

an everyday life interiors magazine - issue #04

apartamento

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04

Stella's room: Keep out!

INTERVIEW BY THEA SLOTOVER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY CLEMENCY JONES

Stella and I first met when we started at the same secondary school four years ago, but we only really got to know each other during our third year. She lives in Kentish Town, North London, in a beautiful Victorian building made up mainly of open-plan spaces and heavy-beamed ceilings which hint at its light industrial past. I have always loved the architecture of the house, but that was not the reason I decided to interview Stella about her room. My decision was based on the unique and apparently unconscious sense of style that she brings to every aspect of her life, not least the decoration of her own space.

I know you had a massive room make-over a couple of years ago when you were 13. If I had re-done my room when I was 13, I would have wanted to be in complete control of the decorating. Were you the main person in deciding how your room looked, or not?

Well, I think my parents had a kind of an idea of what they wanted the main structure of the room to look like. They wanted the big windows and the big modern floors and stuff, but... I was allowed to choose, like, the all the furniture and wallpaper and I was allowed to choose where I wanted everything put.

How did you choose all the furniture? You've got that chair and I'm assuming it's quite old. That was found in a tip I think, and, we recovered it. (laughs) Yeah... we find a lot of stuff at the tip actually. There's some furniture in the living room from the tip.

Does your room feel very separate to the rest of the house?

No not at all. Well, it kind of is because it's very me, my room, and the rest of the house is just quite...

Family?

Yeah. It's quite similar to the other rooms. It's just this is very much my style, which is quite different to my parent's because theirs is big and simplistic, and like, I like little kitschy things. But I find it quite difficult to find places to put them, because when I first got the room I was like I don't want any shelves at all, and then slowly I began to realise I couldn't just hide everything in my cupboard, it just didn't work. So I ended up having loads of shelves. The windowsills aren't supposed to be shelves but they've kind of turned into shelves because I can't find anywhere else to put things!

So, last time I was in your room I saw these records, and I wondered, how did you get them, and what's the story behind them?

Well, my mum has crates of records, like, the builders had to put them in a box and they couldn't actually carry them down the stairs they were so heavy.

But I took a couple of them, and we did used to have a record player, but it broke. My mum and I used to listen to them together on the player when my house wasn't done. I kind of like the

records because you get all the tracks that aren't on iTunes. I wanted all the other records in here but I couldn't find a place to put them, because apparently if I put them up there (on top of the wardrobe) the wardrobe would give way.

Do you listen to music in your room now?

I have iPod playing system but I mostly listen to it on my iPod. I like it to be my own personal playing. I like it when it's going literally straight into my head. When it's being played on a sound system you don't take it in as much.

So, your mum and dad are both artists, they both work downstairs out of studios. Do you like the close proximity or do you ever wish you had more space from them?

I don't know. It's a bit like, well it's good having them here all the time, but it's not good having them here all the time. But I always get really worried, because my dad works with big chunks of metal, that they're going to fall on him or something. I can actually hear everything that's going on downstairs, and it gets a bit nerve-racking sometimes because I can hear these big chunks of metal falling everywhere.

Oh my god, that sounds really scary! So last week, you had a big house party and you refused to let people in your room. Why was that?

Because I didn't want them touching my stuff, and because I didn't want them to steal!

Do people steal?

Yeah, give 'em a little bit of alcohol and they'll take anything that takes their fancy! It's just last time there was a party here, someone tried to take my jacket. Also I've just re-done my room, and I care about the rest of the house, but the rest of the house is less easily damaged. I have just so many little things that are special to me and I'm quite sentimental so I just didn't want everything to be nicked. People steal little things like my jewellery and perfume. I think they think it doesn't matter because they're little things, but it matters.



It matters more than the big things.

Exactly. But I don't think anyone's gonna walk out with a sewing machine and a laptop!

What do you do in your room? How much time do you spend in here doing stuff?

Well, usually it gets quite messy so I do most of my work outside (the room). Yeah, I do quite a lot of sewing in here and I do a lot of drawing and stuff and I sleep and read... I relax in here. But I probably don't spend most of my time here because I can't get Internet connection in here, which is quite important.

That's true. I use the Internet so much in my room it's terrible. Part of my relaxing thing is going on Internet.

Me too. I watch Ugly Betty - I don't know if you can say that, I think it might be illegal.

What about your collages, do you make them gradually or just...

With that, it wasn't meant to be a collage at first. At first I just wanted to fill it up, so I just cut up magazine photos and stuff, and just blocked everything on. Then slowly I put all the clutter from my desk that I didn't want to throw away on it, and eventually it ended up looking quite nice. So now I just pin everything on

top of everything. I'm sure when I start to undo it I'll find lots of hidden stuff behind.

Literally every single teenager I know has a collage in their room, but your one is the most interesting I've seen... You look at it and you can tell who your life-long friends are. It also tells the story of your life in a way.

Yeah, it sort of goes in steps of my life. There are a lot of childhood photos. Yeah, it's true about the friendships, but there are some people up there I'm not really friends with but I like to have memories of being with them. I have quite a lot of pictures like that up there.

I have also stuck pins in a couple of people's faces. (Thea laughs) But that wasn't meant maliciously or anything. I just was angry. I didn't want them to have a pin in their face!





apartamento - Stella Sabin

You have lots of posters, do you have idols?
I don't really have idols. There are people who I admire, like...my mum? The main reason I've got them up is that they just look good. That one (of Kitchener) was free in *The Guardian*! I think it's quite cool how he's always pointing at me when I'm on my bed.

I don't know many people who'd put that up in their room, I'd be to scared to.
Oh no, I really like it! Also, 'cause I have the big baseball hand, pointing at the same time, (that says) Go Stella! (laughs).

What about your dog?
I've always had that dog, in every room I've had I've had that dog.

I doesn't seem like it was placed there, it just is. You can't imagine it not being there.

Exactly. I just love it. My mum's made quite a lot of dogs. I used to have a littler dog, but my mum sold that one, I think. The dog hasn't got a name. It's like the Audrey Hepburn cat in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, its just dog!

Do you let your brothers in your room?

I don't like having my brothers in my room... My brother Larry, who's 7, comes in sometimes, he likes to mess it up. Frank who's 13 doesn't like coming in my room. It's too scary, it's a girls room! His room stinks.

You have an enormous wardrobe.

Yeah, although it gets too crowded. I don't want to throw away clothes, because I've decided that I'm gonna keep my clothes forever. I've got a lot of my mum's clothes actually, and that's kind of what made me not want to throw away my clothes. Obviously I'm not going to keep them if I have children, but I dunno, I'd want to!

Well, I think about that sometimes.
Me too. I'd want to vacuum press everything and give to my mum to look after till later!

What about all your teddies on your shelf?
Have they always been up there, or have they been banished?

Now I don't know what to do with them because I don't want to put them up there because I do like them, but I also feel really immature and I kind of want to get rid of them.

It's a feature of every 14-15 year olds' room, well maybe not so much boys' rooms, but every 14-15 year old girl has teddies like, hidden!
Yeah, it's funny. It's that stage were you really don't want to get rid of them still because they're like your little cling on to childhood things... but you don't want them in your room! I don't know what to do, because occasionally

I like having them there. I don't want to throw away all my Beanie Babies. I had a massive Beanie Baby collection. I had about 30. I've cut it down to about 15. My favourite one was a little bat, she was called Batty. And she was pink, and I was gonna bring her into school and show her off, and then I lost her on the way to school, and I spent the whole morning with my dad, just running back and forth like in tears, going, "Where's Batttttyyy?"...



Your jewelery is also very intriguing, I like the way

you've hung it up to decorate your wall. It's also because I used to make, like, a real mess of my jewelery because I had, like, a jewelery box and it'd all get tangled. It's quite a lot more practical like that.

If you had to choose between the perfume and the jewelery or the teddies, which would it be?

You know, I might have to keep the teddies.

Really?

It's just could never throw them away, not yet anyway.

apartamento - Stella Sabin