

OUR POP-UP HOME
Taxidermist Hannah and her partner Blaine, a musician, are temporary 'guardians' of an old industrial building in London. 'Knowing that our stay here won't last doesn't stop us from investing in it and filling it with things we love,' she says.
● **EKTORP** 2-seat sofa, lingbo colour [192-575-14] €xx

Nurture your curiosity

Photography Mel Yates Styling Katie Phillips Words Andrea Hunt

'The living room is the place I most enjoy, combining my taxidermy pieces with art works, books, photos and furniture we've curated'

LOVE ECLECTIC DISPLAY

The couple's home showcases their individual sense of style. 'It's like a treasure nest of curiosities,' says Hannah. A mix of open shelving, glass cabinets and bell jars helps to store, protect and display their most beloved items. • **KALLAX** shelving unit 147x147cm, high-gloss white [203-0574-50] Cxx





CHOOSE TO CO-LIVE

'Not everyone understands property guardianship,' says Hannah. 'My dad's still confused!' A year and a half ago, she and Blaine signed up to act as custodians – along with six other members – of a disused industrial building in Clerkenwell. In exchange for deterring squatters, they benefit from low-cost accommodation, as long as they're happy sharing kitchen and bathroom facilities, and move out as soon as the building is ready for redevelopment by its owners. Putting down roots isn't an option. But for Hannah, the alternative living arrangement has valuable pay-offs. 'It's been a transformative experience,' she says. 'The housing crisis in this city is killing creativity. People can't afford to live and work anywhere near the centre.' Originally a tram shed, then a collection of shop units, the building in its current incarnation is a vibrant creative hub. 'We live in the old shop units, I have my studio in the shared internal courtyard and Blaine and his band have a recording space in the basement,' says Hannah. 'There's rarely a lonely moment, which is important to me as taxidermy can be a solitary existence. Our fellow guardians include a photographer, a singer, an artist, and an astrologer. We're a mixed bag, and that's part of the fun. Recently we organised a special evening, collaborating to present works from myself and six other guardians – a total celebration of the creative guardian community we're part of.'

WORK UNCONVENTIONALLY

'People are curious when they find out I'm a taxidermist. For me, it's about appreciating nature in a different way. It inhabits the area between interiors and art, natural history and curiosity. As a child I was fascinated by crab skeletons on the beach and museum dioramas. I went into fine arts, then four years ago my interest in taxidermy was rekindled. I took a few short courses, became a member of the Guild of Taxidermists and began sharing my work on Instagram. It's a delicate balance making ends meet, so I work part-time in a bar. But things have taken off in the past year, thanks partly to the space here, which frees me to work on bigger projects. In the day, I work on my ethically sourced animals. People love popping by to see what I'm up to. Once the sun goes down, I relocate to our living room to work on finer details while I watch TV. It's a long day, but a fulfilling one.'

GO WITH THE FLAW

'Fine art training teaches you to appreciate the beauty in imperfections, to see them in a different context,' says Hannah. It's an approach she takes in her work, and it's one she and Blaine have taken in their home too. 'When we moved in, everything was bare, stripped back. But we had this huge space, big windows and the freedom to put our own stamp on it. We did everything ourselves. Moving was a big job. We have a 12-foot long dining table that's far too big for the space! Most people would live more lightly. But they're our things and we love them. This is our first home together, and collaborating on creating it makes it an especially magical space for me. It isn't perfect – it's a bit rough round the edges – and that's part of what makes it interesting.'



COSY UP THE BEDROOM

Hannah's top tips for making a bare room feel like home? 'A rug is one of my staples for transforming a space. I also like to add crisp bed linen in nice floral patterns, throws, lots of lighting, unique plants and cushions.' ● **HASSLEKLOCKA** quilt cover, white/pink [303-902-86] €xx

'The large studio space has glorious natural light flooding in through the roof, and extra lamps so I can keep working once dusk hits'

MY UNIQUE WORKSPACE

In the communal space, Hannah uses a piano and plants to screen off her area. 'My work requires lots of tools, so good storage is also essential,' she says. 'And a swivel chair means I can comfortably access tools without interrupting my work.' • **BAROMETER** work lamp, brass colour [003-580-37] €xx

GET TOGETHER

'It's lovely to gather with fellow guardians when our different schedules allow,' says Hannah. It's a collective effort, with everyone pooling their tables and seating for a relaxed, mix-and-match set-up.

● **RÅSKOG** stool, black [603-519-00] €xx

'It's good to be part of a community of like-minded people and to have the shared space. It's always buzzing'

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