

## At 10,000sq feet, it's enormous. 'We had so many kids – six – we wanted a big space'

A model turned fashion designer, Bute (born Wendell) is the stepdaughter of the former Treasury secretary Lord Rees. Her childhood was split between London and rural Wales. She modelled in Paris and later moved to the Caribbean with her first husband, Jamaica-born Robert De Lisser, with whom she has two children.

The architect Angus Shepherd (of Powell Tuck Associates) was enlisted to unify the warren of buildings with glazed links ("The glass boxes look like they're floating"). "We clad it in the brick and reconfigured upstairs." She and Johnny, who died in 2021, "worked very well together", Bute says. "He wanted minimal and I wanted cosy. So we would have a battle and then we'd meet in the middle." Shepherd introduced lightwells and added a roof terrace over the main living space, with lush greenery indoors and out turning this corner of Camden into an oasis.

"When you drive through the gates, you are in your own little world," Bute says.

At 10,000sq feet, it is an enormous house, but until last summer, it also served as an HQ for her fashion label,

Serena Bute London. "I still do most of my shoots here," Bute says.

She began making elegant, swishy and, crucially, comfortable trousers from her kitchen table in 2015. Countess Debonnaire von Bismarck was an early fan and a cult following ensued. When you see Bute's posh trackies and silky athleisure staples worn by Kate Moss, Emma Watson and Adwoa Aboah, her interior taste makes a lot of sense.

"Cosy, liveable and not pretentious is always my ethos," she insists. "I hate going into a house where it feels uncomfortable and prissy... I want people to feel relaxed when they come here."

Bute's home centres around a cavernous, concrete-floored kitchen/living/dining room with a brass fireplace and vast off-white Living Divani sofas. All are welcome – animals included. Peggy, her bulldog, has just pinched a pastry from the railway sleeper dining table. "Darling, you had the croissant? Naughty!" Bute chides. Apparently it's Jag – the dachshund that belongs to her and Johnny's 24-year-old daughter – who's the naughtier pooch.



Entrance hall with Aldo Tura table and Mies van der Rohe chair

Johnny's Japanese photography collection (which is on loan to Pier 24, a San Francisco art museum) was put together with help from gallerist Michael Hoppen. Retro Murano orbs hang above the 20-seater dining table, which was custom-made in Belgium.

"You can have hundreds of people in here. It's great for entertaining. It was

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