



Restful shade (left): white walls and bleached lime oak floorboards contrast with the striking Man on Fire sculpture. But the dog is unfazed

Colour movies (right): African art features in almost every room

Aga saga (below left): the kitchen/diner with bar-top island is the ideal for super-fast breakfasts



A glamorous new songwriter, busy mother, marathon runner and psychotherapist has created an exotic family home. After a childhood of poverty, it was her treat, she tells **Caroline Phillips**

Teddy bear essentials: a stag's head looks down on the children's Ralph Lauren twin sleigh beds



Stylish: Lili often recalls her impoverished upbringing, but she has a desire to put this behind her that inspired her to design a fabulous home

THE SOUND OF MUSIC

NOT heard of Lili Tarkow-Reinisch yet? Well, you soon will. She's one of London's hottest new songwriters. Her lyrics are being promoted across the Atlantic to Grammy-award winning singers like Carrie Underwood, and to American Idol.

Not bad going, considering Lili is also a full-time psychotherapist, wife, mother of two, Aikido black belt and marathon runner. And the sole decorator of her Ralph Lauren-meets-Louis-Vuitton-and-Andrew-Martin-style apartment.

The entrance hall to her west London home sets the dramatic tone. A Senegalese burial outfit hangs on the wall and the corridor is flanked with wooden African fertility symbols in museum display cabinets. There's an Art Deco ebony console table and, on the floor, zebra skin.

Even the nearby loo has walls of black oak planks that were used underwater as sea defences to stop enemy submarines during the War.

Lili greets me in Chanel, jeans and bling. Her hair is waist-length and her eyelashes almost as long. "Never underestimate the superficial," she laughs.

Originally from St Louis, she came to England 15 years ago. "I came here to do a Masters in Economics at LSE. My

knowledge of the Maastricht Treaty made me the darling of every party!" Afterwards, she returned to her private psychotherapy practice.

The apartment in which she now lives with her hedge-fund husband, Mark, and their children is stylish.

"Home" wasn't always thus. "When I was 12, my father left us in such penury that my mother had to apply for a special permit for me to work," she recalls. "Our neighbourhood was disparagingly dubbed 'Indian Ghettos'."

"We got food stamps - which the Government give you when you're really poor. Our motto at home was, 'If it ain't broke, it will be soon'."

Her "escape" came with a scholarship to Washington University, and she hasn't stopped working since. It was with a desire to put all this behind her that she tackled her décor.

The couple bought the flat five years ago: Mark liked it because it didn't need any refurbishment. Lili, however, had other ideas - for changing every room! It took three years to get planning permission to knock down walls. "For a year we lived with builders to save money."

The experience was worse for Mark. "I dusted him every morning before work. He was initially resistant to the changes, so every time he travelled, I'd take a wall down! Once, he went to his

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Photographs by Mark York

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beloved steam room but it was already in the skip."

The new look is bold, masculine, aesthetically harmonious and somewhat disturbing. There are white walls and bleached lime-oak floorboards.

"But everything has a dark side. The flat's full of creatures that have been captured. Analyse that," she says, surveying the sitting room with its reindeer rugs over sofas, old zebra skins and antler candelabra.

"That's not just a picture of a rodeo," she says, pointing to a wall-sized photograph. "It's a prison rodeo. A sculpture, Missing Boy 3, by the Korean artist Ki June Park is purposely unsettling. And Tim Shaw's 'Man on Fire' bronze should make you cry."

It's also an oasis of brown, silver and monochrome. "When the man came to design the fish tank in the TV room, he thought I was joking when I said, 'Only black and white fish - anything with colour becomes a fish finger'."

Underlying this order is a sense of hedonism. "There's a bar you can dance on, and every room's set up for a party. A sound system follows you around the flat - anything by Shwayze, Wrapt-Up productions or Lo-Star."

And there's a wine fridge in most rooms. "Yeah, pure class," she laughs.

The sitting room is where everything happens, from seeing patients to record-



ing music and writing songs ("with Jerry Meelvan who tours with Robbie Williams, Ellie Golding who's always in the papers, and Leo Whiteley, who signs stars for Notting Hill Music.")

There are tribal artefacts, a yee-hah! Remington cowboy sculpture and vintage Louis Vuitton. But also a grand piano, lead-lined acoustic floorboards and ceiling. Ceiling-height black oak cupboards conceal the kind of technical gear

that warms her "trailer-park heart". Like much of the furniture, she designed these cupboards. "If I can't afford something, I get it copied or hit Lots Road."

This stylish thrift extends to the children's rooms, despite their Ralph Lauren sleigh beds. "There's not a single thing they couldn't take to their first flats." (The kids are aged eight and 11.)

And what of the master bedroom, an Asian enclave with Tang horses? "Our

heavenly Vi-Spring mattress is the star turn alongside my closet of car-to-bar vertiginous heels and Ruhlmann-inspired tallboy. The photographs of vintage cars are all Portobello Road finds." She pauses. "Much of what's here only costs a fiver. But the cheap stuff's beautifully lit, so looks expensive."

It's also a home bursting with love, laughter and style. Now all she needs is a Grammy in the loo.

'My husband was brutally resistant to the changes, so every time he travelled, I'd take a wall down'

Wall-to-wall artefacts (top): Carvings, animal skin throws and antler candelabra in the sitting room

Table manners (left): a curved banquette makes for cosy suppers

Dream room (far left): a Tang horse and a quilted bed dominate the master bedroom

■ **Lighting:** All Square (020 7727 0606, www.allsquaregrp.co.uk)

■ **Handmade beds:** Vi-Spring (01752 366311, www.vispring.co.uk)

■ **Audio:** BOSE sound system (0800 1074999, www.bose.co.uk); integrated lighting and music from Lutron Homeworks (020 7702 0657, or visit www.lutron.com); and Redhorn Audio Visual (020 7486 8604/8605, www.redhornav.com)

■ **Kitchen:** Gaggenau appliances (0870 840 2003); units by Clive Christian (020 7349 9200, london@clive.com)

■ **Antiques and artefacts:** Ralph Lauren (020 7535 4600) for sleigh beds, Henry Gregory Antiques (Portobello Road, 020 7792 9221) for vintage Louis Vuitton, Sebastiano Barbaggio (020 7792 3320) for African art

■ **Display items:** from Striking Displays, Brighton (01273 423623) for Perspex display cases

■ **Aquarium:** designed and supplied by Aquatic Design Centre (020 7636 6388)

■ **Furniture:** David Murcott (0780 279 6708) for bespoke Ruhlmann and Art Deco-inspired furnishings

HOW TO GET THE LOOK