



WALDO WORKS

Tom Bartlett, 43, founded Waldo Works in 2000 and while forging a career in high-end retail design he's also gained a stellar word-of-mouth reputation for bespoke residential projects from London to Hong Kong.

Words *Bethan Ryder*

For someone with such high-profile clients, Tom Bartlett flies under the radar. He's the force behind Smythson's new stores in New York, Fortnum's beauty floor and the award-winning Laslett Hotel in Notting Hill and yet he isn't a household name. But then his Clerkenwell-based architecture and design firm is not eponymous. Waldo Works is named after his Kensal Rise home, a converted spice warehouse, where he first began practising in 2000.

His reluctance to court publicity is perhaps why he's been entrusted with designing Jade Jagger's Ibiza villa and, more recently, the London home of supermodel Cara Delevingne. He bats away questions about these clients with Old Etonian-style ease: 'Perhaps they feel safe coming to me, because I don't answer questions like these,' he says.

He generally works with people who appreciate his rigorous, graphic clarity and 'slightly more academic approach'. So it was the bold primary colours and geometric forms of the Memphis Group together with the calmer Viennese Secession era and a dose of Eileen Gray, that inspired a recent project for a Notting Hill-based financier and his French wife.

Meanwhile, another Notting Hill scheme involved transforming a mews house into private twin offices for an international hotelier and his art collector wife. The lower level is devoted to the storage of her Old Masters drawings and prints, the first floor is a lounge for both and the second floor is the husband's office. 'She's fairly quiet whereas he's on the phone a lot so we had to separate them with a floor. Upstairs the staircase surround kind of morphs into a library,' says Bartlett, explaining how the grid of Crittall-like windows extends into shelving. 'He's quite tough and likes sleeping outside and stuff like that, so we employed a masculine aesthetic.' It might lean towards the industrial but it's softened by Josef Hoffmann lounge chairs and a suede-topped desk by New York architect Annabelle Selldorf.

Pushed to identify his typical residential client, he admits they're quite a cultured lot. 'We talk about concepts and work them through. So yes, it's probably people who enjoy reading books and looking at art and thinking about that side of things.' They have to be sophisticated enough to appreciate Bartlett's punchy use of colour - one of his projects features a bathroom decked out in Max Lamb's vibrant Marmoreal terrazzo. It's something that runs through to his own wardrobe, too. 'In terms of dressing, the clarity David Hockney used to have is where you want to be heading,' he says, looking the part in a cobalt-blue cotton utilitarian jacket. 'I like a crisp aesthetic and emotive use of colour. I do want to live in a white room, but I can never quite get there.'

Waldo Works' approach means that the company rarely works with residential developers, because Bartlett dislikes the 'blingy' show home look that so many favour. 'We're not really interested in that wanting-to-look-rich thing, it sort of revolts us. We like to work with developers who are looking for another place in the market, who need residential interiors that will have a huge point of difference.' He is currently designing the 31st-floor penthouse of the landmark Canaletto building in Shoreditch; designed by UNStudio architects it's due for completion in March 2017. A triangular tower, the penthouse layout

focuses on the 360-degree panorama of the capital. Bartlett has relished playing with 'intelligent' glass that turns opaque at the flick of a switch and a palette of materials that runs through the principal spaces ranging from patterned marbles through to lacquered finishes, painted glass, veneers and mirrors.

It's less common for him to solely undertake an interiors scheme - 75 per cent of his studio's work is architectural and he's always mixed the two disciplines. 'Pure architects will consider every detail through to the textiles; just look at someone like John Pawson, he does the whole thing.' Bartlett's method may be exacting and meticulous, but it's combined with wit and verve, which might explain the Jagger and Delevingne commissions. Can he do party crazy? 'Oh yeah, we enjoy that,' he replies. 'I've done a few poles in my time.'

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Above left: Tom Bartlett in the Villa Gallia chair by Josef Hoffman in the office he designed for an international hotelier and his art collector wife - the sculpture outside is by Christopher Le Brun, and left, the staircase in timber and blackened steel at the same property. Top right: vintage armchairs and Viccarbe side table in The Laslett hotel. Right: the diary wall in the Library at Smythson's Madison Avenue store. Left: aerial view of the Neo Bankside penthouse

