



home life

It's nesting season – here are some inspiring ideas for creating a cool-yet-cosy interior

TRIED AND TESTED

McQueens Flower School

'Don't be self-conscious, relax, let yourself have fun,' says our teacher, Duncan McCabe, as he ties a ribbon around the glorious bouquet of Avalanche Sorbet roses, stock, astrantia and acacia he has just effortlessly put together. I'm at McQueens Flower School, learning how to make hand-tied bouquets. We have already been shown how to 'condition' our flowers – removing excess foliage, plucking unsightly petals and generally making sure that the

blooms we're using are the pick of the bunch (McQueens does the flowers for Claridge's and the Connaught, standards are high) – before cutting them to uniform size. Duncan has also told us the importance of 'spiralling' our flowers so that the stalks all point down 'circling in the same direction'; this allows the flowers at the top to sit more comfortably together.

As I attempt my first bouquet I'm reminded of The Generation Game: Duncan made it look so easy – it's not. My bunch soon falls apart. With Duncan's help, I finally grasp the technique and my second effort – a simple, but lovely posy of

Vendela roses, matricaria and ruscus – is much more like something I'd be chuffed to receive. During the day Duncan gives us tips for making flowers last longer, tells us what works with what – 'keep the palette simple, think about texture' – and talks about different styles of arranging, his work and the life of a florist. I come away from McQueens with two bouquets and plans to fill my favourite vase with something more exciting than an off-the-shelf mixed bunch. **SS**
A one-day hand-tied bouquets course costs £320. McQueen's Flower School, 70-72 Old Street EC1, mcqueens.co.uk

SHOP WATCH

Punk's not dead

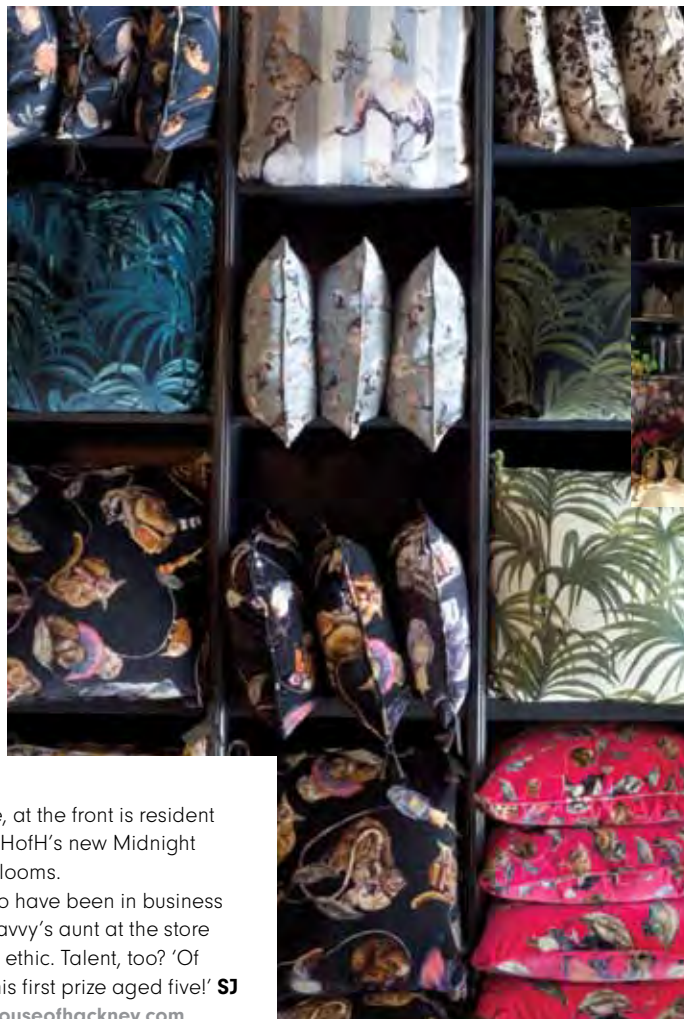
House of Hackney (HofH), the style-led go-to interiors and clothes emporium, finally has a home to call its own. Its flagship store recently opened on hipsville capital Shoreditch High Street. A luxurious, gilded interior from its entrance down the spiral staircase to the showroom, it is a cacophony of the brand's signature prints and colour with one of their newest designs, Palmeral, most prominent.

'We are very visual and House of Hackney is all about prints,' says Frieda Gormley, who, with husband Javvy M Royle, created the brand. Why Shoreditch? 'We feel our customer is here,' she says.

HofH's prints, eccentric, characterful takes on traditional images, adorn homewares, soft furnishings, lighting, sofas and clothes. 'We're a bit like a punk, kid sister of Liberty,' Frieda says. But it is not just an old-fashioned aesthetic the brand is known for - its also its commitment to traditional British manufacturing. 'Our furniture maker in Long Eaton has been a family business for more than a hundred years.'

To complete the sensory overload of the store, at the front is resident florist Wild at Heart, selling flowers featured in HoffH's new Midnight Garden print alongside many other tempting blooms.

It has been a remarkable rise for the duo, who have been in business just over two years. Their secret, according to Javvy's aunt at the store opening, is down to the couple's non-stop work ethic. Talent, too? 'Of course,' she says, proud as punch. 'Javvy won his first prize aged five!' **SJ**
 131 Shoreditch High Street E1, 020 7739 3901, houseofhackney.com



House of Hackney's recently opened flagship store in Shoreditch, which showcases the brand's acclaimed homeware

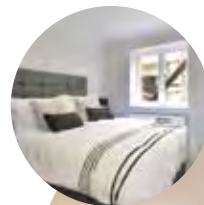


WORDS: STEPHANIE JONES, NICKI LONGFOOT, KATE PARKIN, AILEEN SCOULAR AND STEVEN SHORT

HOT PROPERTY

Southwark Park Road

381 Southwark Park Road is a stylish development of 14 newly refurbished apartments situated opposite Southwark Park. The properties feature open-plan living/dining spaces with high-gloss white kitchens, sleek bathrooms and good-sized bedrooms. Bermondsey Tube is a short walk away, as are the buzzy bars and restaurants of Bermondsey Street. Prices start at £350,000. Find out more from Felicity J Lord, Shad Thames, 020 7089 6490.



Flower power: learn the not-so-simple art of constructing a hand-tied bouquet on one of McQueens' informative workshops or courses

