

stranger things

Like a Gothic fairy tale brought to life, Matt and Jules's home has unexpected twists, with angels, insects – and even a unicorn – at every turn



Photography/James Merrell • Production/Mary Weaver • Words/Jenny Tucker

HOME PROFILE

THE OWNER Matt Goss, an antiques dealer and owner of Pure White Lines interiors shop/website. He lives here with his partner Jules Owen, an interior designer, and Victorian bulldog Elvis.

THE PROPERTY A double-fronted Victorian house on three levels in east London. On the lower ground floor there is a kitchen, dining room, utility room, bedroom and wet room. On the ground floor there is a living room, study, bedroom and WC. On the first floor sit four bedrooms and the main bathroom.

LIVING ROOM

This is a room full of grand gestures, from the sprawling bespoke sofa to the praying angel and imposing convex railway station mirrors. Get the look: The Fifties railway mirrors, angel statue, Seventies coffee table and antler skulls are all from Pure White Lines. For a similar rug, try French Connection Home. The walls are painted in Chermise estate emulsion by Farrow & Ball.





LIVING ROOM

This is the party zone where friends gather for drinks. Matt designed the Prescriptions cocktail cabinet. 'I want the house to be cosy at this time of year,' he says. 'Winter flowers and a real fire ensure that.'

Get the look The oak school cabinet, columns and red chairs are from Pure White Lines. For a similar mirror, try Cox & Cox.

It's a sharp, shivery winter's afternoon

in east London and Christmas is a misty breath away. Behind the door of this particular home, something magical is occurring. Waiting inside is a unicorn, more than one angel, a lioness, hundreds of butterflies, a human skeleton and a man called Matt—who thinks it's all rather wonderful.

There's no denying this home is the stuff of fantastical festive grottoes, with its smorgasbord of 'what-on-earth!' oddities at every turn. And guests can't help but feel they've walked into some captivating, otherworldly kingdom—Narnia meets Miss Havisham meets The Natural History Museum. To be honest, it's hard not to gawp.

Matt Goss, who lives here with his partner Jules and this collection of treasures, is an antiques dealer who spends his life searching for unusual pieces. 'It's a thrill,' he says, 'when you know you've laid eyes on something really special. Whether it's in the south of France, northern Italy or Eastern Europe, if I have that gut feeling, I know I have to buy it.'

With Christmas nearly upon us, Matt is inundated with requests for all kinds of whimsical one-offs. 'I sourced a full-sized giraffe last week for a local hotel, plus a lot of my customers are looking for special pieces, such as a comfy vintage Chesterfield for when the family descends on them.'

With his home address barely a 10-minute walk from his Shoreditch shop, it has also become a showcase for his favourite acquisitions. Customers can make an appointment and see things in a real-home environment, which means he might install something in a room, but if a buyer takes a fancy to it, off it goes. 'Most things here are for sale,' he reveals. 'So the look of the house is constantly changing as items move on. It's a transient way to live, but I have a very low boredom threshold and the business has such a high stock turnover. You can't get too attached to things as there's always something new and exciting to own. Is there anything I would never get rid of? Ha!



↑ STUDY

This is Matt's favourite room—a sanctuary for his quirkiest pieces. **Get the look** The artist's figure and Tank chair are from Pure White Lines. The walls are painted in Farrow & Ball's Black Blue estate emulsion. For a similar rug, try Graham and Green. For a mirror like this, try Rockett St George.

Jules... and the dog... oh, and a huge statue of St Matthew. It was one of the first pieces I bought and he signifies good luck to me. One of his hands is extended up in the air and I plan to have him in the bathroom, holding out a pile of towels.'

'This is only Matt's second Christmas in the house. I bought it 18 months ago when it was a derelict shell. But it is a big, airy house, perfect for showing off all my antiques, which are often on a grand scale. I had to do some basic updating—wiring, plumbing, that kind of thing—but it's amazing what a difference a coat of moody paint can make when you want to create drama.'

When it comes to entertaining, Matt's parties are just as spectacular. A recent Halloween bash had 150 guests, an all-night bar, two towering angels adorned with burning torches and a DJ with a stuffed polar bear for company.

'Christmas Day will be equally as mad and food is the centre of it all,' says Matt, who used to be a rugby coach. 'I am one of five siblings and myself and my two brothers have big appetites. We love to eat. I'll invite the whole family and a few close friends. Christmas breakfast is my favourite—pigs in blankets, smoked salmon, scrambled eggs and, of course, plenty of bubbly. Then, a not-so-traditional beef wellington for lunch and my dessert of choice, a huge tiramisu. There will be flowers everywhere, a real tree and everything draped in lights, even in the garden. I like to keep all the overhead lighting on dimmer for even more dramatic effect.'

With a house so festooned in peculiarities, it doesn't take much to imagine you're tripping through the pages of Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* while playing an extra in Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland*. 'It's all so normal for me,' says Matt, laughing. 'What, even the unicorn?' 'Of course! But he will be draped in festive fairy lights too.' *Find Matt's shop and website at purewhitelines.com. See floral art by Joanna Innie at outflowers.london*

HALLWAY

When guests arrive at this house, they often feel like they've walked into a museum. I love that,' says Matt. **Get the look** The Murano glass Sputnik pendant and reproduction turtle shells are from Pure White Lines. The walls are painted in Downpipe estate emulsion by Farrow & Ball.





KITCHEN

"The kitchen is a bit of a work in progress," explains Matt. "It's next on my list of things to tackle." **Get the look** The built-in kitchen units came with the house - for similar, try Magnet. Find terracotta floor tiles like these at Fired Earth. The Live East Die Young print is from Nelly Duff.



KITCHEN

"I would like loads more beautiful freestanding antique units in here, but I've already started with this incredible dairy cabinet from the 1880s," says Matt. **Get the look** The French cast-iron bistro table and Tolix chairs are from Pure White Lines. The glasses and crockery are from Anthropologie.

HOME TRUTHS

What's the best part of Christmas? Spending time with friends and family. I'm so busy the rest of the year. Your special Christmas ritual? A long dog walk on Christmas morning followed by our group of family and friends descending on our local pub in Broadway market. It's so quiet in London at this time of year. Love that. Would Santa say that you've been good this year? He'd say I've been fun. You can't be fun if you're always too good. Dream present? Antiques dealers are notoriously hard to buy for. But I'd never say no to a surprise trip abroad. Sun or snow? Definitely sun. Especially in January. In fact, we're thinking about a visit to South Africa. Panto or carol service? Ha! Neither. Give me a good pub, restaurant or even live comedy.



BEDROOM DETAIL
 Matt's vintage taxidermy 'unicorn' sits in a meadow of flowers designed by Joanna Imrie at Cut Flowers London.
Get the look The unicorn is from Pure White Lines.

← WET ROOM
 Matt has turned a tiny bathroom into a functional shower space.
Get the look The bronze wall tiles are by Fired Earth and the faux plants are by Abigail Ahern.



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MAIN BEDROOM
 Neutral walls are the perfect backdrop for Matt's cluster of deer skulls and out-there lighting.
Get the look The bed is from And So To Bed. The overhead lights were made by Matt - the Felix Adams 3 light pendant at Kes Lighting is similar. The velvet print cushions are by House of Hackney.

THE BLUEPRINT

