

BLANK CANVAS

SITTING ROOM The artwork *Marquee* by Philippe Parreno hangs over the chimneypiece, which is flanked by Sixties De Sede slipper chairs in Rose Uniacke linen and Maharam mohair. Michael Krebber's painting *DEP-MK-0017* adds a strong dash of colour

A chance meeting led to a collaboration between two Americans in London – and the result is a striking Marylebone apartment that perfectly showcases the designer and the owner's respective passions for 20th-century furniture and contemporary art

TEXT MIEKE TEN HAYE | PHOTOGRAPHS MICHAEL SINCLAIR





'The flat has a somewhat BOHEMIAN and CASUAL, MID-CENTURY European story, with all this CHALLENGING ART layered on top'



TOP LEFT The dining area has a Seventies Gino Sarfatti **chandelier**, a Guillerme et Chambron Sixties 'Victorine' **table** and an inkjet print of Wolfgang Tillmans' *Sendeschluss/End of Broadcast IX*. TOP RIGHT Liz Deschenes' *Front/Side #20* silver toned **photogram** in the hall. LEFT Arthur Jafa's *Mickey Mouse Was a Scorpio* **c-print** hangs above the sofa. The **chair** is by Ligne Roset. RIGHT A Mark Leckey *Articulated Felix Doll* tones with Liz Deschenes' *Moiré #21* **photogram**. The custom-made **sofa** is covered in Pierre Frey's 'Bridget' bouclé



處處都是外人

KITCHEN Charlie made some minimal cosmetic changes in this room, including lacquering the cabinets in 'Stock' by Little Greene. The neon sign, *Foreigners Everywhere (Chinese)*, is by the conceptual artist Claire Fontaine

New York-based interior designer Charlie Ferrer has carved out a distinctive niche for himself by making a point of never taking on the same project twice. 'I am as project specific as possible – maybe to my own detriment,' he muses. Charlie is known for creating layered and dynamic interiors that rely heavily on vintage pieces, which he deftly weaves together to

tell a story. 'I want every item in a room to have its own narrative, whether it's a rarefied piece of art-deco furniture or a primitive stool.' With his expansive grasp of 20th-century design – which he sells through his design gallery on Istdibs – Charlie's projects rely heavily on vintage furniture, supplemented with custom pieces he designs, and high-end upholstery and window treatments.

For this flat, Charlie's involvement hinged on a providential drive-by sighting; while he was walking in Marylebone, a former university classmate happened to spot him from a car. 'I got a message from him, saying, "This is random, but did I just drive by you on Marylebone High Street? I'm on my way to look at an apartment with a broker – want to join us? I need a designer."'

The client, who had been in Charlie's peripheral social circle at university and when they were young professionals in New York, is Josh Silver, an American working in finance in London with an interest in contemporary art. His collection was a draw for Charlie, who knew that assembling the strong artwork in dialogue with interiors would yield a compelling challenge with dynamic results. 'The entire process became a great co-authorship,' explains Charlie. After an exhaustive search, the pair eventually found a suitable flat on Bryanston Square, W1, with a grand sitting room, large enough to accommodate two seating areas and space for dining.

'I told him, "This is how we'll do it – we're going to get on the Eurostar, go to Paris, fill a truck with flea-market pieces and make this as ready-to-wear as you can get. But with high-quality upholstery and curtains,'" recalls Charlie, whose client was initially reticent. His previous experience had been working with designer Neal Beckstedt on his Manhattan apartment, which had been much more architecture driven. After a discouraging empty-handed morning at Les Puces, Josh found a light fixture he liked. 'He finally said yes to something just before lunch. I thought, oh God, is this even going to work? But, after lunch, things began to flow and he got excited. When you shop with clients, you build a story – it's live feedback between you, the dealers and the client.'

For the sitting room, Charlie designed a sofa with Charles Burnand he describes as 'Vladimir Kagan meets Pierre Yovanovitch meets croissant', which is upholstered in a cream bouclé from Pierre Frey. 'Josh noticed the trend of furniture being re-covered in this fabric and he became obsessed,' he says. The custom sofa was

complemented by Jacques Adnet nesting tables, with a Roger Capron coffee table – an investment piece – in a second sitting area.

Part of Charlie's process is schooling his clientele in the value of collectable design. 'It's always an educational process,' he says. 'And sometimes it's a two-way street, which is wonderful.' A pair of De Sede chairs covered in mohair and linen flank the chimney-piece. A rustic-looking Guillerme et Chambron dining table from Les Puces is teamed with Eames chairs. There are flea-market finds dotted through the flat, such as the primitive, amorphous, burl wood chair in the hall next to a Liz Deschenes photogram. 'I like eclecticism – we managed to make it feel unified and collected,' says Charlie, who also worked with dealers on Lillie Road, SW6, and at Alfies Antique Market, NW8, to fill in the gaps.

While Charlie educated Josh on collectable design, Josh exposed him to avant-garde artists he was not familiar with. 'His collection is interesting because it is challenging – it comes from a gay, multi-

cultural and edgy perspective,' Charlie enthuses. 'The flat has a somewhat bohemian and casual, mid-century European story, with all this challenging art layered on top.' Ashley Carr of Modica Carr Art Advisory acted as art consultant and pieces include works by Wolfgang Tillmans and Arthur Jafa. 'Josh has an installer of great repute, Biscuit Beschizza, known as Lord Biscuit. London has all the right resources and people – it's a bit like New York in that way.'

While the main room is grand and open, the bedrooms are small and cossetting, with custom textiles from Sandra Jordan. In the main bedroom, the client's existing George Nakashima-inspired bed is complemented by aluminium and resin side tables, and an alpaca bouclé in blue serves as a bed blanket. The spare room's orange bespoke blanket contrasts with a Maharam forest-green cotton-velvet headboard. A Fifties-era desk with a Marcel Breuer chair and frozen-video art in a frame create contrast and interest.

The kitchen, where Charlie made some minimal cosmetic changes, including lacquering the cabinets, has a large red neon artwork sign, *Foreigners Everywhere (Chinese)*, which he hung above the wall cupboards. 'It feels as if you're walking into the red-light district when you enter the apartment,' he explains. The cloakroom was also enveloped in green spray lacquer. The paint throughout the flat is from Little Greene, which Charlie loves.

Meanwhile, the finishing layer of accessories in the home was drawn mostly from the client's own collection – ephemera from South East Asia, art books and model cars. 'It's personal,' says Charlie. 'And not overly serious.' While his mission is to eschew a serious-looking interior, it is impossible not to be struck by the designer's masterful eye, which brings together the high and the low, the rare and the rustic. The rigorous mix echoes Charlie's point of view. 'At the end of the day,' he says, 'I want my interiors to feel collected' □

Ferrer: ferrer.co





OPPOSITE Max Hooper Schneider's glass sculpture *Plasm(o)void 2*.
 LEFT The cloakroom walls are in Little Greene's 'Sage Green'. RIGHT In the spare room, a Maharam velvet covers the headboard; the artwork is Ken Okiishi's *gesture/data*.
 BELOW LEFT David Wojnarowicz's *Untitled (Genet, after Brassai)* lithograph is above the custom walnut headboard in the bedroom.
 BELOW RIGHT Heimo Zoernig's *Untitled* artwork hangs in the study



Charlie is known for creating LAYERED and DYNAMIC interiors that rely heavily on VINTAGE PIECES, which he weaves together to tell a story

