



Penthouse Apartment, Courtfield Gardens,
Kensington, London



CLIENT
Beaufort House Ltd.

ARCHITECTS
Niall McLaughlin Architects
Niall McLaughlin, Spencer Guy, Marina Kayser Eichberg

ENGINEERS
Refurbishment: WCJ Engineers
Carl Vining
Roof: Packman Lucas
Toby Maclean
Staircase: Price and Myers
Phil Hudson

SPECIALISTS
AV/Media/Audio/Lighting/Controls Consultant
Gryphon Systems

Architects' Account

The maisonette apartment occupies the fourth and fifth floors of a 19th century terraced house in Kensington, which is divided into five separate units. The stucco façade of the property faces onto Courtfield Gardens, a small square forming part of Kensington's conservation area. Planning regulations required that the façade be preserved in its typical proportions and the sash windows retained in their original form. It was, however, possible to open out the roof to make a terrace behind a traditional lead parapet.

The entry into the apartment is a journey towards the daylight at the top. When the door is opened, daylight spills down from three floors above. The internal staircase is a smooth plaster vessel with a steel stair contained within its volume. The stair is designed so it does not touch the edges of the container, instead floating within the space. To achieve this effect, it was necessary to fabricate the stair in one piece and crane it into position from above. We think of it as being like a ship in a bottle.

The main living space occupies the top floor and celebrates its position under the sky with a series of skylights above the room. Daylight enters between transverse beams of cast plaster that are deep and curved to ease the light into the room. The beams act as a baffle to soften the light as it enters.

The roof terrace on the top floor is a kind of 'negative' space with light from below glowing through the roof deck at night. Alternating slots of timber and opalescent glass create a banding of light and shade in the evening. It is possible to walk over this banded surface, which reinforces the connection between inside and outside.

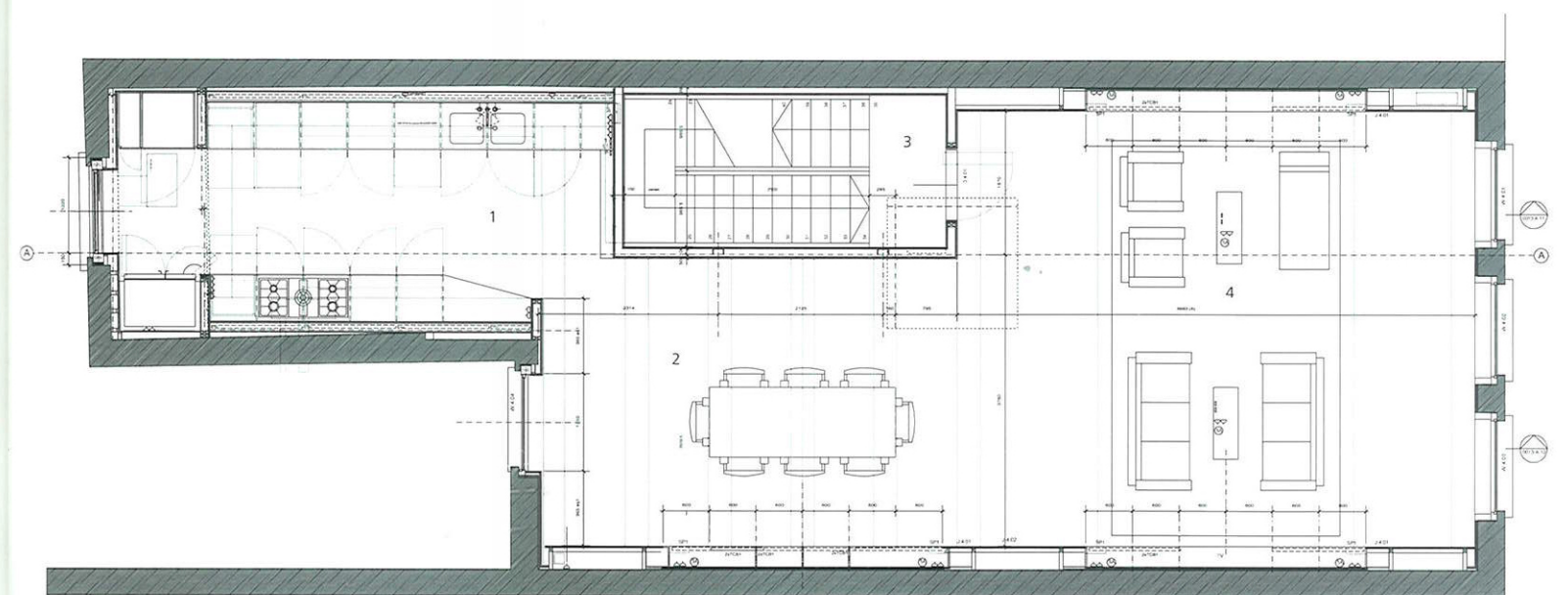
The apartment is designed around light. The space is intended to change as

the sun wheels overhead; sometimes beams of light are cast down the walls, sometimes light is blurring into soft shades of blue and grey. The luminosity of the rooms shifts continuously through the day and through the seasons.

Photography: Nick Kane



- 1 Two long slots run the length of the walls of the main space and contain the TV, fireplace, stereo, air conditioning and bookshelves. They generate a dado line that is consistent throughout the room
- 2 Light spills down around the edges of the steel stair
- 3 The apartment is designed around light



Fourth floor plan, top floor of maisonette

Legend

1. kitchen
2. dining area with roof-lights above
3. internal steel stair
4. living area with roof-lights above and built-in shelves