



Bianchi is a sharp dresser as well as a talented designer

LIVING *the* DREAM

Dulwich resident and award-winning interior designer Matteo Bianchi on why his new studio in Peckham fits the bill perfectly

Words MADELEINE HOWELL



Bianchi's designs show how residential and commercial projects are crossing over

Matteo Bianchi's Peckham studio on Brayards Lane is a fresh, modern working space, which he describes as the 'perfect place to be'. According to Bianchi, who moved from Dalston to Dulwich five years ago, the area is changing fast. 'We've found ourselves in the right place at the right time,' he smiles.

Despite completing projects internationally and across London, from Clerkenwell to Chelsea, he's happiest in south east London. 'I'm really proud to be in this area and I want this part of London to have what it deserves, design-wise,' he says. 'I'd love to design something iconic locally one day, a restaurant or an office perhaps.'

Bianchi is not afraid to work on both residential and commercial projects, and suggests that the boundaries between the two spheres are blurring. 'The two worlds are getting closer and closer,' he says. 'Restaurants are cosier now, and are often made to feel like a family kitchen. Likewise, whether you're designing a house for a family, a couple or a single person, you might think about evoking a boutique hotel. There's a crossover.'

For the millennial generation, whose work/life boundaries are becoming less and less distinct, Bianchi's office spaces are something to aspire to. One of his commercial projects, an independent estate agency, was awarded the 2015 UK Best Office Interior at the International



His lighting designs, in particular, catch the eye

Property Awards, and the canvas of cool greys and concrete with sheepskin stools against an added punch of natural greenery is full of personality.

Bianchi himself grew up in Venice, and was drawn to London to work in advertising. He soon enrolled at the Chelsea College of Art and Design, and never looked back. Nowadays, with awards and a distinctive style under his belt, he is honoured to return as a guest lecturer. Given his signature bold, stylish look, the success of the studio isn't surprising. 'In everything we do, we try to be chic and refined,' he explains. 'It's not too over-the-top, but it's also original. There's always some quirkiness and playfulness, something that you wouldn't expect, but it's also serene. It's an extreme mix, but it's what I like and it's why we stand out.'

At the same time, Bianchi is 'old fashioned' and draws everything by hand at the table first. His own Baffo (that's whisker in Italian) pendant lighting hangs overhead and a couple of his own 'muffin pouffes' are also scattered around – playful, luxurious seats with hidden storage that have caused quite a stir in the design world. 'This is my dream studio,' he smiles. 'During the day we can get the most out of the light, and the front window showcases our own products. It's the equivalent of a chef opening a restaurant – it's the ultimate expression of your own design philosophy.'

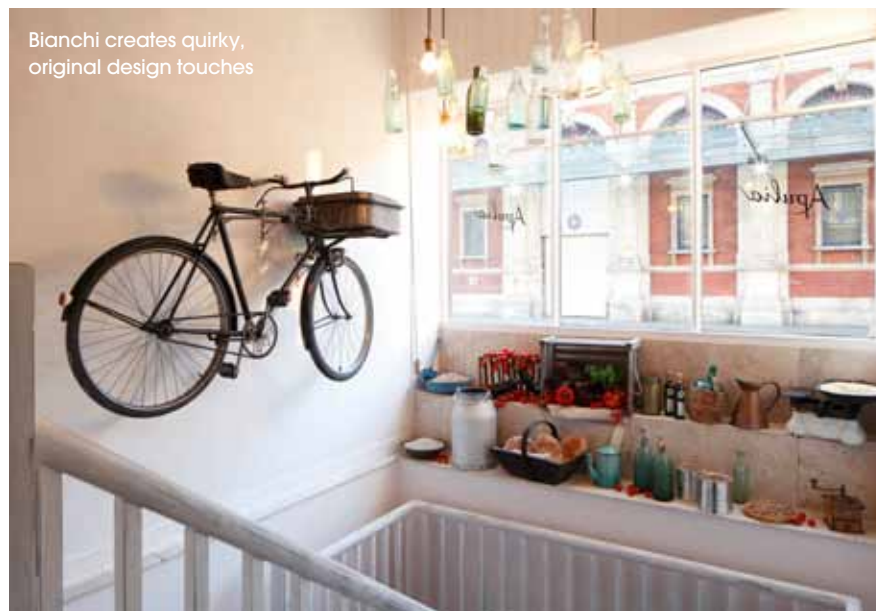
His Acorn lights, like the Baffo pendants, are unusual yet functional. 'It's made of concrete and glass, which contrast together to create a solid, elegant appearance inspired by the shape of acorns.'



Bianchi's own home in nearby Dulwich Gardens bears the unmistakable hallmarks of his other projects. 'I had a brief from my wife,' he laughs. 'I treated it as a project in itself. It was a dated, two bedroom garden flat. The only thing we kept was the original Victorian fireplace, which we set against Venetian stucco.' Bianchi is not afraid of dark colours, and even in his garden, he opted for charcoal-coloured decking set against lush leafy green plants and pillar-box red garden chairs.

For Bianchi, it's also of crucial importance to get children's bedrooms right. 'We were lucky enough to have a baby and we wanted the nursery to have personality. Surroundings at home are important – my son is always looking around at the wallpaper. The feature wall is a chalk board, so as he gets older he can draw on it.' As Matteo Bianchi Studio grows, too, we predict exciting times ahead.

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Bianchi creates quirky, original design touches