

## Home profile

**THE OWNERS** Pioneering godfather of British modern design Sir Terence Conran and his wife Vicki.

**THE PROPERTY** An apartment within the Richard Rogers-designed Montevetro building in southwest London. It has a living/dining room, office/sitting room, kitchen, two bedrooms, one en-suite bathroom, two shower rooms and a balcony terrace.

## LIVING ROOM

'One of the wonderful things about living here is that you're always looking at the clouds,' says Terence.

'They float by in the most wonderful formations – I could watch them all day.'

**GET THE LOOK** This is the Eames Lounge chair and Ottoman for Vitra. The Rex sofa and the rug are both from The Conran Shop. The Spun floor lamp is by Sebastian Wrong for Flos. The Red side tables are by Nendo for Cappellini. The lime sculpture is by Royal College of Art graduate Simon Taylor. Simon can be contacted via the RCA.



## DINING AREA

'Such a heroic space needed a heroic table and, my God, it was a heroic effort to get it up here,' Terence explains. 'It took 11 men to haul it up the eight flights of stairs.'

**GET THE LOOK** This is a bespoke table by Benchmark. The Wishbone chairs by Hans Wegner for Carl Hansen are available at The Conran Shop. The landscape photograph of Kyoto is by Gerd Hasler. The striped artwork is by Kenneth Noland.

# 'IT'S LIKE A THEATRE

on your doorstep with a new performance every day,' says Vicki Conran, gazing down at the Thames and across to the impressive view of Battersea Power Station from the bird's-eye vantage point she shares with her husband Sir Terence. It seems appropriate, given his status as modern design's founding father in the UK, that they should not only be based in a building designed by another great – architect Richard Rogers – but that as you rise up in the lift, or look out one of the windows, almost every iconic London landmark, from Big Ben to the Shard, is in full view.

No strangers to riverside living – Terence was instrumental in revolutionising the Shad Thames area near Tower Bridge in the early Nineties – it's a first for them to be living on one level and up so high (the couple's main base is still the majestic Barton Court in Berkshire, profiled in *Livingetc* in October 2006). 'The light is so amazing and there's always something happening on the river – it's lovely too at night when the whole aspect changes,' says Vicki. Terence agrees: 'I feel extremely relaxed being here,' he says, reclining in an Eames Lounge chair, cigar in hand, the blue of his signature favourite-coloured shirt matching his eyes. 'I love to watch the helicopters go by and the constant movement of the barges and tug boats up and down the river. It's like New York-living without the actual grubbiness of being in Manhattan,' he adds, with a smile.

When the couple moved in a year ago (in part to leave behind the noise of the endless renovations taking place in Chelsea, which was their London base, but also to be closer to Terence's sister Priscilla, who lives in the same building), the first thing they did was to change the floor. 'It had all the charm of an airport,' Vicki groans. 'It was made up of shiny dark-grey slabs, which might be okay for a waiting area, but the greyness was no good for a home.' In its place, she laid oak boards to enhance the light 'and, I suppose, being near the river, to inspire a driftwood feel,' Vicki says. 'The colour of the floor was the starting point and everything else flowed from that.'

Vicki also rearranged some of the spaces to better suit their needs. 'We knocked two of the original four bedrooms into one to create a second sitting room-cum-office (and a third bedroom, with a sofa bed, if needed) and I removed a lot of the built-in storage in the kitchen as it was a bit too much,' she says. With his own Benchmark furniture company based on the doorstep of their country home, Terence enjoys the luxury of having many things custom made – a perfect example being the bespoke shelving unit in the living room, which he designed (complete with laser-cut holes to allow for remote control access to the TV, cleverly hidden behind an 18th-century landscape painting), which Benchmark then made in laminated ply. The way it fits so beautifully along the wall allows the rest of the space to breathe.

'I like an uncluttered palette – monochrome really, with maybe just one material,' says Vicki. Against the pale backdrop hues of oak floors and white walls, a subtle but vibrant energy comes from bursts of colour – from the orange Victor desk by Roberto Lazzeroni and lime-green sculpture by Simon Taylor in the living room to Vicki's collection of art and ceramics, mainly by graduates of the RCA (where, until recently, Terence was provost). 'I don't mind a bit of colour,' Vicki concedes. 'It's a bit like my wardrobe, which is mainly black and navy, but with a lovely collection of red shoes.'

There's wit and whimsy in many of the pieces dotted around the apartment, such as the 'exploding' lamp base by Cuban collective Los Carpinteros, which reflect the couple's endless curiosity and search for dynamic, interesting and entertaining design. 'You can't go and seek it out – it jumps on you,' says Vicki. 'And we never stop learning,' adds Terence. 'My whole life, I've always been interested in design that is plain, simple and useful. The calming freshness of this apartment reassures me I was on the right track – I really believe living with simplicity is the new luxury.'

*Sir Terence Conran's latest book, Plain Simple Useful, £25, Octopus Publishing Group, is available at The Conran Shop*

## LIVING ROOM

'My major contribution in here was the shelving,' says Terence. 'You may wonder why there are so many holes in the lower panels - that's so you can get the remote-control beam through to the box without opening the doors.'

**GET THE LOOK** An 18th-century painting hides the TV screen. Bonhams regularly auctions similar artwork. This is the *Victor desk in Orange* by Roberto Lazzeroni for Lema. The floor lamp is by Rabih Hage. The exploding *Lámpara de Mesa* by Los Carpinteros was bought at a contemporary art fair in Madrid.





**‘I’ve been buying ceramics for years – and they all happen to be black and white’**

## ← SITTING ROOM

'I thought it would be nice to put my ceramic collection on graded grey shelves,' says Vicki.

**GET THE LOOK** Many of Vicki's ceramics were made by past RCA graduate artists, including Nicholas Lees and Magdalene Odundo. On the walls is artwork by Barton Hargreaves, left, and Hector de Gregorio, far right. Find Barton Hargreaves's work at The Brook Gallery. Hector de Gregorio is represented at The Cynthia Corbett Gallery.

## ↙ HALLWAY

More artwork lines the walls of the gallery-like entrance. **GET THE LOOK** The *Think Black Line* chair is by Masayuki Hayashi for Nendo. Above it hangs a modern reworking of Vermeer's *The Geographer* created by Filippo Caramazza.

## ↘ KITCHEN

Here, Vicki pared back the built-in storage that lined every wall - 'it was all a bit too shiny,' she says - and removed the island to allow for a small table and chairs. **GET THE LOOK** Find the *Eero Saarinen* table for Knoll and the coffee house chairs by Gebrüder Thonet at The Conran Shop. For similar cabinetry, try Poggenpohl.

## OFFICE

The space doubles as a second reception room. 'It's a place to escape when Terence is watching endless episodes of *Poirot* or *Midsomer Murders* in the other room and I can sneak in here and watch *The Bridge*,' Vicki explains. **GET THE LOOK** The artwork includes a sketch by Henri Matisse. This is the Clifton dining table, designed by Terence for Benchmark, teamed with a vintage Thonet chair and Eames DSW side chairs in White. The Task table light is by Original BTC.





‘Being dedicated shoppers, it’s quite handy having The Conran Shop to fall back on!’

### Home truths

**VICKI, WHAT CAN'T YOU LIVE WITHOUT?** My 3DOG

tent. I love it so much, I could live in it permanently.

**WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE THING TO DO IN LONDON?** Escape to the ENO at The Coliseum with my daughter Hattie. Its recent production of *Xerxes* was amazing.

**WHERE DO YOU GO FOR A HOLIDAY?** Mousehole in Cornwall. Beautiful beaches, great walking and hiking, delicious seafood and brilliant pubs. Just lovely.

**DO YOU HAVE A SECRET SHOPPING DESTINATION?** Tokyu Hands [in Tokyo] for wood bookbinding tools and the most fabulous

handmade *chiyogami* [origami] tissue papers.

**WHAT'S THE BEST DISH YOU'VE MADE RECENTLY?**

A huge paella for 90 people at the Green Man Festival [in the Brecon Beacons]. I hired a big paella rig and it was perfect for cooking bacon and eggs for us all the next morning.

**IS THERE ONE THING YOU ARE EMBARRASSED TO ADMIT?** I really love *Strictly Come Dancing!*

**DO YOU HAVE ANY REMAINING AMBITIONS?**

To do the GR-10 pilgrimage across the Pyrenees to El Camino de Santiago.

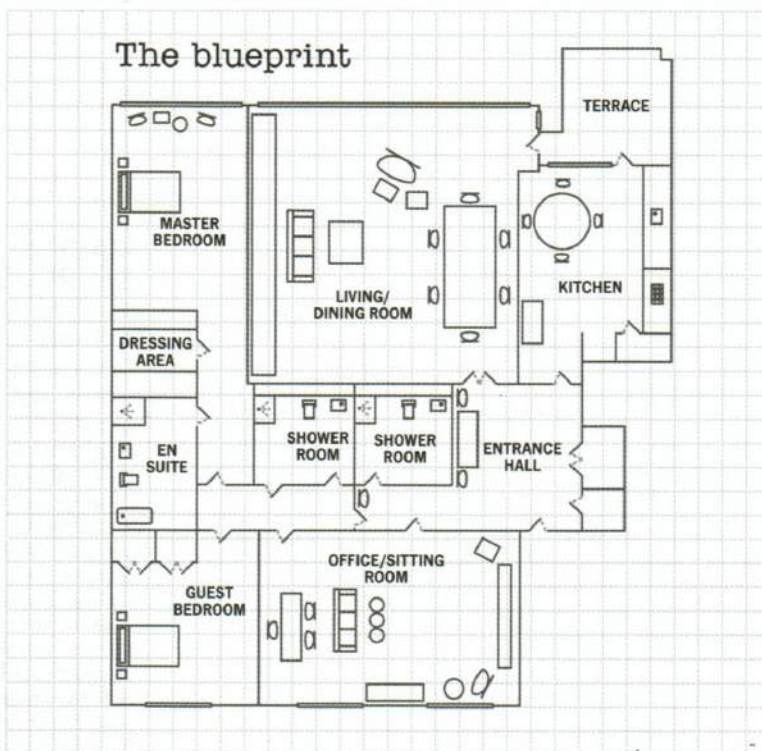
### MASTER BEDROOM

'I found the most wonderful bookbinder-turned-picture hanger to help me hang the artwork,' says Vicki. 'It was all on the floor, leaning up against the wall.'

**GET THE LOOK** The drawings are by the late Russian artist and costume designer Natalia Sergeevna Goncharova. Christie's auctions her work. For an original Thirties armchair like this one, try The Old Cinema. To source a vintage Josef Hoffmann chair, try 1stdibs.com. The Butterfly vase is from The Conran Shop.



'I like the seamlessness of the apartment's design – it's a very easy place to be'



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# IDEAS toSTEAL

To soften a modern space, mix pastel and dark hues with geometric prints

KEY SURFACES



FROM LEFT Woodgrain wallpaper in Off White on Stone, £75 per 10m roll, Threads at Wallpaper Direct; Parma Gray estate emulsion, £36 for 2.5l, Farrow & Ball; and Ithaki F6480-05 acrylic, £71 per m (W142cm), Osborne & Little



KEY FEATURE Bespoke shelving

This birch ply shelving unit was designed by Sir Terence Conran and embodies his philosophy - it's all about simplicity. The unit was custom-made by Benchmark, but you can get creative and enlist the help of a carpenter for a look of your own. Homebase (homebase.co.uk) sells maple furniture boards, £17.49 (244 x 23cm). Or try Fired Earth's (firedearth.co.uk) teak Petit Door A, £135 (30 x 30cm), for a slightly darker look. Source a tradesperson via ratedpeople.com to customise your unit.

KEY PRODUCTS



1



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3



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1 Framed Blue Morpho butterfly, £55, A Rum Fellow 2 Glass jug, from £26, Sophie Conran for Portmeirion 3 Harlequin cotton cushion in Multi-Bright, £100, Niki Jones at House of Fraser 4 Etagiere wood stand, £95, Plümo 5 59th Street chenille and chrome armchair in Grey, £1,025, Content by Conran 6 Martini aluminium side table in Persimmon, £129, West Elm 7 Woodrow walnut and veneer king-size bed, £1,599 (mattress not included), Blu Dot at Heal's



6



7

Research Sophie Brown Photography (bespoke shelving) Paul Raeside; (paint swatch) Pixeleyes