

# LONDON LIVING

## SIMON UPTON



FOREWORD BY NICKY HASLAM



# HUNTER GATHERER

## HUBERT ZANDBERG, SPITALFIELDS

London is the centre of the world – things happen here! I arrived from South Africa in 1997 when the energy of the art scene had been transformed by the YBAs (Young British Artists), whose work appeared in *Sensation*, an exhibition at the Royal Academy.

Travel is in my DNA. Over the years I have acquired homes in London, Berlin, Paris and Cape Town, cities with which I feel a strong affinity. One of the reasons I invest in property is because it gives me a new playground in which to indulge my passion for creating dialogues between objects and art. I have been buying art all my life which means that much of my collection has had to go into storage.

I have lived in London for twenty-seven years and have come to love it. I remember the precise day I felt like a Londoner and the city became home. It was like a religious experience. I have always bought or rented in West London yet was intrigued by Spitalfields because of its heavy dose of history – it is so redolent of old London. Ironically, the flat I bought is a wolf in sheep's clothing: a mock Georgian new build from the 1990s in a street of period houses.

The design of the flat, which is tiny, was driven by the art I had decided to hang. It is the ultimate jewellery box; I wanted it to be a representation of my old home on Ladbroke Grove, my first true cabinet of curiosities. I made the space look bigger by adding more and more stuff, which emphasises the fact that it is just a box, a little 'Wunderkammer'. The scale makes sense, yet it is also a comfortable place to stay with a big bed, a huge shower and an oversized sofa.

During the three years it took to renovate, the flat became a laboratory for some of the design schemes my team and I were working on: the terrazzo floor and paint techniques in the kitchen and lobby were all experiments, as was the plaster mould on the living room ceiling, which we were trying out for the bathrooms of a beach project.

I wanted the space to take on the character of a painting. It was a very considered design; every surface is covered – nothing is left as plaster or brick. The walls are either lined with fabric, or panelled, in a nod to traditional jewellery boxes which are upholstered in velvet, satin, leather or veneer, all with beautiful detailing.

My favourite part of any design is hanging the art at the end. Although each of the rooms in this flat were contrived around paintings I had already chosen for them, the luxurious burnt-orange velvet on the walls of the living room – so beautiful and simple – made me unusually hesitant.

For now, London is where I spend most of my time, but nothing is permanent.













