

The living room with
Graham and Green chairs



OUT WITH THE OLD

When an interior designer bought a run-down house in Hackney, east London, he had to strip everything out and start again

REPORT Dominic Bradbury PHOTOGRAPHS Richard Powers



The en suite master bathroom
RICHARD POWERS

When, after 25 years in the fashion business, João Botelho decided it was time for a change of direction, he didn't have to look far for inspiration. The Brazilian had so enjoyed doing up his Hackney town house that it made sense to turn his flair for interior design into a new career. "I have always had a great passion for interiors," he says. "But working on the house was a real eye-opener for me. I was fascinated by each step along the way and found that making design choices came very naturally to me. The whole project gave me a lot of confidence."

Botelho was born in the Brazilian city of Belo Horizonte, but left for England in 1994. "I sold everything I had – my VW Beetle, my stereo, everything – and came to London," he says. After an intensive English language course he got jobs with Nicole Farhi and Jasper Conran,

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before becoming managing director of Donna Karan UK, as well as looking after the international stores in Asia and the Middle East. Always a perfectionist, he was given the nickname "the general".

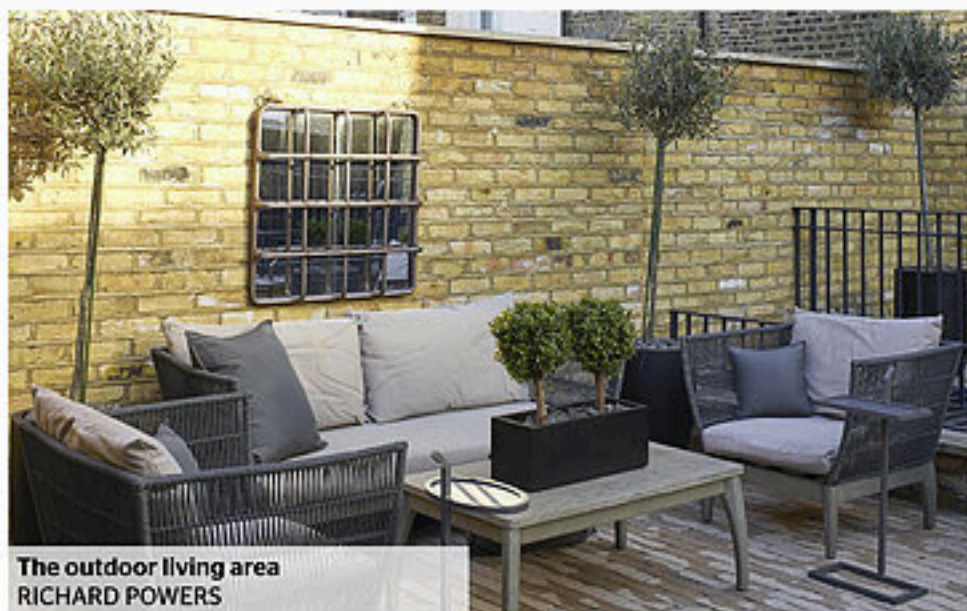
Botelho and his husband, Laurent Colinmaire, who works for Rothschild private bank, rented a flat in Shoreditch and began saving to buy their own place. Back in 2004, they came across the top two floors of their Victorian house in Hackney, which was for sale as a maisonette. "Originally the house was divided into two separate apartments," says

Botelho. “The maisonette looked terrible when we first saw it. There were orange walls and the kitchen was disgusting. But I could see the potential – the rooms were large and the ceilings were high – so we put in an offer.”

Botelho and Colinmaire embarked on the first phase of work and then, two years later, managed to buy the bottom two floors of the house as well. They decided to reconfigure the property as a three-storey home for themselves, with a separate rental flat in the basement. This meant stripping the whole building back to its bones, with the help of Waind Gohil + Potter Architects, and adding a new extension on the ground floor, which leads out into the back garden.

“It was a very different story before,” says Botelho. “We have redone everything. There was nothing original in the house that we could save or use. Even the corncicing had to be replaced because it had been damaged or lost over the years. The reclaimed wooden floors, the fireplaces – everything is new. We used to have some Victorian fireplaces, but we wanted something more ornate, so we found these Louis XV marble surrounds.”

Botelho describes the look as “masculine glamour”. The colour palette is one of greys, blacks and off-whites, with an emphasis on texture throughout, whether it’s the timber floors or the exposed brickwork walls of the new extension. There’s feature lighting in the form of



The outdoor living area
RICHARD POWERS

vintage chandeliers mixed with contemporary lights from Buster + Punch. Botelho declares himself obsessed with symmetry; he and Colinmaire even each have their own spaniel, Prince and Oscar.

The ground floor is an open-plan living space with the sitting room leading to the dining area and kitchen at the back of the house. A number of elements were designed by Botelho himself, including the kitchen units and the sitting room side tables, which form part of the new furniture collection. The garden was designed as an outdoor room for summer, complete with an open-air

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lounge and dining area.

Upstairs, Botelho reconfigured the first floor as a huge master suite, with light flowing in from the windows at either end. The space can be divided with recessed sliding glass doors, if needed, although essentially it’s an open-plan room with the sleeping area connecting with the bathroom, which is dominated by a working fireplace and a cocoon tub. The top floor has two guest bedrooms and a bathroom.

The atmosphere throughout is calm and soothing, with a sense of order in every part of the house. It is a conducive setting for Botelho as he grows his new interiors business.

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The master bedroom with B&B Italia bed
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The exterior
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