



Designer collection

INTERIOR DESIGNER PAOLO MOSCHINO HAS TURNED HIS ONCE POKEY VICTORIAN FLAT INTO A GLAMOROUS EUROPEAN-STYLE APARTMENT. HE GIVES RUTH CORBETT THE GRAND TOUR

PHOTOGRAPHY CHRIS TUBBS



Opposite: Paolo with his beloved boxer dog Ty in the drawing room. This page, clockwise from top left: The Louis XVI desk was picked up at auction at Christie's; the apartment is full of antiques and curiosities; the neutral master bedroom; a 19th-century bronze bought in Brussels



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'On every surface, whether wall, floor or table, there are pieces of art and small precious objects'



Opposite: One end of the drawing room is kept plain to show off art works by Jean Cocteau. This page: Warm, muted colours in the guest bedroom

THE MOMENT I WALKED IN HERE, I SAID, I want it! says Paolo Moschino of his sumptuous home in a Victorian mansion block in Victoria. 'It was very dark, very English and very old fashioned, but I knew it could be fabulous. The height of the ceilings were what sold it to me.'

Originally from Florence, Paolo has lived in London for 18 years. For a handful of those, he was in partnership with interior decorator Nicky Haslam buying furnishings and lighting from Italy, to sell in their shop in Holbein Place. Ten years ago, he bought the business and now operates under the name of Nicholas Haslam Ltd, while Nicky went on to launch NH Design. Confusing maybe, but Paolo shrugs off any suggestion of that. 'It's not a problem, we are both interior decorators, but Nicky does famous people. I only do people I like,' he says. 'A job may take up to three years, so you have to get on with the clients. Luckily, all of mine seem to become my friends.'

These future friends frequently visit Paolo's home before he starts work, for what better way to show off his talents. Originally a somewhat poky four-bedroom flat, Paolo spent a year reconfiguring the space to suit his needs. He knocked through many of the smaller rooms to create just a few large spaces, which allow in much more light. The end result is a stunning two-bedroom, two-bathroom apartment, with elegant European-style salons opening left and right from a central hallway.

In the double drawing room, Paolo has used two very different schemes within the same space to great effect. Divided by two antique English chinoiserie screens, one end has been decorated to house his collection of art works by Jean Cocteau. He started collecting them as a boy, aged 15. 'I wanted a white room where I could show them altogether, so I made this end of the room deliberately simple and quite plain.'

But plain and simple is not very Paolo, so he made the other end of the room quite the opposite: opulent, dark and rich. In here Paolo has installed hand-carved, pine wall-panelling, which looks and smells wonderful. Velvet-covered sofas are strewn with tapestry-covered cushions. French and Italian antique pieces sit alongside extra tall English bookcases (behind which the TV and music system have been secreted), and numerous framed drawings line the walls.

It's this room that gets clients excited. They come here to talk through their ideas and end up wanting an exact replica of Paolo's drawing room. 'This room has been repeated about seven times now for various clients,' he says. 'It's flattering, yes, but I always try to make each one different.'

He uses the same logic for his home, making each room different to keep it interesting. 'I like a surprise when you walk from one room to another,' Paolo explains. On every surface, whether wall, floor or table, there are pieces of art, small precious objects or wonderful rugs and furnishings.

And he is especially particular about bathrooms, which he feels should be of the very best quality or you might as well not bother. His own en suite bathroom has marbled walls, the best fixtures and fittings and really is the most sumptuous bathing space. 'I wanted the feel of the most elegant hotel bathroom,' he says. The bedroom is a much more neutral affair, decorated in layers of cream and white. A handsome collection of etchings is perfectly suited to the soothing palette.

Considering the abundance of fabulous private residences in central London, it's surprising how few live up to the epitaph 'jaw-dropping'. Paolo Moschino's home is one of the exceptions: there is simply no other way to describe this London home. ■

Nicholas Haslam Ltd, 12-14 Holbein Place, SW1, tel: (020) 7730 8623, www.nicholashaslam.com

PAOLO MOSCHINO'S TOP PLACES TO SHOP

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Christie's, 85 Old Brompton Road, SW7, tel: (020) 7930 6074, www.christies.com

I bought the portrait above the drawing room fireplace at Christie's. The showrooms are stunning – full of the unique and beautiful from rare wines to vintage posters. Buying at auction is so much fun, everyone should try it at least once.

AIS Ltd, 32 Thaxted Road, New Eitham, SE9, tel: (020) 8294 2253, www.artinstallationservices.co.uk

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