

# BANKSIDE PENTHOUSE

LONDON

WALDO WORKS' APARTMENT AT NEO BANKSIDE IS A  
CELESTIAL PLACE - INSPIRED BY SHIFTING SKIES AND STARRY  
NIGHTS, IT'S HEAVENLY, IN ALL SENSES / *By Ruth Corbett*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RUY TEIXEIRA

*Dramatic skies, seen  
through the glazed  
roof, gave Waldo Works  
its design inspiration.  
The pair of 'Crescent  
Moon' sofas are by  
Studio Putman*

How does one put flesh on the bones of an empty, white-walled shell – a space that tops 24 storeys of soaring Richard Rogers architecture – to create a real, living, breathing home?

That was the lofty challenge facing the design talent at Waldo Works, the London-based architectural and design studio that landed the contract to transform the interior of this extraordinary space.

Part of Neo Bankside, a London development that will eventually provide a total of 217 residential units in five separate buildings, the penthouse is a show home that is all about reflecting the elements. With genuinely spectacular views of the city skyline, and with the River Thames snaking far below it, a considered, thoughtful approach was paramount to the success of this project.

“How we could make it work wasn’t immediately apparent, so it was important to think carefully about what the real

experience of living in this sort of space could be like,” explains Waldo Works’ founder Tom Bartlett, who works alongside practice partners, Sasha von Meister and Andrew Treverton. “Normally, our projects involve us in all the nuts-and-bolts stuff – the plumbing, wiring and so on – but this is the first time we have worked purely on the interior design, and it was wonderful to be able to focus solely on the aesthetics of the space.”

One of Bartlett’s first considerations was whether to soften or harden the existing architecture. “Both approaches would have been equally effective, but unusually for us, we plumped for softening,” he says. “There is so much going on here, in terms of the views, and what’s outside, and the very strong geometric architecture. We felt that the best complement to all of that would be a subtle scheme that had an identity of its own, which reflected the greater elements.”

To this end Bartlett’s team has used the beauty and delicacy of the vast, constantly shifting skies as the basis of its design concept. They have subtly referenced suns, moons and constellations throughout, bringing a gorgeously celestial look to the whole space.

Bartlett explains that the lower floor of the double-height space is broadly divided into two zones: the living area, which is itself loosely zoned into formal and informal spaces; and the kitchen and dining areas. Both have been designed to play on the idea of day passing into night, from lightness to darkness.

In the living area, a monochrome mix of textural fabrics – woven, raised surfaces and graphic patterns – has been used. The formal zone starts in a watery ‘day’ palette of dawn colours, over a sunny rug and pale crescent moon-shaped tweed sofas by Studio Putman, which look out over the view. Towards the more relaxed >

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OPPOSITE: The master bedroom’s dressing table, designed by Waldo Works, cleverly wraps around an internal column to make the best use of the space. Beyond, the ‘Tip of the Tongue’ light and the marble ‘Meditation Stool’ on which it rests are both by Michael Anastassiades



*An orange sofa (from the Sofa & Chair Company) sits on top of a Christopher Farr rug, with a design by Kate Blee inspired by a map of the heavens. The 'PK' gold-leaf light is by Catellani & Smith*





'night' area, the colours turn dusty orange and the furniture is placed on a specially designed rug with a pattern inspired by the heavens, by Kate Blee for Christopher Farr. "There's a sunny aspect at the front of the space, where one might entertain friends and guests, and a night-time feel at the back, where lounging and TV-watching can happen," says Bartlett.

The scheme for the dining area reflects the silvery waters of the Thames. Hovering over a minimal white table, a shimmering paper light by Ingo Maurer offers a hint of otherworldliness, while the dining chairs have been upholstered in wool in a palette of light grey, sky blue and cream. It's a place to lounge, linger and ponder the skies, whatever the season, or time of day or night. "We wanted it to feel sunny and clear and 'breakfasty' during the day, while at night, once the lights go down, to become warm, intimate and cosy," says Bartlett.

Upstairs, the geometric theme continues in the master bedroom, which features a deep-pile bespoke rug based on a Kandinsky painting. Here the muted red of the textiles echoes the red structural frame of the building, while the walls are painted to represent a flat white sky. The view is sensational: St Paul's in all its glory, flanked by buildings ancient and modern.

The two guest bedrooms are luxurious boltholes that Bartlett's team took particular care over. "It's important that guest rooms aren't afterthoughts, or places you just walk through," he says. "I wanted to get across that lovely feeling of welcome one gets when shown into a thoughtfully and generously prepared and decorated guest room. And I think we've done it. These rooms really do sing."

In one of them, the rich tones of night-sky blues contrast with the brass of a bedside lamp by David Chipperfield for Wästberg. A boat-like bed provides

a nurturing feel, and a wall-mounted string shelving unit with desk completes it. The other, with its geometric Hermès wallpaper, and lime colour scheme, features a minimal take on a four-poster bed, which lends it a graphic focus. The rooms are unostentatious, but with a luxury that lies in the subtle plays of form, proportion, materials and level of comfort.

Highly designed, and yet approachable, the apartment demonstrates Waldo Works' success in delivering an incredibly accomplished piece of design – one that you can genuinely imagine a family living in. "Domestic architecture today is about so much more than ground-floor living in Victorian houses," says Bartlett. "There are many ways to be and to live and I think this is a valid and very special choice in a high-density, urban part of town. It's an elevated way to live, in every sense of the word." **A**

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OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The guest bedroom, with inky-blue walls and a Wästberg 'W102' light; Hermès 'Herringbone' wallpaper and a minimal four-poster in the second guest bedroom; the master bedroom features dusky pink fabric walls and Collier Webb's classical 'Frank' plaster lights