

DRAMATIC TURN

An interior designer has transformed two run-down flats in east London into an elegant home filled with statement pieces to showcase his love of “masculine glamour”. By **Kate Salter**



PERFECT TONE: The mirror in the reception room is from Abigail Ahern and the velvet armchairs are from Graham and Green. English Fireplaces supplied the Louis XV marble surround; either side are art works by Manuel Bersan. The coffee table is by Ines Cole, on which is a sculpture by Robert Lee Morris





NEW HEIGHTS Above: The dining table is custom-made by Lombok and the chandeliers are from Abigail Ahern. Bricks by London Stone were used for the extension. Opposite, clockwise from top left: On the landing is a Gubi mirror and a Buster and Punch pendant light; the ground-floor staircase is crafted from reclaimed driftwood; the master bedroom features a Maxalto bed from B&B Italia and a chandelier by Timothy Oulton; the custom-made front door by Casa Botelho

The interior designer João Botelho is a man who enjoys his cocktails. Throughout his handsome, four-storey townhouse in Dalston, are elegant, curved martini tables punctuating every room like smooth brass commas. They are in the reception room, the living room, next to the bed, beside the bath, even in the walk-in wardrobe. Fortunately, the tables which are designed by Botelho himself and named after James Bond martinis, say more about his love of a bygone-era glamour than a penchant for hitting the bottle at every given opportunity.

Originally from Brazil, Botelho founded his design company Casa Botelho after a successful career in fashion. Naturally, the house is the most stylish on the street: immaculate painting; windows and porch painted in Farrow &

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Ball’s ‘Railings’; wide cream Yorkstone steps. Inside there are moody paint colours, atmospheric lighting that picks up the brass and steel martini tables and sparkling chandeliers, a look he calls “masculine glamour”. “I like a little bit of James Bond,” he says.

Botelho has already been for his morning walk across nearby London Fields with his two bouncy cocker spaniels and shows me into the kitchen to make a coffee. Inside, the scale of the ground floor is so vast and so light

it almost feels as if you have stepped outside again. The kitchen and dining area are flooded with light from a frameless skylight running the full width of the room and light also pours in from the three metre-high doors that lead to the garden.

The kitchen consists of a huge island made of black wenge wood topped with an enormous slab of dark polished concrete. Behind it is a wall of immaculate black wenge cupboards that hide everything – literally everything.

The oven is behind a door, so is the Nespresso machine with custom-made wooden drawer for its coffee pods. Botelho tells me his insistence that the door hiding the fridge match the dimensions of the cupboard door at the other end lead to “many, many meetings” with his builders. “I’m obsessed by symmetry and I like things to be very sleek, architectural and sharp,” he says.

“Symmetry” is one of Botelho’s design mantras. “Symmetry is about making sure the colours are coordinated, the proportions are right, whether it’s the height of the art work or the lights.” Over the long dining table hang two huge chandeliers. “I bought all my lighting before I started the project”, Botelho says. “My partner thought I was totally crazy. I knew I had to get the chandeliers beforehand so





BED AND BATH Left: The second-floor guest bedroom has a Lombok bed and is painted in Farrow & Ball's 'Elephant's Breath'. Right: The bathroom on the same floor features deer heads by Graham and Green, a vintage vanity unit on which sits a Martha Sturdy vase, and a floor mat by Zara Home

I could plan where they were going to go as they would need supports because they're so heavy. I also knew if I didn't buy them then I wouldn't have the money to do it at the end. I was right: by the end of the project we had spent *everything*."

Botelho shares the house with his partner, a French investment banker, someone who is "very practical" and had the unenviable job of dealing with the finances during the 15-month building project (Botelho estimates it cost around £1m). "I'm the one with the eyes so he was managing the finances, the builders, the architects. He's French, so he's not so visual," Botelho says, smirking.

The house was originally divided into two flats. In 2014, with the help of Waind Gohil + Potter Architects, the flats were joined, a basement was dug out to bring light into the downstairs and an extension was added.

Botelho worked for Nicole Farhi and then Donna Karan, and says his fashion background has given him a solid understanding of fabrics. You can see his love of texture in his own designs, such as his Bacco armchairs which are upholstered in a bright mustard velvet with contrasting silk cushions. On the wall is Matilda, a stuffed zebra head who, he says, is "part of the family".

But the most striking thing on the ground floor is the staircase. A solid block of darkened reclaimed driftwood that resembles a Rachel Whiteread sculpture, it is a thing of beauty. "I wanted something very imposing and modern," Botelho says, "and I liked the idea of it having been washed away by the sea."

Botelho has a knack for making each corner of the house count. Even the first-floor landing, clad

in reclaimed wood and complete with an armchair and one of Buster and Punch's amber-hued LED filament bulbs, is a space in its own right (Botelho says he was forced to switch to LEDs after his partner complained of the sky-high electricity bills).

On the first floor is the master bedroom, where a B&B Italia bed takes centre stage. The en suite bathroom, separated by a Japanese-style sliding door is, in fact, bigger than the bedroom itself. The "moody and sexy" feel comes from the smooth black Tadelakt walk-in shower, ornate fireplace and a black and white Porcelanosa bath (one of the most expensive items in the house).

The second-floor guest bedroom has a more cosy feel and shows how painting the walls, ceiling, skirting boards and windows in one colour can make the room feel larger. "Every client

I work with now, I have to convince them that it's the right thing to do" says Botelho.

He has just completed a project in Temple, winning over stuffy barristers with a bold office reception redesign, and he is pleased with his South Kensington project where he convinced a French couple on the merits of exposed brick ("the French hate brick"). After launching his range of mirrors at Clerkenwell Design Week, later this year Botelho will launch a range of rugs with Jennifer Manners and fabrics with Margo Selby. But the project that still gives him the most pleasure, he says, is his own home. "I was sitting watching television last weekend and was looking at the light coming in through the doors. I thought, 'wow, it's so beautiful'. I don't get tired of it." **L**

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