



*From punk upstart to establishment sophisticate:  
Sebastian Conran's home tells us all we need to know  
about the design scion's love of colour and a good pun*

# The story of my life

WORDS BY HOLLY WILLIAMS

**A**S PART OF the Conran dynasty (his father is Sir Terence, his brother the fashion designer Jasper), it is little wonder that designer Sebastian Conran's own home is sharply styled. But his Victorian semi in Bayswater, west London, where he lives with his wife Gertrude, is no show home.

Although the 54-year-old does have his own collections about the place, Conran reveals, "My home is a collection of bits I've been given, bits from the past - it's an assembly of my edited life."

One wall, for instance, is given over to punk posters from his student days; as the union treasurer at St Martins, he gave the Sex Pistols their first booking - and he went on to design artwork for the Clash.

"We all thought punk was a wonderful new movement, a new Bauhaus," he says. "Then it got hijacked, politicised."

Moving into the kitchen, meanwhile, we're bang up to date with some of his designs for John Lewis, all smooth stainless steel with flashes of colour.

Conran thinks in colours, he explains: his books are ordered in shades not out of aesthetic pretension, but because that's the way he remembers where things are. "It's just a different way of remembering - 'Mine's the mug with the red handle' or 'The yellow one has two sugars.'"

Elsewhere in his home, there are signs of a subversive sense of humour. There's a collection of Chairman Mao badges, for example, which he bought in a street market in Shanghai and plans to display →



**FIGURES OF FUN** Conran's home mixes the artless (a colour-your-own Nativity set he left white, left) with the beautifully crafted - including a Miro (above), maquettes given to him by Eduardo Paolozzi (left) and an abstract cross by Keith Milow (right)

INTERIORS  
My space

in a butterfly case. And above the keyboard hangs a cross – a piece by the abstract artist Keith Milow, knowingly entitled *A Cross Between Painting and Sculpture*. “I think it’s meant to be ironic, but having said that, [my wife] Gertie is Catholic,” he muses mischievously.

He’s certainly fond of a pun: see the plaster cast of famous landmarks of Paris, picked up in Charles de Gaulle Airport: “I liked the play on ‘plaster of Paris’.” Clearly the people making it didn’t see it – they do them of other cities too.”

It’s not the only plaster in the house: at Christmas, Conran picked up a paint-it-yourself plaster Nativity set from a Christian bookshop opposite the Home Office, which he left plain white. It sits among a collection of small figures which were gifts from the sculptor Eduardo Paolozzi, who was a friend of his father, Terence, and became Conran’s mentor. “I used to see him once a month and he’d take me round the studio and give me one of these maquettes – little versions of the huge bronze sculptures he makes.

“I like having curious things about the place; part of being a designer is that you have to be innately curious.” •

*Sebastian Conran’s range for John Lewis is available at [johnlewis.com](http://johnlewis.com)*



**PUNK WITH PANACHE**  
Conran in his kitchen, left, full of sleek stainless steel – in the background can be seen his collection of punk posters from his student era (also below); below left, Conran’s collection of Mau badges and ‘plaster of Paris’

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