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with
**Sebastian
Conran**

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* *Home profile*

THE OWNERS Product designer Sebastian Conran and his actress wife, Gertrude Thoma.

THE PROPERTY A Victorian house over three floors in west London. The ground level has a living room, kitchen and dining room; upstairs, there's a master bedroom suite, steam room and bedroom; the top floor has a study, bedroom, bathroom and utility room.



GROUND FLOOR

Sebastian demonstrates the super-lightness of Gio Ponti's Superleggera chair – just one of the pieces that make up his collection of 'simple, classic designs'. Antique rugs and kilims soften the Ardenne oak flooring.

Get the look See *Ideas To Steal* for a similar rug. The black Sinbad chair (above left) is by Vico Magistretti. The Wink chairs in the window are by Toshiyuki Kita for Cassina. The red Take A Line For A Walk chair is by Alfredo Häberli for Moroso. The Aspen sofa is Content By Conran. The Loop table is by BarberOsgerby for Isokon Plus. The Arco lamp is by Flos. The Beep lamp is by Sebastian Conran. For wide-board oak flooring, go to Dinesen. >



Cool, calm, collected

Sebastian Conran has created iconic ranges for department stores and posters for punk bands, so it's not surprising that his home blends elegance, practicality and era-defining, rule-breaking star pieces

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OUTDOOR SPACE

'We designed the folding doors ourselves, and love being able to open the house onto the garden,' says Sebastian. 'We hit a problem, though – we forgot about curtains; there was no space for them to be drawn behind the folded doors. The solution was a curved rail that goes round the corners, onto the walls on each side. It looks just like we'd planned it!'

Get the look Buy curved curtain-hanging systems from John Lewis.

If today's lifestyle is all about being relaxed, comfortable and surrounded by the things you love, then designer Sebastian Conran has mastered the art of modern living. His home – with its seamless flow from front door to rear garden of rooms dotted with what he calls 'the stuff of life' – is one of those stucco-fronted west London wedding cake houses we all dream of getting our hands on.

Sebastian had long-harboured similar dreams, having first clapped eyes on the property as a child. 'My stepmother's sister, Dinah Morrison, used to live next door and I often came to play in the garden as a child. Her son [now designer] Jasper had his first workshop just over there in that garden shed,' he laughs.

When, six years ago, Sebastian found himself in the market for a new home, he looked in the area that held special memories and, as luck would have it, his favourite house was >

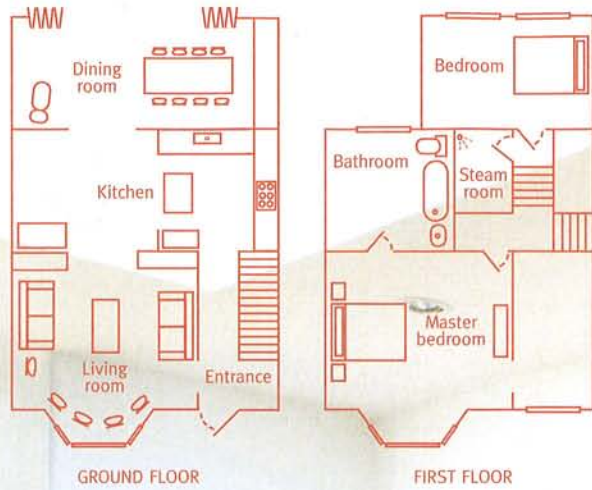


DINING ROOM

Iconic Sex Pistols artwork (as treasurer of his college student union, Sebastian gave the band their first gig) by Jamie Reid and examples of Sebastian's poster designs for The Clash add edge to the elegant space.

Get the look 55 Max sells some original promotional posters. The Tolomeo floor lamp is by Artemide. The LC4 lounge chair is by Le Corbusier for Cassina. The Tulip side table is by Eero Saarinen for Knoll. The Italian chairs came from The Conran Shop 20 years ago.

THE BLUEPRINT



What they did

- Created 'pocket doors' – slabs of MDF that slide between partition walls to section areas off.
- Replaced the entire rear wall with bi-fold glazed doors.
- Enlarged and aligned door frames.
- Laid new oak flooring throughout.
- Opened a 'serving hatch' between the kitchen and dining area to allow in light and create a view to the garden.
- Painted the kitchen units and added an iroko worktop.



KITCHEN

The units are painted in a colour Sebastian created from a gouache of stainless steel, and had it replicated by a local paint company. 'I wanted a shade that had the same tonal value as the metal to give cohesion to the mix of materials,' he says. The island is on castors, so that it can be wheeled out of the way to double as a bar for parties. Half-depth shelving keeps Sebastian's essentials close at hand – 'I can't stand having to dig about for things when I'm cooking.'

Get the look The Hamilton range at Howdens Joinery is similar to Sebastian's kitchen. The storage jars and pots are by Sebastian Conran. Go to Preedy Glass for glass splashbacks. B&Q sells iroko worktops.

for sale. 'A deal had been agreed,' he says, 'but I left instructions to get in touch if it fell through.' Six weeks later, the call came.

What followed was never going to be your typical story of a car-crash house that needed gutting to unleash its full potential. 'We bought a Victorian property with sturdy proportions, so there wasn't that much to do structurally,' he says. 'And I don't believe in ripping out perfectly good fittings just for the sake of it.'

But when you have design in the genes – Sebastian is the eldest child of Sir Terence – the urge to put your own stamp on a property is strong. What he modestly refers to as 'an exercise in tweaking' translates as precise widening of hallways, raising of door frames and adjusting of sightlines to create a series of perfectly aligned vistas that lead seamlessly from living room to kitchen, dining room and garden beyond. Against this meticulously devised backdrop, the creative brain's flotsam and jetsam – collections of art, toys, prototypes and memorabilia – pepper every surface.

As the design expertise behind Nigella Lawson's kitchenware collection, and a very successful range at John Lewis, it's not surprising that the kitchen is at the heart of Sebastian's home. Although he admits he's 'not really a party person', he adores cooking – the rationale behind the horizontal internal window in the wall between the kitchen and dining room. 'It drove me mad to be in here cooking and have guests in there chomping away. I felt so disconnected.'

Although many of the kitchen implements that are in daily use were created by the man himself, he freely admits he's not 'a fancy cook. Simple, good-quality ingredients – that's all you need.' Whether you're designing a punk poster, a pot or your home, that sounds like a pretty good recipe.

Find out more about Sebastian's design work at sebastianconran.com. >



*** Home truths**

Classic Martini or pint of real ale? Ginger beer – cloudy looking, but clearer thinking.

Which kitchen gadget has changed your life? The Microplane grater makes using garlic and ginger much easier, but watch your fingers.

What would be your final meal? Rare rib-eye steak, char-grilled, with hand-cut chips. Bugger the cholesterol.

What do you wish you'd designed? The all-electric, solar-powered aeroplane.

The song that says it all... *I Will Survive* by Gloria Gaynor. It was the video with the girl on roller skates that did it for me.

Minimalism or maximalism? Appropriate common sense – well considered, but not over designed.

If the house was on fire, what would you grab on the way out? My wife, because everything else is replaceable.

BATHROOM

Wood panelling adds an unexpected hint of country chic, but a marble top keeps the look elegant. The mix continues in the fittings, with a traditional claw-foot bath coupled with a minimal, organic basin, which was designed by Sebastian.

Get the look For a bath like this, head to Fired Earth. The Ovoid basin is from the Aveo collection by Conran & Partners for Villeroy & Boch. The Butterfly stool is by Sori Yanagi.

BEDROOM

Above the bed is a print of a drawing by Bob Gill, which was given to Sebastian by his stepmother when he was a child. The bedside table was a Sebastian design for The Conran Shop's Quaker range.

Get the look The cushions and bed throw are from The Conran Shop. The Oleana checked blanket is from Few And Far.

ONLINE EXTRA

For more fabulous homes full of ideas to steal, visit livingetc.com/houses.





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Sex Pistols **print**, £5.95 (unframed), Easyart. Cool Curva **floor lamp**, £14.99, Argos. Isidoro **rug**, £85, WovenGround. Measuring **bowls** £45 for three, Sebastian Conran for John Lewis.

MIRROR, MIRROR

Sebastian has used mirror panels between shelves to create the illusion of a room twice as big and to add impact to his collection of glassware. You can create a similar effect with bespoke mirror panels from Preedy Glass, which can come with pre-drilled holes so you simply fix them in place with screws.



FROM ABOVE RIGHT Bekväm **kitchen trolley**, £29.99, Ikea. Tom Foolery **sofa**, £1,975, Sofa Workshop.



KEY SURFACES OF THE HOUSE

(From top) Blue Daisy Lt **emulsion**, £28.50 for 2.5l, Sanderson. Oak Oiled **flooring** in Natural, £69 per sq m, Solid Floor. Rossano Nutmeg **faux leather**, £43 per sq m, Designers Guild.



ideas to steal
from Sebastian & Gertrude's house

Calming neutrals offer the perfect backdrop for design classics and punchy pop art