

The £45 million Chelsea townhouse that has it all (minus a toothbrush)

Chelsea Barracks' latest development is a six-bedroom house expertly decorated and furnished with rare antiques. Fiona McCarthy steps inside with its designer, Brigitta Spinocchia Freund

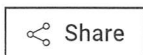


The furniture, lighting, artwork and vinyl collections of The Collector's House have been curated to perfection

FELIX SPELLER

Fiona McCarthy

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Once home to the British Army, the multibillion-pound Chelsea Barracks redevelopment is one of London's most sought-after neighbourhoods. It is now also home to one of the most expensive townhouses on the market.

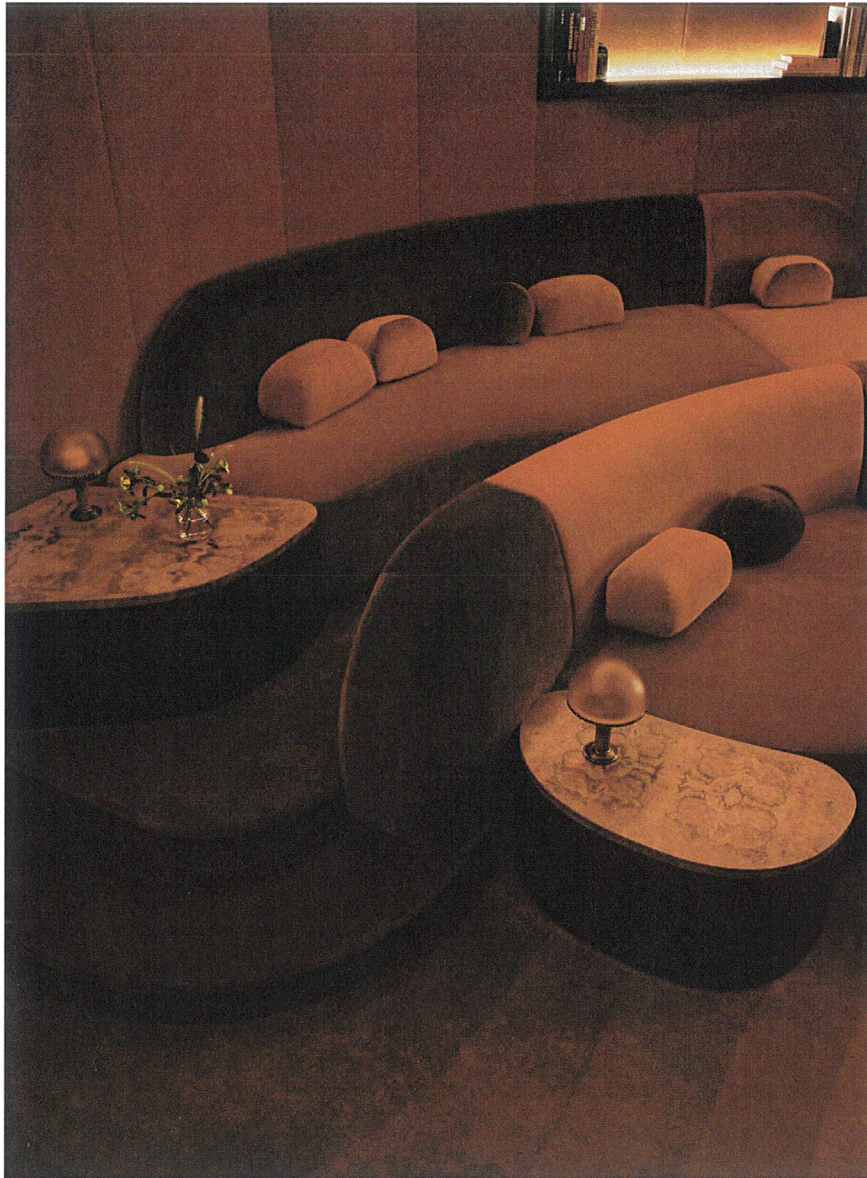
The Collector's House, a magnificent five-storey, six-bedroom, end-of-terrace Georgian-inspired home with interiors by Brigitta Spinocchia Freund, is on the market for £45 million. Everything from the furniture, lighting and artwork down to the painstakingly curated collections of vinyl, books and even vintage cocktail making paraphernalia is included in the price. Simply walk in and make yourself at home.

Spread across 12,800sq ft, with soaring ceilings (some almost 12ft high), a sweeping central staircase, sexy cinema and speakeasy bar, health sanctuary (complete with pool, spa, yoga studio and sauna), private garden and dazzling roof terrace, the house on Whistler Square is prized for its corner location. "It is unique in the sense that it has light coming in from both front and back, and there's the feeling that you don't have other buildings butted up right next to you," explains Spinocchia Freund, whose west London design practice was established in 2009.



The sweeping central staircase contains individually selected contemporary art pieces

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The home cinema is cosy with red velvet

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To create spaces appealing to a variety of tastes and budgets, the Qatari Diar group behind the reimagination of Chelsea Barracks has worked with all sorts of designers, including Albion Nord, Banda (founded by Princess Beatrice's husband, Edo Mapelli Mozzi) and Charu Gandhi's Elicyon architectural and interior design studio. They have created apartments, penthouses, mews and townhouses surrounding the estate's seven lush garden squares.

While working with the existing base build, "we've done a huge uplift, bringing in a lot of classic features where possible," Spinocchia Freund says, from panelling, beading and joinery to a soothing earthy colour palette. "I didn't want the palette to be beige or cream. I wanted it to be strong but liveable, with a sense of warmth." In the entrance hall alone, five shades of green were custom-mixed by the paint company Coat.

The decor of The Collector's House reflects its name. At least 70 per cent of the furniture is collectible. Spinocchia Freund's parents ran shops in Istanbul and Dorset selling antiques and the creations of local artisans, and she spent much of her childhood in markets and bazaars. "I'd rather buy a sofa which is less expensive, but is a 20th-century collectible. There is an immediate resale value with pieces like that, and because I go direct to the seller, we end up with very good prices."





The set of graphic Africa chairs by Afra and Tobia Scarpa

Fifties leather-wrapped armchairs by Jacques Adnet were the first things she bought, long before the design scheme was finalised. “I knew what pieces we needed, and the designers I wanted in the space, so we had to snap them up because they weren’t going to sit there for ever.” A 1950s Paul Frankl cork and mahogany Big Foot coffee table, a set of graphic Africa chairs by Afra and Tobia Scarpa in the kitchen and a cabinet by André Arbus in the study (a rare find) as well as pieces by Charlotte Perriand, the 1970s Italian architect Silvio Coppola and the Bulgarian designer Boris Tabacoff are among the hero pieces, dotted throughout the house.

Texture abounds too, through intricately hand-knotted rugs, months in the making according to Spinocchia Freund’s own designs, and Pierre Frey fabrics. Many were custom woven by

the textile brand's centuries old Le Manach weavers, including the "Verdure" leafy print used for the kitchen banquettes, and, with waterproofing, under the contemporary gazebo outside.



The Fifties leather-wrapped armchairs by Jacques Adnet in the living room

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The dining room contains a wooden dining table by Max McIntock

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The master bedroom, with murals by Robert Cooper

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Vintage Murano chandeliers jostle with contemporary lights by the British designer Joe Armitage (inspired by originals designed by his grandfather Edward), and a wooden dining table made by the London-based furniture designer Max McIntock. “He worked alongside the Fifties Pierre Jeanneret chairs to bring the same feeling of grain and colour while staying true to his own design, polishing the table by hand rather than by machine to create a harmony between old and new.” Bespoke designs, from a beaten metal console (part of Spinocchia Freund’s own furniture collection), plaster lights (“it’s very difficult to find the right kind of beautiful, sculptural lights in pairs”) and bedroom headboards (each one in different heights and shapes) to the cinema’s 1970s-inspired rounded sofas, contribute to the townhouse’s unique mood.

The Collector’s House has also provided a dreamy backdrop for new and young artists. Spinocchia Freund has worked with the Sarabande Foundation, established by the fashion designer Alexander McQueen in 2006, including artists Lucy Jagger,

Almudena Romero and Robert Cooper, whose murals have transformed the dining room ceiling and headboard screen (overlaid with embroidery by Hand & Lock) in the principal bedroom; as well as the Incubator gallerist Angelica Jopling (daughter of the founder of White Cube, Jay Jopling, and the artist and director Sam Taylor-Johnson). “Angelica has been helping us to find some really interesting pieces, the idea here being to platform emerging artists working in a variety of different mediums.” The rising talents on show include Kesewa Aboah, whose body-inspired pieces are rendered in paint and tapestry, and the multimedia artist Antrea Tzourovits.

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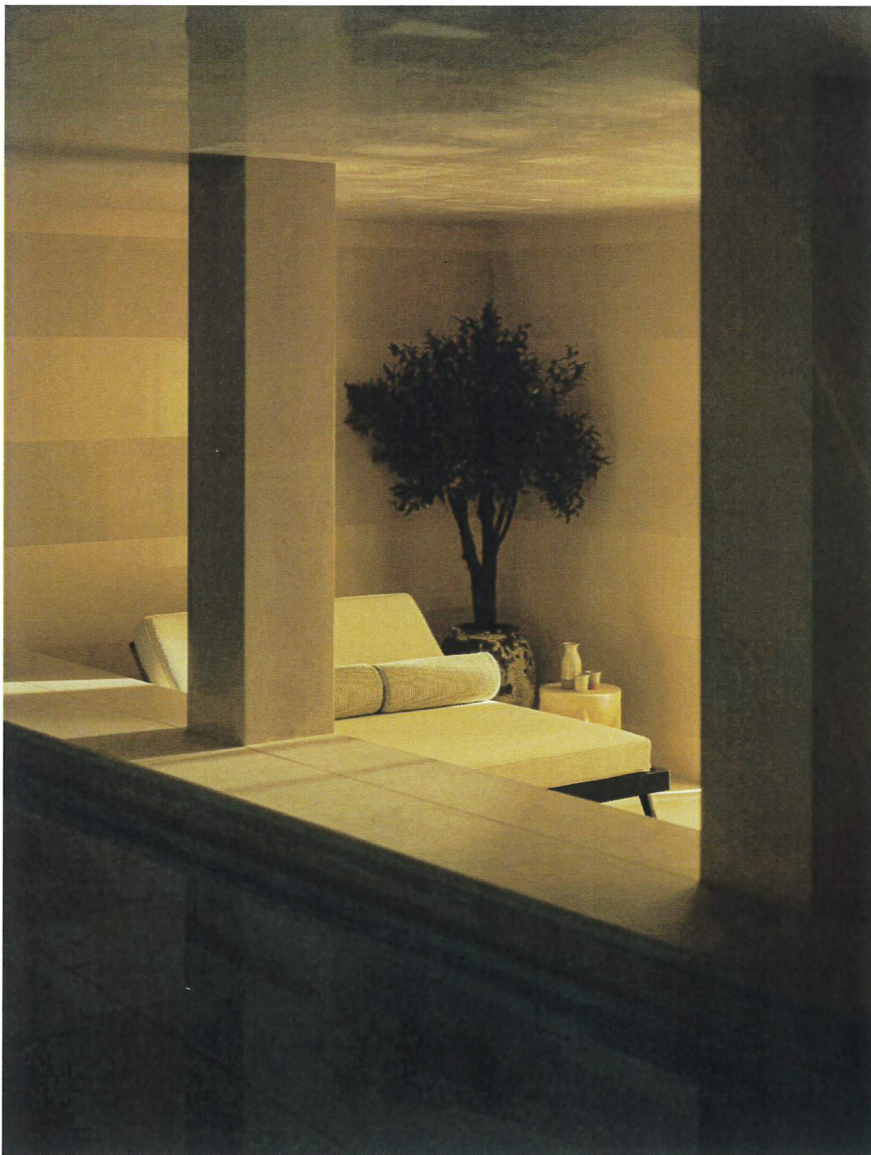
Mid-century classic chairs provide comfort and elegance

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Despite the highly curated feel of the house, there has been no compromise on practicality or comfort. There are televisions discreetly hidden behind sliding panels; mid-century classic chairs that are as elegant to look at as they are easy and enjoyable to sit in; and the “calming, unifying” effect of

swathing rich shades of terracotta or Roman yellow across walls, ceilings and joinery makes each of the bedrooms “bold but interesting”.

The designer’s love for collectibles is not only for their resale value, but as a reaction against “the constant stream of the overly new”, Spinocchia Freund says. “It is hard translating only contemporary pieces into a living space without it feeling like a hotel. You have to mix it all up, turning pieces on their head by merging them with things that shouldn’t really go together.” And while an old piece can be re-sprung and re-upholstered, it is the patina of imperfections that “makes it look great and allows it to bring a different sense of emotion and feeling to a room”.



The health sanctuary has a pool, spa, yoga studio and sauna

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Spinocchia Freund says that she always seeks out pieces that have their own personality, that don’t shout too loudly and that feel comfortable, whether that’s for her residential or

commercial projects, from London and the Cotswolds to Monaco and Ibiza. After all, why have a boring lamp when you can have one with a zoomorphic ceramic base crafted by the Parisian ceramicist Max Idlas in the 1960s? “The project has proven to be a huge labour of love [it took 12 months], but I have to do it the way I have to do it. Finding the right pieces takes time.”

[Spinocchiafreund.com](https://www.spinocchiafreund.com); [chelseabarracks.com](https://www.chelseabarracks.com)

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