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ITALIAN INTUITION

The owner of this Kensington apartment wanted to create a glamorous, 'international' look with an art-deco flavour, which she achieved with the shared vision and cultural understanding of interior designer Paolo Moschino

TEXT **TRISTRAM HOLLAND** | PHOTOGRAPHS **PAUL MASSEY** | LOCATIONS EDITOR **LAVINIA BOLTON**

It is not a surprise to find that both the owner and the designer of this imposing apartment in Kensington are Italian. While the building's proportions and its floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking a leafy communal square are unmistakably Victorian-English, its decoration has a cool, stylishly assured quality that is distinctively international-Italian.

It was, however, serendipitous that, when Sofia Barattieri di San Pietro needed the help

of an interior designer, she found her way to Paolo Moschino through English friends whose apartment she much admired. More important – for Paolo takes on only three or four projects each year – he and Sofia got on well and discovered that they shared a penchant for furnishings with an art-deco flavour. 'I have a passion for that period,' says Sofia. 'I already had key pieces and we worked around those.' More than that, 'Paolo understood

what I wanted and helped to shape my vision

For his part, Paolo found that because Sofia is 'so interested in fashion, she has an eye for colour, proportion and style,' and he admires her robust attitude: 'She was never scared of my suggestions – or of saying, "Absolutely no, I hate it."' Sofia's openness to new ideas and her decisiveness reflect her business acumen. She conceived and masterminds a groundbreaking, upmarket fashion website, Motil



OPPOSITE The entrance lobby (right) is sleek and glamorous, with a black marble Maison Jansen table on which sits a black glass vase from Nicholas Haslam. The wall of the staircase leading to the lower ground floor (left) is clad in mercury-glass tiles. THIS PAGE The drawing-room sofas, by Nicholas Haslam, are covered in 'Armure Cannelle' silk in mole by Claremont, with matching custom ruching on the cushions



THIS PAGE The owner found the nineteenth-century, English chaise longue in the drawing room at the Olympia International Fine Art & Antiques Fair; it is covered in a Nicholas Haslam linen. The centre table was designed for the space, by Paolo Moschino. OPPOSITE The chimney, with a 'see-through' fireplace, divides the drawing room from the dining room. The Thirties chairs in front of the fire already belonged to the owner, and have been re-covered in a turquoise Claremont fabric





Fidel Castro



BOTH PICTURES In the dining room, a 'name painting' by Simon Patterson hangs above the fire (opposite); to the right is a bicycle sculpture by Gary Hume. The tables and chairs were designed by Paolo, the latter with brass handles so that they can be easily moved around. The holographic portrait of the Queen, *Lightness of Being* (this page), is by Chris Levine



which allows friends to shop online together in real time. Since its launch in April 2011 it has soared to success; Sofia believes that the key to this is that it is 'so totally user-based'.

Sofia has three young children, and when she had the chance to expand into the apartment next door – also composed of a raised ground floor and semi basement – she leapt at it. But amalgamating the two posed a mammoth challenge: the adjacent buildings had different floor levels and were divided by a load-bearing wall supporting five storeys. Knowing that the job required the expertise of highly skilled engineers and builders, Paolo called in the firm of Tyler Mandic. The work was completed in just over a year, and the result, a sumptuous L-shape apartment, is, says Sofia, 'exactly what I wanted'. On the main floor, one axis leads from the enormous kitchen at the front of the house via a spare room that looks on to a light well to the dining room facing the gardens at the back; the other is formed by the dining room and drawing room. The family's bedrooms, a media room and a small gym are on the floor below.

Merging the two apartments allowed Paolo to create a spectacular centrepiece: he stripped out what had been a maze of small rooms to reveal two magnificent nineteenth-century mirror-image reception rooms, complete with their original cornices. He removed all but the chimney of the wall that had divided them, and even made that transparent by taking out the fire backs to allow views through the fireplace. Though the two rooms have different functions, Paolo unified the space by using off-white paint on the walls and ceilings and dark, ebonised-oak parquet floors throughout, and dressed all six windows with simple grey-green silk curtains and sheer roman blinds, making the rooms appear both larger and more serene.

In addition to running his shop, Nicholas Haslam, Paolo designs furniture for specific locations. Sofia, he said, 'wanted a dining table that could seat at least 20, but on occasions only eight. I thought one long table would look like a boardroom, and when there were only eight diners, it might make one wonder what had happened to the rest of the party.' His solution was to design two square tables, each for eight, with deeply bevelled edges and a space between them in which an extra table top, its edges bevelled in the opposite way, can be slotted in. He also designed the dining chairs and, wanting to give their backs extra interest – chiefly because 'one sees so much of them' – added brass handles, thus creating a link to the studs on the Fifties sideboard and also making it easy to move the chairs.

Paolo takes 'an intuitive rather than an

analytical approach' to his work, but so spot-on is his intuition that he has orchestrated the furnishings and the owner's art collection so that they enhance one another without the effect ever seeming contrived. The peacock hues in a painting by Dao Hai Phong above the drawing-room fireplace, for example, find echoes in the turquoise of the Thirties armchairs, the sea-blue leather stools, and the teal of the dining chairs beyond. On the opposite wall, the gentler colours of a set of Gary Hume prints are at home above the mole tones and velvet comfort of a cushion-strewn sofa.

The entrance lobby, from where stairs lead to the lower floor, perhaps more than any other space expresses Sofia's wish to be 'international'. What could have been an insignificant area has been 'transformed', she says, 'into a jewel'. The floor and stair treads are paved with polished black marble, and one wall is lined with smokily glimmering mercury glass. A glittery jet chandelier, a black marble table and a pair of Forties, Italian, columnar glass lamps add further layers of lustre. The black flooring extends down a corridor to the gleaming kitchen, where it turns into grey and white veined marble, with paler, Carrara marble worktops. Though Paolo has lived and worked in London for 30 years, Sofia feels it is 'his Italian culture that has given him his understanding of how to use these materials'. Perhaps their shared roots also explains why, as she puts it, 'The place is deeply personal to me' □

Paolo Moschino for Nicholas Haslam: 020-7730 8623; www.nicholashaslam.com | Tyler Mandic: 020-7352 5250; www.tylermandic.co.uk | Motilo: www.motilo.com

OPPOSITE A view through the dining-room doors (top left) shows a Forties, Italian sideboard below a painting by fashion illustrator René Gruau. The chair at the end of the corridor (top right) is from Fendi Casa. One wall of the kitchen (bottom left) is hung with photographs by Montserrat Soto; the curtain fabric (bottom right) is 'Uzbek Soft Sky' by Mark Alexander, from Romo. **THIS PAGE** FROM TOP In the spare room, the bedside table, lamp and wall lights are all from Nicholas Haslam. The main bedroom, on the floor below, is decorated mainly in cream and white, with brass accents in the bedside tables and the Fifties lamps by Maison Charles; the print above the bed is by Gary Hume. The adjoining bathroom is furnished in a similar, cream and brass scheme; 'I am so tired of chrome,' Paolo explains

— the — Knowledge

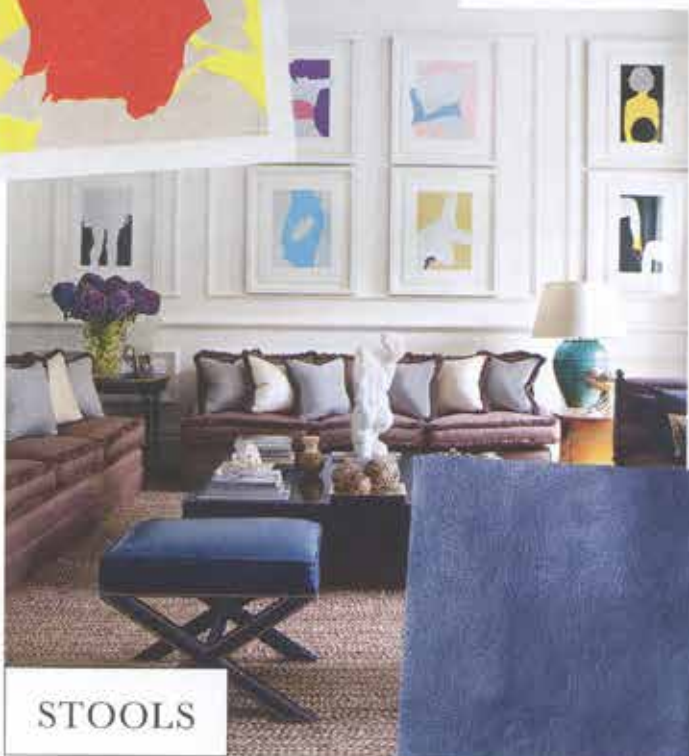
Inspired by the houses in this issue,
Emily Tobin gives directions on how to achieve similar style

GARY HUME PRINTS

The owner of this apartment spotted this set of Gary Hume prints at a Louis Vuitton fashion show and immediately bought the lot. Pictured is *Two Roses* which costs £2,000 from White Cube (www.whitecube.com).



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STOOLS

'Sigaro' stools by Nicholas Haslam (020-7730 8623; www.nicholashaslam.com) provide extra seating in the drawing room. They cost £820 each and measure 47 x 62 x 43cm; consider covering them in 'Royal Hide' leather by Edelman (020-7351 7305; www.edelmanleather.com), which costs £22.50 per square foot.



VELVET

The dining chairs were designed by Paolo Moschino and upholstered in 'Douro-Lac' (1463/41), a soft, sea-green velvet by Lelièvre (020-7352 4798; www.lelievre.eu) that costs £109 per metre.



MIRROR GLASS

Mercury-glass tiles line the entrance hall and make for a glamorous ascent upstairs; the tiles are also used to similar effect on the chimneypiece in the dining room. Paolo recommends Mirror Works (01743-588287; www.antiquemirrorglass.com); expect to pay approximately £414 per square metre.