



Isy uses the first-floor 'salon' for meetings, but also as a private sitting room. On the desk is a paper sculpture by Christian Astuguevieille. Joel Parkes, who uses dead wood repaired with pewter and pigments, made the artworks on the tables below the shuttered windows.

SPLIT DECISION

When Isy Ettedgui found a Georgian town house for sale in central London, she knew what to do. Realising it would make both a great new home and flagship shop for her revived leather business, she bought it, in spite of the planning risks, and set about dividing it into working and private areas. Her upstairs residence, filled with shrewdly chosen art and objets, proves the gamble paid off. Text and photography: Tim Beddow





Opposite: Isy calls this room her den/library. Above the fireplace, *Atelier* by Alberto Giacometti is flanked by spindly bronze figures that could be by the same artist, but in fact come from Mali. Above: *Shiny Books*, a 2000 photograph by Abelardo Morell, hangs at the other end. Below: the dining table, by Patrick Gilles and Dorothée Boissier, displays a pair of André Dubreuil 'Perles' candleholders.







Isy worked with designers from Plain English to create her kitchen. It features worktops, splashbacks and shelves (displaying antique Lalique and Daum vases) of Italian Arabescato marble, and high black stools by India Mahdavi. The painting, *Les Goudes*, is by Maurice Estève





Above: Gilles and Bosser designed the sofa in Isy's room and the bed to match. Below left: the pair also created the cupboards. The sculpture is by Maillof. Below right: this staircase, moved from the ship below, leads to the roof. Opposite: Saint Laurent marble lines the spare bathroom, where an Aboriginal fish (a creature loved by Joe) bought from Alistair McAlpine lies beneath the mirror







ISY ETTEGUI would undeniably agree that the enduring love of her life – aside from her late husband, Joe, and their three children – would be Connolly (formerly Connolly Leather), the classic British outfit, founded in 1878, that exemplifies high-end quality. 'It has been my baby,' she freely admits. She was introduced to the family firm in 1989 when it invited Joe to sponsor a competition to design a chair for his chain of fashion stores, Joseph.

Smitten from the outset by the (then) bespoke company, which had made the benches in the Houses of Parliament and been the preferred leather designers for car makers – Ferrari, Jaguar, Bentley and Rolls-Royce among others – Isy opened its first shop, designed by Andrée Putman, in a Belgravia mews in 1995 (Wolf Aug 1995). Their landlord, the Duke of Westminster, was so happy to have Connolly in one of his mews that he gave them a year rent-free.

The shop felt new, fresh, classy and soon had scores of devoted aficionados. But it also had its blips and, after a major downturn in the USA, had to close its doors in 2010. But Isy remained steadfast. And when she saw an 18th-century town house on a street off Savile Row with shop and domestic/living possibilities on the floors above up for grabs in 2014, she realised it was too good an opportunity to miss. 'I think I was subconsciously always looking for a new Connolly location,' she says.

In typical Isy fashion – recalling successful past projects – the designers she called were the Parisian duo Patrick Gilles and Dorothee Boissier, whose first job in London had been Isy and Joe's flat in Chester Square. Now celebrated, with a hotel in St Barts on their 2018 agenda and the Ritz Madrid scheduled in 2019, they designed not just the shop (which opened last year) but Isy's home above, to achieve seamless continuity between the two.

'Isy is a *helle âme* [a beautiful soul], as we say in French,' says Dorothee, 'a luminous woman with great warmth and generosity.' Yet – with a touch of trusted guidance – she also knows what she wants and, most importantly, the quality she strives for.

Perhaps it was her eight years working for this magazine at its inception with the owner, Kevin Kelly, that honed an unerring eye for detail and excellence. While at Wolf, Isy met Joe, said farewell to Condé Nast and then, after a spell running her own advertising business, came the Connolly moment in the late 1980s.

Fast-forward to October 2014, when Isy decided to take the plunge with 4 Clifford Street. The former gallery with offices above needed an extra floor to make it suitable as a home, but there were big risks involved. 'I had to sell where I was living to invest here,' says Isy, 'and of course planning permission, which had been re-

fused before, could have gone either way.' She completed in December and then applied for planning, before Gilles and Boissier made their initial visit. It was the first time they had worked on a Georgian town house. 'We had to play with the listed parts,' explains Dorothee, 'invent classical elements, add modern touches, reinvent the layout, adapt to Isy's wishes and keep the charming, non-symmetrical beauty of it.'

A year later the planning application was accepted. 'Until we knew, there had been a lot of tension,' says Isy, 'and I was glad to have Donald Insall (a specialist conservation architectural practice) on my side.' Her old flat, meanwhile, had not sold, so financial anxiety continued to lurk round every corner.

Work began soon after they had the good news. While basement and ground floor were logically going to be used for the shop, 'the first floor is transitional,' says Dorothee, 'being used both to show furniture and objets, but also as another living room for Isy.' Everything had to be brought in and out of a very small listed doorway. Above are all her private rooms, reached from the ground floor by a newly panelled 18th-century staircase, a tad lopsided with age. 'It is a bit like a boat here; not a big space, so we worked very closely for what I needed – three bedrooms, three bathrooms and the other essential rooms – in basically a very small space,' says Isy.

The décor is very much a fusion of Joe's and her tastes. 'I introduced Joe [who died in 2010] to interiors, as he was of course more fashion-oriented and his aesthetic more modern than mine, which leans towards texture and warmth,' says Isy. 'We complemented each other well.' Patrick and Dorothee were in tune with her preferences and 'presented plans, layouts and materials for working sessions in which we'd discuss, then adapt and correct to Isy's wishes'.

'I love things that are tonal and natural,' Isy says. This is assuredly a throwback to her early years in Africa and remains a passion that extends to much of the handmade leather and cashmere in the shop downstairs. Born in Nairobi, she lived in myriad African countries – among them Kenya, Malawi, Botswana, Lesotho and Niger – until she returned at 23 for university. Her father's work involved developing new systems of governance for Commonwealth countries gaining their independence.

'My childhood in Africa certainly had a magic and mystery, and I'm sure gave me a more liberated style of expression. Early on I came to love texture, earthy colours and craft pottery.' All this is reflected throughout the apartment in sandy colours, tribal artefacts and a certain sparseness. The Warhol in the dining room is painted in tones of pale straw and diamond dust, and the tall lamps in the sitting room might seem to be modelled on African spears, though they were actually designed by Christian Liaigre.

Her approach, married to Joe's preference for black, straight lines, simplicity and eye for comfort and quality in every detail, explains the relaxed but luxurious atmosphere. Here, this seems as defining as the building itself, with its Georgian proportions 'that seem so human and comfortable', the architects and craftsmen, or the work of Patrick and Dorothee.

Isy has an inimitable sense of what she enjoys in her home. Readers will be relieved to know that her previous flat did finally sell, so she can *lala salama* (sleep well), as they say in East Africa, in her new home ■

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