at the back of the house, is a bold mix of pattern and colour. On one wall is a floral wallpaper by Sandberg, called Malin, on another a green chevron pattern created by Bert and May tiles. There’s a pink breakfast bar with brass edging, and brass Buster and Punch handles gleam on the blue cabinets. “I removed the cooker hood because I don’t really like cooking very much. I’d rather have a pretty light hanging above the hob.”

The theme of play runs through Murray’s interior. As well as the trapeze, she commissioned multi-level hallway furniture, stepped cushioned storage that encourages jumping and climbing as well as lounging. “I love the idea you could vault up on to the bench then up on to the wardrobe.” She adds: “I’m very much a child at heart and colour seems to be equated with childishness, which is not always seen as a good thing, but I think it is a brilliant thing. The childish mind is a creative mind.”

For more on Emily Murray’s decorating journey, visit her blog at pinkhouse.co.uk and [@pinkhouseliving](https://www.instagram.com/pinkhouseliving). Her book is *Pink House Living: For People Cheating on Fashion with Furniture*, published by Ryland Peters & Small, £19.99. ■