

# HOUSE & GARDEN<sup>®</sup>

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## OUT IN THE OPEN


*A striking RIBA House of the Year + DAN PEARSON on his Somerset smallholding  
+ Roses in a SPITALFIELDS walled garden + An insiders' guide to MARRAKECH*





# LOVE IN

Filled with peonies, foxgloves and a mass of roses, the romantic walled garden of this Spitalfields townhouse



Despite being a stone's throw from the bustle of Brick Lane in London's East End, the garden has an extraordinary tranquillity, with an array of fragrant roses in bloom for much of the year

TEXT JODIE JONES | PHOTOGRAPHS RACHEL WARNE

# BLOOM

was sensitively created by young designer Miria Harris for Ben Adler and his late wife Pat Llewellyn

Spitalfields, in east London, is a palimpsest of bricks and mortar with, at its heart, the Georgian jewel of Fournier Street. Originally built for Huguenot silk weavers and merchants, these impressive buildings were carved up over time into workshops and cheap accommodation occupied by more recent immigrants and a smattering of artists. Then, just as many of them were on the point of collapse, the houses were gradually rediscovered by people who had the combination of the financial wherewithal and the

aesthetic sensibility necessary to rescue them.

Ben Adler and his now late wife Pat Llewellyn fell for one of the finest houses on the street back in 2013. The couple clearly enjoyed a project. (You can also read about the remarkable restoration of their house in Gloucestershire in this issue.) In the case of their Spitalfields house, which had most recently been used as an office and sample store for a fabric wholesaler and had previously been filled with small rag-trade workshops, they engaged Julian Harrap Architects to sensitively reverse its structural decline. It was slow work that took nearly three years, and the couple were able to move in just 11 months before Pat's death.

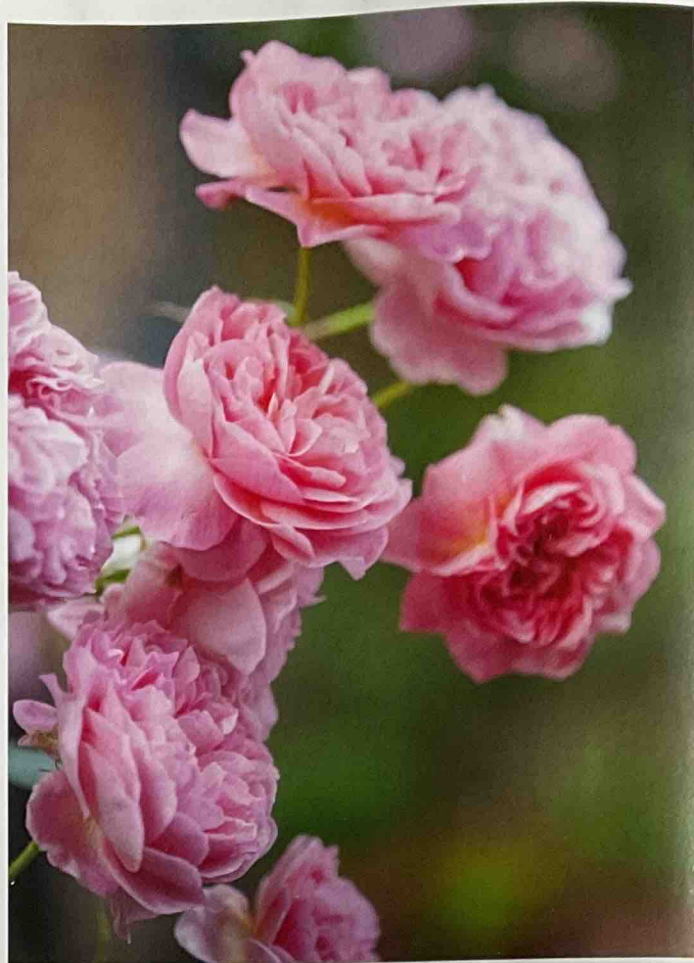
Although their house was now a triumph, the walled garden behind it was still a disaster, blighted by a decades-old nine-car garage, which housed the previous owner's collection of sports cars and took up almost all the garden – the space now occupied by the potager and much more. So Ben and Pat turned to Miria Harris for help. The young garden designer, the sister of an old friend, had worked for four years in Jinny Blom's studio following a decade in public art curation, but this was her first big solo commission. On visiting the house for the first time, on Christmas Eve in 2016, Miria knew she was being invited to create an instant garden of huge importance. 'It was a wonderful expression of trust,' she says.

Ben and Pat wanted a romantic, timeless garden that could be filled with flowers in time for the coming summer, so Miria suggested a design implemented in two parts, 'I drew up a framework of intersecting paths converging on a circular raised bed at the heart of the ornamental garden, which referenced Georgian designs and ultimately would lead through a gate in a wall to be created towards the back of the garden and into a small potager. Ben and Pat already had the gate – it had once belonged to the poet Dylan Thomas, which appealed to Pat, a Welshwoman – but we knew that the kitchen garden would have to wait.'

Miria used the temporary black hoarding boards that divided the garden at the point where the potager wall would one day be built as a backdrop for some old and very beautiful espaliered pears she managed to source. 'They were wonderfully gnarled and gave an impression that the garden could have been here forever,' she says.

She built raised beds to reduce the visual impact of the high boundary walls, laid paths in Vande Moortel Belgian brick (a contemporary choice with a timeless quality) and incorporated several antique ornaments, including a 14th-century stone font. 'It gives a nod to Christ Church Spitalfields, the Hawksmoor church you can see over the garden wall,' says Miria. 'I also had the church in mind when positioning the outdoor table, so Ben and Pat would be able to sit and watch the sun go down behind its spire.'

Miria then drew up a planting plan, orchestrated to fill the garden with flowers for as much of the year as possible. 'We started with extraordinary striped tulips followed by an explosion of peonies and wisteria. But I think the roses are what make it really special. Often



## BEN AND PAT WANTED A ROMANTIC, TIMELESS GARDEN THAT COULD BE FILLED WITH FLOWERS

ABOVE Beautiful *Rosa* 'Boscobel' produces a glorious succession of fragrant, coral-pink double flowers from June through to early autumn. OPPOSITE TOP The ordered geometry of Miria's design can be admired from the first-floor drawing room. BOTTOM Sheltered by a high wall, the garden table is positioned to catch the last of the late-afternoon light

first and last to flower is *Rosa* 'Boscobel' and we have masses more, including 'Little White Pet', 'Gertrude Jekyll', 'American Pillar' and 'Cardinal de Richelieu'. They are chosen for fragrance and colour, which ranges from white and soft pink to deepest burgundy.'

Remarkably, the work was completed in less than two months, delivering a poignant summer of flowers and fragrance. Since then the garden has settled and, two years ago, Ben called Miria back to finally realise her potager plans. She commissioned raised vegetable beds with turned wooden corners that echo the shape of a 1726 newel post inside the house, designed a wrought-iron pergola to echo Dylan's gate and selected more espaliered fruit trees to line the walls, which were built with reclaimed bricks and lime mortar.

Today, the garden sits comfortably within its walls, both old and new. It is the epitome of romance, in part thanks to its sensitive design and planting, but also because it was a garden created for two people, of whom one is now present only in spirit □

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