



Battersea's Ryan Barrett is  
a man of many talents

# MODEL GENTLEMAN

*Versace model, photographer and talented craftsman: Battersea resident Ryan Barrett is making waves in more than one creative sphere*

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Barrett is happiest when at the wheel



He loves to design textiles and pottery

**F**rom Milan to New York, Ryan Barrett has modelled for the likes of Dolce & Gabbana, Vivienne Westwood and Versace since he was 18. He's a true fashion week veteran blessed with the most chiselled of cheekbones, and has called Battersea's Queenstown Road home for the last ten years.

'Donatella is great fun. She's a good laugh,' he reveals, chuckling over a steak baguette at The Ship. But we're not just here to talk about his glittering modelling career. Quite the creative, Barrett has always used his experiences in the spotlight to feed

*Barrett has used his experiences in the spotlight to feed his other creative pursuits*

his other endeavours and pursuits – he's happiest behind the pottery wheel, and as confident behind the lens as in front of it. His own photography has featured in *Wonderland*, *Men's Health* and *Rollacoaster* magazines.

'Modelling gave me a free education in photography,' he explains. 'I generally shoot other men so much better because I understand the poses. I've been lucky enough to meet so many amazing photographers, like Bruce Weber.'

The plan was never to achieve worldwide fame as a supermodel: Barrett loved to paint and sew when he was growing up, and studied Fine Art and

Textiles, receiving a First Class degree from Goldsmith's University. Now, he's come full circle. His fashion textiles business, Vooprint, which he co-founded three years ago with designer Peter Westcott, is the world's first exclusively online design studio. The pair are disrupting the textiles industry in the same way that Net-A-Porter's Carmen Busquets transformed the way fashionistas like to shop – and all from their whirring Thameside studio at Battersea Reach.

'The textiles industry is quite backwards,' he tells me. 'Clients have been used to fabric merchants coming to them for years, so this is really innovative. Each one of our prints is a copyrighted piece of art. It's a platform, just like Asos or Mr Porter.' Their client list is growing, with brands from Calvin Klein to Zara quick to sign up.

'It was a challenge to get buyers to switch over to buying online,' Barrett admits. 'It was prehistoric compared to other industries. Buyers were so used to seeing swatches in front of them rather than going online – but there are only so many swatches you can carry around.'



Barrett is just as happy  
behind the lens as in front



Lucy Rie and Barbara  
Hepworth inspire his designs



The site has developed into a 'little monster' says Barrett, and boasts 20,000 unique prints in its vast, trend-led library at any given time. The designers, headed up by design director Lisa Franks, are kept busy keeping up with fashion blogs and the catwalks, and often head to art galleries for inspiration.

Barrett enjoys his work, I suggest. 'It's a great industry,' he reflects. 'It's a constant source of inspiration keeping up with the trends.'

More recently, another of Barrett's 'serious hobbies' (he's very modest) is gathering pace. Despite a glamorous working life, he says he is happiest hiding himself away in his Granny's shed, working on his earthy ceramic pots and sculptures. 'I was quite frustrated just doing modelling, because you can't be creative yourself,' he says. 'At 30, I'm getting to the age where I don't want to do every fashion week. It's fast paced, but you do meet a lot of people, and you get to travel.'

'I'm very hands on – I used to paint, sew and knit – so pottery is a progression of that. Barbara Hepworth is a real inspiration, as is Lucy Rie. I'm in

love with Japan. There are some amazing potters over there. I went to Beizen recently, where they wood fire the ceramics for 14 days straight. Someone has to put wood in 24/7. It's an incredible process.' As with modelling, photography and print design, composition is a key element, and the ceramics themselves are earthy and striking. Barrett describes the process as intensely meditative, and as a powerful antidote to the stresses of everyday life. How would he describe the finished pieces? 'They're very textured,' he explains. 'I use a process called raku, which is also Japanese. It's a specialised process. You fire it outdoors in a gas-fired kiln and drop it into an oxidiser to oxidise the clay, which then crackles and reacts to give an unusual, organic effect to the glaze, which is really beautiful.' We say watch this space...

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It all began with a love of  
painting, sewing and knitting

