

HOUSE of the MONTH

# LONDON CALLING

Interior designer Tara wanted an elegant yet edgy apartment for relaxing with friends and then chilling alone. She found it by the Thames and now has the best view in town

Words – Fiona McCarthy  
Photography – James Merrell  
Styling – Mary Weaver

## Home profile

**THE OWNER** Tara Bernerd, an interior designer and founder of Tara Bernerd & Partners.  
**THE PROPERTY** A riverside apartment in south London. It has a large open-plan living/kitchen/dining space, a hallway with concealed storage, a master bedroom, bathroom and dressing room, a guest bedroom with en suite, a guest cloakroom and a terrace.

## LIVING AREA

'Everywhere you look, is a homage to the view,' says Tara. 'Give me grey felt, petrol-blue velvet, baby-soft leather and smoked dark glass, mixed with concrete and wood and I'm in heaven.'  
**GET THE LOOK** On the wall are Harland Miller's *A Decisive Blow Against If* screen print from *White Cube* and a photograph of a tarantula by Guido Mocafico from Hamiltons Gallery. The *Bell* side table is by Sebastian Herkner. The *Powell* sofa and *Wilson* side table in *Granite*, right, are by Minotti. The cushions are, from left, *Tattoo Union* by Tara Bernerd; and *Hummingbird*

by Alexander McQueen for The Rug Company. The ikat rug was custom-made by Luke Irwin. The *Merrow Associates* coffee table is from *retrospectiveinteriors.com*. For similar, try *Chaplins*. The *Kilin* armchairs are by Sergio Rodrigues for *Espasso*. The *Fifties* floor lamp is from Philip Thomas. For similar, try *EDC London*.



**HALLWAY**

'I like to create a big entrance,' Tara says of the 'jewel box' space with concrete walls. Mirrored-glass doors (not shown) hide generous storage and help to make the space feel larger. **GET THE LOOK** This is Erwin Olaf's Hope photograph from Hamiltons Gallery and the T904 bench by Gastone Rinaldi for Poltrona Frau from EDC London. The solid concrete walls were supplied by MASS Concrete.



← **DETAIL**

Creating a space where Tara could cleverly hide her TV and display her favourite possessions and books inspired the central, concrete and wood bookcase. **GET THE LOOK** The bookcase is Tara's own design. For a similar ashtray, try giftlab.com.

**LIVING AREA**

For Tara, her apartment is like a hotel lobby, with lots of different places to sit. 'I like that idea,' she says, 'but my version is approachable, warm and a bit edgy. The difference here is that I'm in my home, surrounded by the things I love.' **GET THE LOOK** Throughout, the oak flooring in Café Noir Crème is by Silvan. The glazing was supplied and installed by D&R Design. For similar concrete planters, try Marshalls.



*'My father always tells me to be myself and the same holds true in your home – be honest about what you love because it's always important to be charmed and seduced by where you live'*

# 'A SENSE OF HOME

is about feeling grounded,' says interior designer Tara Bernerd, known for her distinctive luxe-with-an-edge style. It's hardly surprising to hear that her hectic work schedule sees her spending more time in the air than at home. She travels regularly from New York to Shanghai and back again – sometimes on a weekly basis. Her recent projects have ranged from design hotels and super-yachts to a high-end residential development in China, as well as her own London riverside apartment. 'Top of the list for my own home was to create a place that makes me feel warm and comfortable, but inspired too,' Tara says of the flat she moved into at the end of last year. With her 'bachelorette lifestyle,' as she calls it, she wanted a space she could lock up and leave at a moment's notice, then 'come back and chill out,' she says. Originally a three-bedroom apartment, the space has breathtaking views of the River Thames – 'That's what clinched the deal,' Tara says. Once she'd bought it, she set about 'opening it out as far as possible'. A bathroom was reworked as a guest cloakroom, a bedroom turned into a dressing room and she replaced the solid living room doors so there is now a view of the river from the front door right through to the balcony. 'I wanted an open-plan vibe with an industrial yet luxurious feel,' she says, 'but without the sense of living in a loft.' Within the large living space Tara has created different zones which, she adds, 'Give the eye lots of different points of interest wherever you sit'. The kitchen was constructed to have the feel of a cool bar and features a marble-clad island where friends can sit and chat while Tara cooks. 'Or we all pile on to the large sofa for cocktails,' she says. 'But when it's just me, I can pull out the TV [hidden in the central bookcase], lie on the sofa and relax.' The long dining table, perfect for large-scale entertaining, doubles up as a work area where Tara sits with her laptop, surrounded by her favourite design books for inspiration. An area by the window on the other side of the bookcase, complete with a vintage coffee table and stools, is a great spot for grabbing a cup of coffee in the

morning and 'embracing the view for just a few moments,' she says. Throughout the apartment, Tara's trademark mix of rough and smooth textures – concrete and velvet, marble and glass, wood and metal – is set against neutral walls and a pale oak floor. 'Previously, I'd used a lot of colour, but now – as I've grown up – I think less is more, especially when you want to have dramatic displays of art. I can't imagine having bare walls – art and design are intertwined,' she says. Tara applied the same philosophy to her home as she uses for her clients' projects. 'It's all about forward-planning and being prepared to compromise on the things you can't live without,' she says. 'For example, I had my heart set on concrete walls in the hallway, but they were way out of my budget. I was going to substitute them with grey-painted plaster, but realised every time I looked up, I'd wish they were concrete.' So she didn't replace the internal doors as planned – and instead had them re-hinged, spray-painted and fitted with new handles – so she could afford the concrete. One thing Tara has learnt is to sketch a floor plan that indicates where the furniture will sit before she goes shopping. 'That way, I know what I need and what I have room for,' she says. 'It helps me stop impulse buying the wrong thing. No matter how much I might love something, it'll be no use if it doesn't fit,' she says. Many pieces were investments, such as the Linley armchairs Tara had been admiring for years, but others were more affordable finds, in particular the vintage console from Retrouvius. 'You don't have to spend a fortune to find cool stuff,' she says. Now her apartment is finished, Tara looks forward to coming home more than ever. 'I might be away more than I am here,' she says, 'but when I walk through the door and see that view, I know this is where I belong.' See more of Tara's work at tarabernd.com. The build of the apartment was by James Donovan of Cumberland Construction (cumberland-construction.co.uk)

**LIVING AREA**

'I think visually, so I like to create little zones of interest,' says Tara.

**GET THE LOOK** The pigeon photograph is part of Geoff Weston's Messengers series from Hamiltons Gallery. View his portfolio at [geoffweston.co.uk](http://geoffweston.co.uk). The New Objectivity American black walnut and leather stools in Havana are by Amy Somerville and the vintage interlocking coffee tables are from Retrouvius. This is the Linley Max armchair, upholstered in Romo's Delano Shingle with leather piping.



↳ **KITCHEN** →

'I wanted to explore a sense of craftsmanship with the kitchen,' says Tara. 'I love the combination of wood and steel, with the sliding, fluted-glass panels inspired by library ladders.'

**GET THE LOOK** The bespoke kitchen, designed by Tara Bernerd & Partners, includes black iron-framed sliding fluted-glass panels, limed-oak shelves and a Carrara marble-clad island. The Shadows glass and wood pendant lights are by Brokis. The OD 61 bar stools, upholstered in Zanzibar velvet by Vescom, are by Erik Buck.



*'I design a restaurant like I would my kitchen, reception areas like they are my hallways, bedrooms as retreats – all have a home-from-home feel'*

**Home truths**

**WHAT CAN'T YOU LIVE WITHOUT?** My sheets, the most luxurious and softest I've ever found, handmade and hand-embroidered, from The Linen Drawer.

**YOU WOULDN'T SAY NO...** to inviting Oscar Wilde as a curious addition to a dinner party and the Danish actor Mads Mikkelsen for eye candy.

**WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE CITY ESCAPE?** Rome, where I stay at the Hotel de Russie. There's a magic and seduction to the city – I love to have lunch at Dal Bolognese, walk in the Villa Borghese gardens and have wine and olives by the Spanish Steps. *Bellissima!*

**NOTHING BEATS...** being outdoors at The River Café for a long, lazy, hazy Sunday lunch with a gang of friends – it's about as good as it gets.

**YOU NEVER GET TIRED OF...** flying. No matter how much I travel, I'm always filled with a sense of awe that I can leave London and hours later, wake up in another city and in another culture.

**WHERE ARE YOUR BEST PLACES TO HUNT DOWN ART?** Jay Jopling's White Cube in Bermondsey and, when I'm abroad, Beijing's 798 Art Zone. I also loyally follow The Museum of Everything.

**MASTER BATHROOM**

'The travertine limestone really draws you in - it's a bit like art,' says Tara. 'A few friends said, "Wow! Are you really going to use that everywhere?" I love that it's so natural, but still strong.'

**GET THE LOOK** The vein-cut silver travertine was supplied by Stonell. The Kaldewei bath, Antonio Lupi basins and Vola taps are from West One Bathrooms. The custom-built vanity unit in limed oak was designed by Tara Bernerd & Partners.



*'Previously, I'd used decorating colours quite forcefully, but now - as I've grown up - I realise that less is more'*

**MASTER BEDROOM**

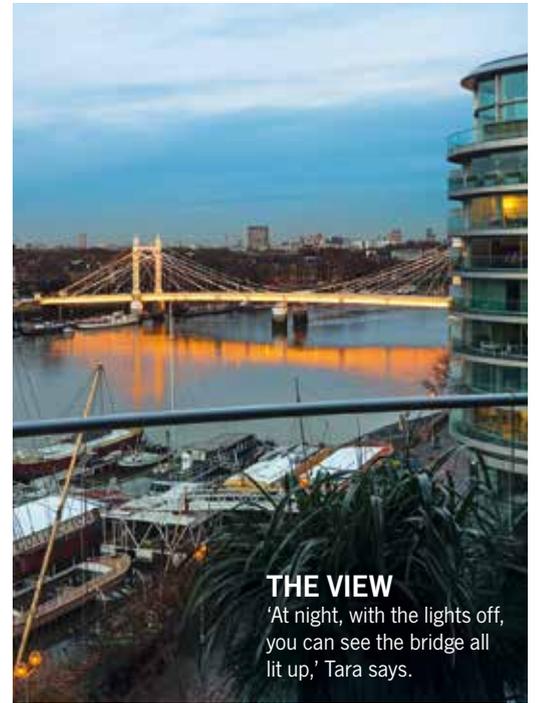
'I wanted my bedroom to be serene and enveloping,' says Tara. 'It's a contrast to the open-plan space of the living room where I spend a lot of my time. Here, I can draw the curtains, watch films and relax - the interiors equivalent of putting on my PJs and taking off my make-up.'

**GET THE LOOK** The painting above Tara's bed is by James Nares from Hamiltons Gallery. The Onda platform bed by Paolo Piva for Poliform is teamed with a Fifties bedside table from Retrouvius. The curtains in Caravan Natural wool by Donghia were made by Edge Interiors.



## GUEST CLOAKROOM

'If there's one room where you can afford to play and have fun, it's the guest loo,' says Tara. 'It's the space where you can make a great first impression.' Here, she indulged her current passion for petrol blue with leather wall tiles and a carved-marble basin. **GET THE LOOK** The Oasis leather wall tiles are from Blackstock's Silkroad collection. The carved-marble basin is from Kreoo's Nabhi range and the tap is from Kallista's One collection. The Rectangular mirror is by Jacques Adnet for Gubi. The walls are lined in Café Noir Crème oak boards by Silvan. For a similar limed-oak vanity unit, try West One Bathrooms.



## THE VIEW

'At night, with the lights off, you can see the bridge all lit up,' Tara says.

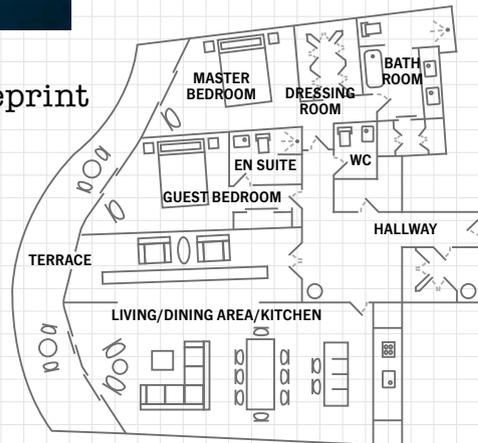
## Livingetc loves

**THAT TARA DOESN'T COMPROMISE** a glamorous aesthetic for the practical needs of daily life. We adore her storage behind a mirror-panelled door, the walk-in wardrobe and the clever TV in the living room, which folds flat in the bookcase when not in use.

**THE USE OF OVERSIZE ART.** Rather than coloured walls, dramatic photography and paintings serve as focal points – and conversation starters – throughout. **TARA'S TALENT** for injecting a featureless shell of an apartment with rough and luxe materials to give warmth and personality.

**THE ELEGANT APPROACH** to mixing modern with vintage. There's not a hint of shabby chic. Each item of furniture is chosen for its elegant, curved lines, beautiful craftsmanship and timeless appeal.

## The blueprint



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