



BEGUILING ABODE

FEATURE: MARION EELE. PHOTOGRAPHY: ANDREAS VON EISENDEL, COURTESY OF CORBIS

The London home of gallerist Rebecca Hossack is a shrine to her lifelong love of collecting.

When Rebecca Hossack moved to London in 1981 to study law, she lived in a hostel in King's Cross on a weekly budget of GB£12 (JOD13). Just seven years later (having given up on law), she opened her own gallery, the first in Europe to show fine Aboriginal art. Nowadays she has built this up to two well-respected galleries in London and one in New York, meanwhile somehow finding time to serve as the Australian cultural attaché from 1993 to 1997 and a local councillor since 2006.

Out of the public eye, the home that she shares with her husband, writer Matthew Sturgis, is a veritable treasure trove in its own right. Tucked away on a quiet Georgian terrace, this creative couple's five-storey house is aptly located in Fitzrovia, the elegantly bohemian neighbourhood that was once home to such luminaries as Virginia Woolf, Dylan Thomas and George Bernard Shaw.



Assorted artworks hang above a sofa covered with Guatemalan textiles



The entranceway is filled with light



The work area with uzbek rug, kilim-covered bench and Aboriginal art

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Hossack and Sturgis originally found the house – handily located just around the corner from the gallery – in a derelict state. They moved into the bottom floor, only later acquiring the upper part of the house that had been divided into a separate flat, and extensive renovations followed. Their efforts paid off. From the hand-painted gold Chinese characters on the front door to the custom wall cut-outs that display favourite pieces, this idiosyncratic dwelling is one that not only presents the perfect backdrop for an enviable collection of art, textiles and curiosities from across the globe, but also one that seems to perfectly reflect a pair of luminescent personalities.



An antique Orkney chair sits on a cosy rug within easy reach of Sturgis and Hossack's ample collection of books



The basement with a collection of Aboriginal art



A bookcase is cleverly incorporated into the staircase



The bedroom is clad in builders' planks, like a ship's cabin

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The house is furnished eclectically, with pieces from various eras and origins, yet there is an overall sense of cohesion that is somewhat hard to place. Perhaps it is due to the fact that, according to Hossack, every item in the house is special to her, regardless of when or where it came from. White walls, reminiscent of an art gallery, keep the rooms remarkably light and airy, tying everything together and allowing the vibrant, playful colours within to shine. Hossack has masterfully blended one-offs, antiques and carefully chosen modern furnishings, such as an Eero Saarinen *Tulip* dining table and chairs.

The master bedroom is clad in simple builders' planks that are more often seen on scaffolding, giving the effect of a ship's cabin. An antique chair sits next to a wardrobe that is thought to date to 1716, yet these are



Hossack's kitchen is adorned with custom-made tiles and crockery by Ann Stokes



This antique wardrobe is thought to date back to 1716

mixed with quirky details and a truly impressive collection of ethnic clothing and jewellery. Above the bed hangs a feather mandala by set designer Simon Costin, who has styled runway shows for Alexander McQueen.

"I love the beauty and ingenuity of mankind," Hossack says, "it never ceases to amaze me." This philosophy has translated into an insatiable passion for collecting beautiful things, which in turn meant that Hossack and Sturgis have had to get creative with ways to display everything. In tribute to Pablo Picasso, a collection of blue glass in shades from cyan to ultramarine catch the light on shelves across the bathroom window, while custom-built shelves form an archway into the living room, allowing the treasures they hold to be viewed from both sides. In testament to the couple's shared love of reading, books grace every room, and a comfy seat – be it a woven antique from Orkney or an iconic Eames Chair – is never far away. Textiles have been loving gathered from across the globe – Guatemala, Uzbekistan, Ghana, Mexico... even the bedspread in the master bedroom is an antique from India, sewn from the wedding dresses of all of the women in one family. Unsurprisingly, Aboriginal art has permeated virtually every space in this home, with both folk art and works by well-known artists such as Queenie McKenzie Nakarra, David Downs and Robert Campbell Jr. "Each painting is like a dear friend that I can't bear to part with. Often, I wish I had a magic house, one that could grow and grow," admits Hossack.

Among the 300-odd artworks that have found their home with Hossack, one notices a



Open shelving in the living room shows off sculptures and artefacts

proliferation of pieces by the late Scottish ceramicist Ann Stokes. Inspired by nature, Stokes' work can be seen throughout the house: a school of tropical fish inhabit purpose-built alcoves on the landing, a tree spreads its branches in the office space, a flock of swans guards Hossack's jewellery and the kitchen is replete not only with plates by Stokes, but also her unique tiles that cover the walls. Hossack was one of Stoke's early supporters, exhibiting the naive yet compelling works in the face of incredulity. "She was truly life-enhancing and a great friend, and I never want to start the day without drinking tea from one of her beautiful cups."

For Hossack and Sturgis, a home is not a static setting to be decorated according to the fashion then overlooked, but rather a constantly evolving entity that resonates with personality. Their London house, with its beguiling collections that one feels they could get lost in, with its warm colours that waft you toward Hossack's homeland, with its sheer dedication to art and beauty, is the very archetype of this ideal.



Swans by Ann Stokes guard Hossack's rings



Bronze cacti sculptures by Edward Cronshaw



A collection of Inuit ivory carvings