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By keeping the walls a neutral colour, Paul has enabled the furnishings of the home to take centre stage

Words Katie Hughes

**S**had Thames, London is a relatively small but exclusive slice of the city, home to warehouses and granaries that sprung up during Great Britain's Industrial Revolution and have since been converted into stunning apartments for the city's well-heeled.

Among them is Sean Ramsden, CEO of Ramsden International, a speciality wholesale exporter of British and Italian groceries and two-time winner of the Queen's Award for International Trade. Business keeps Sean out of town for the majority of the week, but on weekends, he heads back to his Shad Thames loft apartment that occupies the top two floors of a converted mill house.

The bright and spacious living room is the heart of Sean's home and is where he spends most of his time

## THE GREAT ESCAPE

This converted mill house in London's Shad Thames has been transformed into a sleek contemporary space, perfect for entertaining



Sean wanted a space to showcase his impressive collection of contemporary art. The painted white walls serve as the perfect blank canvas.



Much has changed since Sean's arrival. A beautifully executed design has transformed the apartment from lacklustre to luxurious. "Sean wanted a space for entertaining, for showcasing pieces of art, but also wanted to create privacy and intimacy within his ballroom-esque loft," recalls Paul McAnearney of award-winning practice Paul McAnearney Architects, who was responsible for translating Sean's vision into a reality. "I designed a dramatic, sophisticated scheme that worked with the existing elements of the space but incorporated interventions in many different forms of glass to emphasise, amplify and adapt the fantastic mill house into a monochrome wonder, perfect for Sean's needs."





**Above** A trio of Fios pendant lights has been suspended above the striking basalt stone worktop to add a decorative touch to the minimalist scheme

**Opposite above** Paul's design ensures that the practical elements of the kitchen face outwards so that it is easy to socialise while cooking

**Opposite below** Paul created a simple contemporary kitchen comprising smart white cabinetry with unobtrusive handles teamed with a durable basalt worktop. Fios pendant lights add an element of interest and warmth

Smart Glass is used throughout Sean's apartment, a relatively new arrival to the residential market that enables users to instantly transform any glass surface from clear to opaque and back again. "It is a perfect product for this project," continues Paul. "We used the largest sheets of Smart Glass made, in order to create visual connections between spaces separated by an atrium. Looking through the atrium, it is possible to see views from living room to kitchen and dining room to living room; however, if a more intimate private setting is needed, the glass can be switched off to achieve the opaque finish."

Sean enjoys relaxing in front of a good film, but did not want the television to become the focus of the space. In the living room, Paul successfully disguised the television using Mirona glass, which looks like a mirror until the television is switched on, and the picture appears. A similar technique has been put into practice in the master bedroom, where a bronzed wall conceals the television. "In the centre, we have fitted a TV, only visible when switched on, while the rest of the Mirona glass is back painted," explains Paul. "The smokey, dark effect of the bronzing helps lessen the stark

qualities of a normal mirror, achieving a softer feeling for the bedroom."

Sean's apartment exudes a masculine vibe, owing to its monochrome colour palette of black, white and bronze. The floor is timber but finished in a matte black paint by Farrow & Ball. It is a brave choice that beautifully offsets the crisp white walls. "We spent a lot of time getting the colour scheme right," says Paul. "Choosing the white paint for the walls was not easy. We wanted it to complement the lighting and the floor to create a space that feels incredibly warm, rather than stark. To achieve this, I used an



extremely pigmented white paint from Farrow & Ball. People say, "paint is paint" but, in reality, that's not true and it's important to take the time to find exactly the right one."

The plain white walls create the perfect blank canvas for Sean's impressive collection of contemporary art, a nod to his student days at Cambridge University where he studied the History of Art. Eye-catching pieces include works by renowned British artists Damien Hirst and Harland Miller, which instantly inject a pop of colour and texture into the otherwise neutral scheme.

**In the living room, Paul successfully disguised the television using Mirona glass, which looks like a mirror until the television is switched on, and the picture appears**



Following Sean's request for privacy, Paul incorporated panels of Smart Glass in the bedroom that go clear when the light is switched on

In keeping with Sean's brief, furniture is kept to a bare minimum, allowing plenty of room for entertaining. Dominating the living room is Jasper Morrison's modern classic Place sofa for Vitra, a low-slung design that can be adapted, owing to its modular structure. "Basically, the modular pieces clip together so Sean can arrange it how he wants," explains Paul. "We reviewed a number of different sofas and in the end, we took Sean along and only showed him this one because we were so confident that he would like it. He did."

In relation to the living room, the connecting bespoke kitchen is comparatively small, defined by smart white cabinets teamed with a stunning basalt worktop. The layout is simple but effective; base units line the back wall and are fitted with a hob and double sink. The adjacent island is well-equipped, with the usual assortment of high-end appliances, and is lit by a trio of Flos pendant lights. A breakfast bar at one end creates a casual eating area, complemented by sculptural barstools that add the finishing flourish.

Dominating the living room is Jasper Morrison's modern classic Place sofa for Vitra, a low-slung design that can be adapted, owing to its modular structure

Dramatic textures and tones in the bedroom have added a sense of character and depth to the home





Sean, who studied History of Art at Cambridge University, wanted the space to showcase his collection of contemporary art, including pieces from Damien Hirst and Harland Miller



Though formal dining is rarely on the agenda, the dining table is positioned perfectly to enjoy first-class views of London

Commenting on the size of the kitchen, Paul says, “this is not a chef’s kitchen, nor does it need to be. When Sean throws parties, he has outside caterers. This kitchen is simply used for preparing hors d’oeuvres.”

The master bedroom is located downstairs and was originally open to the ensuite bathroom.

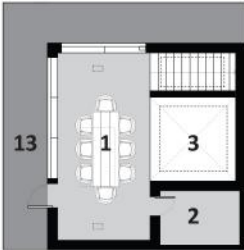
Paul decided to keep the existing layout, but installed a Smart Glass wall to create a sense of privacy. Smart Glass is also used to partially separate the luxurious bedroom (complete with an enormous Harrods bed dressed in Fendi Casa bedding) from the dressing room. Here, walk-in wardrobes in western red cedar make a style

statement and help to maintain a minimalist and clutter-free space.

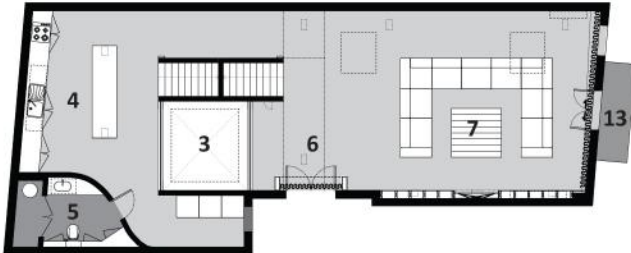
“Sean travels a lot during the week and he looks forward to coming home,” says Paul. “We have created the perfect place for him to escape the stresses of the week and have a good time entertaining friends.” 

Legend

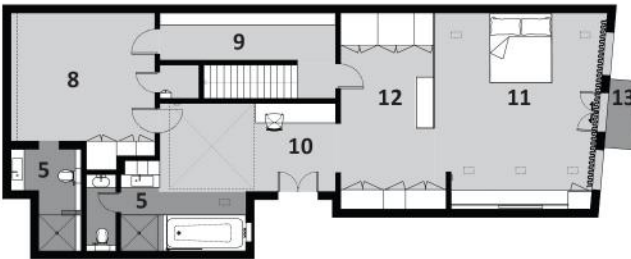
- 1. Dining
- 2. Storage
- 3. Light well
- 4. Kitchen
- 5. Bathroom
- 6. Entry
- 7. Living
- 8. Bedroom
- 9. Hall to stairs
- 10. Study
- 11. Bedroom
- 12. Walk-in robe
- 13. Balcony



Third floor



Second floor



First floor

project particulars

This project was designed by:  
**Paul McAnearny of Paul McAnearny Architects**  
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**Web:** paulmcaneary.com

**LIVING ROOM**  
**Sofa:** Vitra (vitra.com)  
**Coffee table & drinks cabinet:** Bespoke  
**Floor:** Timber with Farrow & Ball finish

(farrow-ball.com)  
**Walls:** Farrow & Ball (farrow-ball.com)  
**Mirror/television:** Mirona Glass by Schott (schott.com)

**KITCHEN**  
**Cabinetry:** Bespoke lacquered units from Paul McAnearny Architects  
**Worktop:** Basalt from Paul McAnearny Architects  
**Tap:** Vola (deduce.com)  
**Lights:** Flos (euroluce.com.au)

**Floor:** Timber with Farrow & Ball finish (euroluce.com.au)  
**Appliances:** Smeg and Miele (smeg.com.au and miele.com.au)  
**BEDROOM**  
**Bed:** Harrods (harrods.com)  
**Bedding:** Fendi Casa (casaluxury.com.au)  
**Walk-in wardrobe:** Bespoke by Paul McAnearny Architects