



# THE SUNDAY TIMES

## Revealed: the would-be National Trust homes of modern London

A social media contest has put a spotlight on how Londoners live now, and found a new heritage property in the capital

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Spatial visionary: Egon Walesch, from Blackheath, won plaudits for combining form and function

stucco-fronted mansion, were encouraged to flaunt selfies (or should that be shelfies?) of their living spaces using the hashtag #NTHouseproud. A panel of expert judges then hemmed and hawed over them to decide which demonstrated a creative use of a confined space, unique decor or innovative DIY solutions.

Results are now in, and the winners of the four categories — spatial visionary, master craftsman, treasure hunter and personal stylist — will receive £1,000 each to spend at Made.com, while Gianini's house, the overall champion picked from the four winners, scores an additional £1,000 worth of vouchers. One of them could also be opened to the public on one of the National Trust's heritage open days in September.

"The competition came about after talking to students at the Royal College of Art, as a way of building an archive of how we live now," says Ivo Dawney, the National Trust's London director. "It is a way of democratising heritage and acknowledging that what is contemporary today will one day be considered heritage."

The campaign received more than 500 photo entries, all of which will be digitally archived by the British Library as a permanent record of life in the capital last year. And the results are wonderfully colourful and eclectic. Take the funky dinosaur knobs that liven up an otherwise unremarkable chest of drawers, the extra-large packs of Maxi Protein that stand resplendent on a kitchen cabinet, or even the three fusty-looking pairs of blue boxer shorts draped nonchalantly over a radiator.

"Some of the homes were hideous, in my opinion — but that's just my opinion," says Max Fraser, a design author and one of the judges. "The entrants must love them, otherwise they wouldn't have entered. What really came across is that few of the homes looked the same. This may sound obvious, but it shows we are more confident in making decisions that aren't dictated by trends, or by how someone else says our homes should be.

"In our industry, we are probably guilty of portraying people's properties too far towards the luxury side — whereas not many people actually live like

WHAT comes to mind when you picture a National Trust property? A crumbling Norman castle with a moat and a creaking drawbridge? A gothic manor with cavernous ceilings and a dusty library where Old Masters gaze down stoically from the walls? Or a one-bedroom flat in Stoke Newington, with modest proportions, an Apple Mac and a mysterious black-and-white photograph in place of the Rembrandts and Rubens?

Yes, heritage purists, you read that last sentence correctly. A modest dwelling in a trendy enclave of north London, owned by Dan Gianini, a Brazilian-born film-maker, is in the running to become the 13th property in the capital opened by the trust — the tweedy gatekeeper of our pre-eminent historic buildings. This rather ordinary Victorian conversion may — temporarily — be joining an illustrious line-up that includes Ham House, a Stuart masterpiece in Richmond, and the Red House, in Bexleyheath, built by the Arts and Crafts guru William Morris.

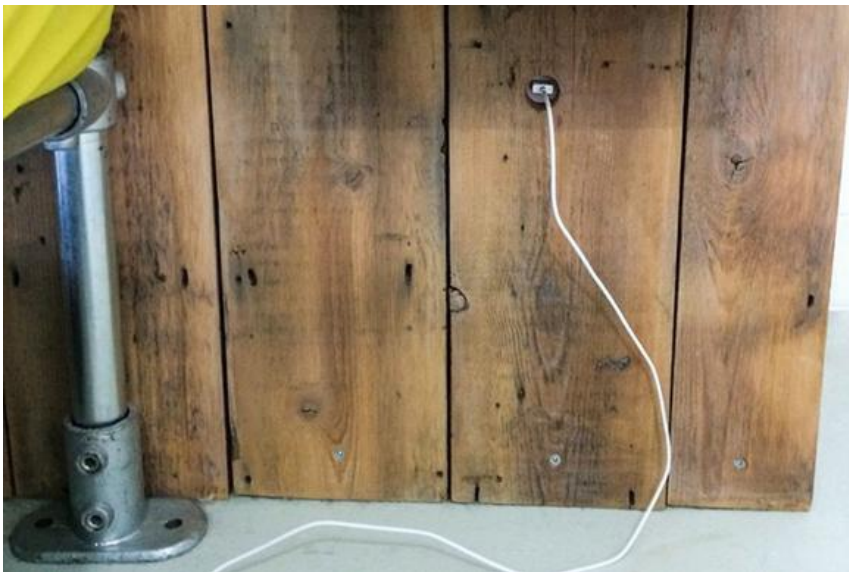
This unusual state of affairs has come about thanks to a social media campaign launched in September by the National Trust, aiming to gain an insight into how Londoners really live today. Domestically inclined citizens, whether they reside in a basement studio or a



Treasure hunter: Dan Gianini, who lives in Stoke Newington, was inspired by the capital's mixed heritage



Personal stylist: John Shevlin, of Waltham Forest, scooped a prize for his 'big, bold, bright colours'



Master craftsman: Beatrice Barton's reclaimed wooden headboard was made by her husband, Mark Baker

that.”

As well as demonstrating how well Londoners are adapting to shrinking living spaces, the entries offer a slice of social history. Hardly any of the pictures show TVs — documenting our increasing reliance on tablets and smartphones, perhaps — while many of the spaces feature reassuringly stuffed bookshelves.

Homeowners are also becoming more inventive, it seems. The winner of the “master craftsman” category, the Barbican-based Beatrice Barton, drew plaudits for a piece of industrial timber transformed into a funky headboard with electronics dock. The “spatial visionary” champion, Egon Walesch was praised for his economic yet stylish use of storage by one of the judges, Annabel Kilner, head of Made.com UK.

Perusing the #NTHouseproud entries, you can see more of Walesch’s stylish Blackheath home, painted in moody shades of blue and charcoal “inspired by our beautiful grey cat, Ivana,” he says. He has started his own design business ([egondesign.co.uk](http://egondesign.co.uk)).

So what made Gianini’s Stoke Newington flat stand out from the crowd? “Some people staged their homes for this competition, but with the winner, you could see that this is really how he lives,” Fraser says. “He has a mix of objects that he’s clearly thought about carefully — the Tom Dixon chair, an odd stool, a beautiful Apple Mac.

“God knows what that picture is on the wall. But to me, all these objects look like ones he loves and has accumulated over time, which is representative of how we all live.”

0 comments

 Richard Goodwin



1 person listening