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Design for living



LONDON-BASED ARCHITECT JAMES SOANE and his partner (in both life and business), Christopher Ash, live in a handsomely converted former industrial building in inner-city Clerkenwell. Though St Paul's cathedral and the law courts of the Old Bailey are just around the corner, their pad is more New York loft than the City of London, complete with metal fire escape outside the kitchen window. The open-plan flat, all wooden floors and exposed brickwork, shouts of urban sophistication, but it's also a personal expression of the pair's jet-setting travels, mixed with past and current passions and their love of rural Suffolk, where they own a cottage. It's been designed for indulging in the two best activities in life – entertaining and relaxing – and,

For architect James Soane, entertaining is all about building on good foundations – using seasonal ingredients with a nod to the classics

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Above: James (left) and colleagues (from far right) Guido, Paul and Delphine, relax around the kitchen table. Bought from Castle Gibson in Islington (020 7704 0927), it's an old school desk given a post-industrial spin with a new stainless steel top. Above, right: A Habitat chopping block serves as a cheeseboard. The knives are by David Mellor (www.davidmellordesign.com). Top centre: The bone-handled Sheffield knives were originally a Christmas present given to James's grandmother in 1952. Top right: The group tuck in to Welsh Cheddar, Gloucestershire goat's cheese and quince jelly, arranged on a leather bench by B&B Italia (020 7591 8111; www.bebitalia.it). Apricots from the farm shop near James and Christopher's Suffolk cottage are served in a Conran Shop white china bowl

while it's uncluttered, is definitely not minimal, a refreshing departure from the stereotype of the uncompromisingly austere architect-designed interior.

To James, the author of *New Home* (£50, Conran Octopus), a glossy, beautifully-produced book about contemporary home design, the most important thing about your domestic space is that 'it's a place that belongs to you and is personal'. For him and Christopher, that also means a certain element of fantasy: 'I like the idea of walking through the front door and pretending that it's a hotel room. Very five star, very James Bond!'

When it comes to eating and entertaining, James likes to buy fresh local produce and to eat seasonally. 'Things taste much



As their practice, Project Orange, is just around the corner, it's easy for James to bring his colleagues home for afternoon tea and a change of scene. The team's current projects range from a casino in Bristol to an 18-room kasbah in Marrakech, where the practicalities of the kitchen are receiving as much attention as the master bedroom – they're incorporating 'a massive vegetable and herb garden so that the chef can cook really fresh food.'

When the working week is over, James and Christopher like to head for St John Bar and Restaurant (a home from home, with its clean lines and high ceilings), 'just for the beer and Welsh rarebits, along with half of the other architects in London', then it's back home to sit on that fire escape, with an ice-cold g&t.

Above, left: Coffee is served in Italian espresso cups. The 1960s wooden tray was bought in a car boot sale for £1. Tunnock's Teacakes lend a classic kitsch touch

Above: The cabinet/sideboard was a sale bargain from B&B Italia, as before

PROJECT ORANGE, 1ST FLOOR MORELANDS, 7 OLD STREET, LONDON EC1V (020 7689 3456). THE PROJECT ORANGE ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN CATALOGUE IS PUBLISHED BY BLACK DOG PUBLISHING (€16.95)