

THE HOUSE THAT CAKE BUILT

Master pâtissier Eric Lanlard has found the perfect home for his collection of modern art
— a former row of derelict garages hidden behind a south London street

REPORT Tony Turnbull PHOTOGRAPHS James Balston



Opposite: the underground party room. This page: the master bedroom, with portrait of Lanlard by Andrew Kinsman



As you'd expect in the home of a man who made his name and fortune from baking exquisite cakes and pastries, it's the kitchen that dominates the ground floor of Eric Lanlard's expansively minimalist house. Set in the heart of the new-build, it has huge sliding glass doors on to the courtyard garden and a sweep of sleek white work surface to accommodate all the accoutrements a master pâtissier could need, from state-of-the-art induction hobs and extractor fans to KitchenAid mixers and serried bottles of Nielsen Massey extracts and flavourings.

Yet it wasn't the kitchen that sold the house to Lanlard and his partner, Paul, but the wall space that would allow them to display their art collection. "Yes, I walked in and thought, 'OK, this is a great space for TV filming and entertaining,' but our previous house was like a glass cube," says 47-year-old Lanlard. "It only had two walls, so there was nowhere to hang our art. Our storage was full of paintings."

He certainly makes full use of the walls now. Every nook and cranny is crammed with art. The seating area at the far end of the kitchen is dominated by a huge 2m x 2m canvas of a flower, bought from a favourite gallery in Mykonos, where they go every summer, to match the purple Ligne Roset sofas. "As you can see, we love purple," he says. "When I met Paul he had a warehouse conversion in East London with a specially dyed purple carpet. I knew then we were a perfect match."

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From top:
Eric Lanlard in
the kitchen; the
courtyard

It's in the more formal sitting room, off the main seating and kitchen area, that the real treasures are to be found. Two pieces by the Italian artist Mauro Perucchetti, of a gold dinosaur head with jewel-coloured Perspex teeth and a sculpture of Batman reaching out to Superman, draw the eye first, but tucked away on a side wall is an Andy Warhol screenprint of Queen Elizabeth II,

from the artist's series *Reigning Queens*. "We got it from a Japanese gallery at the Masterpiece art fair in London. I'm not saying it was cheap, but we got a good deal. I googled it and the last person who bought the whole set was the Queen herself for her royal collection." In the master bedroom, also off the main living area, with its David Linley bed and chest of drawers, is another, "even ➤"

rarer” Warhol, a portrait of Liza Minnelli.

Lanlard got a good deal on the house itself, buying in 2008, just after the financial crash. Walking down the southwest London street, past mock-Tudor and Victorian semis, you’d never guess that set behind the houses, beyond a large purple gate, is such a modern home. It used to be a row of garages and had been derelict for years. Planning restrictions meant it couldn’t go up more than one storey, so the developers decided to go down, creating a spacious lower ground floor in the days before basements became the bane of every London street. “It’s a great space and the quality of the workmanship is really impressive.”

It’s in an area Lanlard knows well. After training in Brittany and doing his national service with the French navy (as private pastry chef to the captain – “Only in France,” he laughs), he came to London aged 22 to work with the Roux brothers, “the only chefs I’d heard of”. He worked at their central kitchen in Battersea before setting up on his own. His big break came when he made the wedding cake for Madonna and Guy Ritchie in 2000. “That really put us on the map,” he says. “I think at the time I was the only person in the country who knew how to make a croque-en-bouche.” Since then he’s gone on to make cakes for many more celebrities and is a regular on TV. He also owns Cake Boy café and cookery school in nearby Wandsworth.

“I love the area for the quietness and friendliness of the neighbours,” he says, and

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despite the art, the couple lead a low-key life, preferring Nando’s or the local pub to London’s ritzier restaurants.

Downstairs, the high ceilings and plentiful light disguise the fact you are underground. Here are an eight-seater cinema room, wine cellar, gym and two spare rooms, plus a party room with pool table and an art deco bar, bought from a Paris flea market.

On the wall are more photographs and artwork. Below a picture of manacled wrists that Nelson Mandela drew on Robben Island is a slightly more prosaic work, a portrait of Westlife adorned with the band’s handprints. “Please don’t mention that one,” Lanlard begs. “It’s a warning not to get drunk at a children’s charity auction.” ■

Cake Boy, Battersea Reach, Juniper Drive, London SW18 (020 7978 5555). See Eric Lanlard’s four best muffin recipes on page 77



From top: the dining area; Andy Warhol Liza Minnelli portrait; the sitting room with Warhol Queen Elizabeth II