

URBAN LUXE

Tara Bernerd (far right) created elegant yet edgy interiors for her open-plan London apartment (right)



art on the walls. The atmosphere is purposeful, but the “cocooned areas” with sofas invite you to kick back. This mix gives you a clue to the woman. She is together, but warm and amusing.

The 46-year old cites as her key influences her parents (her father is the property tycoon Elliott Bernerd), the French design guru Philippe Starck (with whom she worked) and Margaret Thatcher. The latter inspired Bernerd with the belief that anything was possible, leading her to leave school at 16, a decision that has paid off. Her current projects include One Park Drive, the Herzog & de Meuron apartment block in Canary Wharf, and the restoration of the Russell Hotel in Bloomsbury, now called the Principal.

Images in her new book, *Tara Bernerd: Place*, show how the Russell Hotel will be transformed when she's finished with it. The once forlorn hotel will feature a refreshing mix of grand cornicing, pale stone, wood, exotic ikat fabric and Chinese porcelain, showcasing her skill at creating interiors that have a distinct English swagger, but don't exclude the outside world.

The book, as well as being the essential primer for a luxe makeover, is as cheering as the woman herself. “I feel the world owes me nothing. I'm lucky to have a place in it,” she says brightly. “I was brought up to think that you had to make an effort and give something.”

It's Thatcherite, but in a good way.

Lady of the manors

A new book shows why Tara Bernerd is a favourite of hoteliers and developers, says Anne Ashworth

THE TARA BERNERD aesthetic, otherwise known as one of the most desirable looks of now, is the diametric opposite of shabby chic. A flat or a hotel created by this interior architect is as confident as her handwriting. In a Bernerd habitat, of which her own riverside flat in London is the perfect example, dark wood combines with gleaming bronze in a style that she describes as “smoky, sexy and handsome”, neither masculine nor feminine, just elegantly androgynous. Glimpse it and you will want to live that way – which is why she's the designer people hire when they want urban luxe, with a bit of edge.

Even a chintzophile could be reformed at the sight of Bernerd's sleek spaces with big

We're so over marble

IN FULHAM, BATHROOMS have metro tiles. In Belgravia, they have marble – on the floors, on the walls and sometimes on the ceiling. Often there is so much marble in the bathrooms of a new-build apartment that you could believe that half of Italy's supply of this metamorphic rock had been used.

The results may be reassuringly expensive, but relaxing in a bath surrounded by crema marfil, a beige Spanish marble, must feel like drowning

in a vat of Ambrosia creamed rice. For this reason, households with taste are asking their designers to limit the amount and the types of marble they select. Less is more, but with attention to such details as the alignment of veins.

The brothers Ben and Nick Wilson, the bosses of the developer Residence One, masterminded the restoration of 70 Chester Square, London SW1, a grade II listed townhouse built in 1835, and

launched on the market for £24.95 million through Savills Private Office (savills.co.uk).

The decor is grand, but as quietly elegant as the stone staircase that rises from the ground floor to the drawing room and the bedroom suites. The Wilsons ordered metamorphic restraint, with the result that the marble baths look monumental, not monstrous. Was crema marfil a “no” in this project? I think you know the answer. **AA**