

STYLE INTERNATIONAL

After travelling the world, Arja Suddens settled in London, bringing with her an eclectic and unique furniture collection

WORDS AND STYLING VICTORIA METCALF PHOTOGRAPHY LOGAN MACDOUGALL POPE



AT HOME
Arja sits on the Heal's sofa in the living room of her Wimbledon cottage



LIVING ROOM
The open-plan area is perfect for Arja's collection of furniture, including her beloved Art Deco teak sideboard, which she bought in Paris. The coffee table and lacquered bucket chairs came from her previous home

HOME PROFILE

THE OWNER Arja Suddens, 66, a former fashion designer and stylist, lives here with her two French spaniels

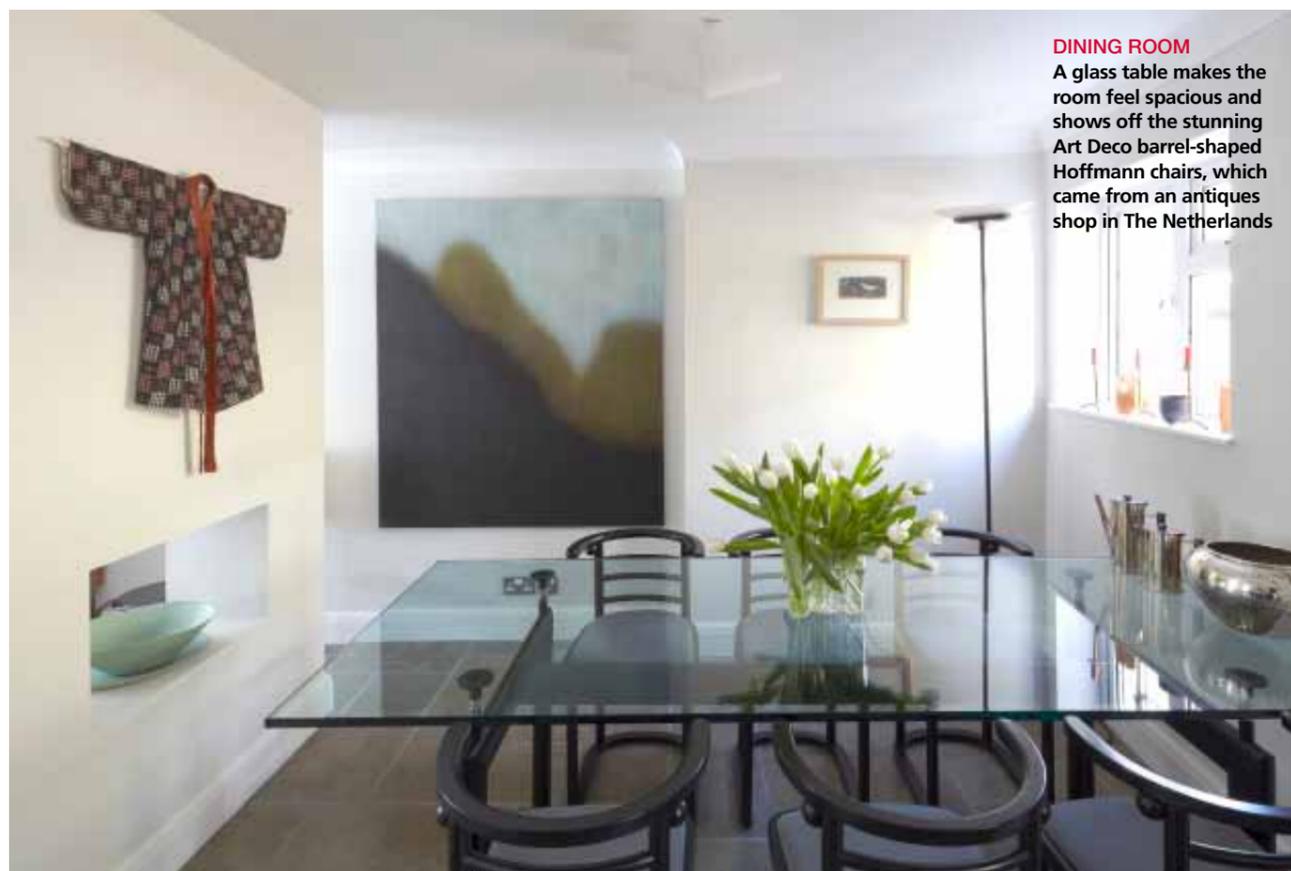
THE PROPERTY A two-bedroom Victorian cottage, built in 1890, in Wimbledon Village, southwest London

PRICE £780,000

MONEY SPENT £5,000

WHAT IT'S WORTH NOW £820,000

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DINING ROOM
A glass table makes the room feel spacious and shows off the stunning Art Deco barrel-shaped Hoffmann chairs, which came from an antiques shop in The Netherlands



LANDING
Arja has styled the space beautifully with her Marcel Breuer Wassily chair, a woven textile from a trip to China and a geometric pendant light; for a similar light try Blue Sun Tree. Favourite pieces of art adorn the walls

‘I like living with neutral walls as a contrast to my colourful furniture – it’s more restful to have a pale shade on the wall,’ SAYS ARJA

After a particularly long, cold winter in Provence, where she had been living on and off for 23 years, Arja Suddens decided it was time to move on. ‘My house was in the middle of an olive grove, away from the village, and I felt quite isolated,’ she recalls. A friend suggested she look for a property in London’s Wimbledon Village. ‘My daughter and her husband live in the area and the common seemed an ideal spot to walk my dogs,’ she says.

Contemporary and open-plan inside, the Victorian property they found also had plenty of period charm. The previous owners had knocked two small terraced cottages together and opened out the ground floor. They had installed a compact kitchen with room for a dining table and at the front of the house there was a spacious living area with limestone tile floors. Upstairs the master bedroom had been turned into a large bathroom and there were two small bedrooms, one with a walk-in wardrobe. ‘I felt very lucky to find it; apart from the wall colour, it was all to my taste,’ says Arja. Not that she’s a stranger to building work – the designer has moved 14 times in the past 30 years and renovated each house in turn.

Every room in the Wimbledon cottage had been painted a different colour. The bathroom was lilac and the bedrooms were yellow, but Arja wanted one shade throughout. ‘I like living with neutral walls as a contrast to my colourful furniture – it’s more restful to have a pale shade on the wall,’ she explains. Arja mixed two paint colours together to create a soft grey, while outside the woodwork became a warm olive green. Through her work as a fashion designer,



TREASURED PIECES
A horse statue, found in a brocante in Alsace, sits on a Chinese wooden drinks cabinet, which came from an antiques shop in Antwerp

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KITCHEN AND DINING ROOM
The open-plan design is ideal for entertaining and there's also enough space for a wine cooler



BATHROOM
A stunning bath, with black marble surround, is the focal point of the large room. The print is by Mark Rothko



MASTER BEDROOM
Arja has kept the scheme simple with pale walls. The side table came from an antiques shop in Paris



BEDLINEN
A pretty white cotton bedspread, a gift from her daughters who bought it in India, adds delicate pattern

'If I love something, I'll always love it. I would rather change what's around my furniture than throw anything out,' SAYS ARJA



SHOWER AND BASIN
Slate tiles in the shower and above the sink introduce texture. The cream woven basket bin is from Habitat

Arja has travelled widely and lived in many countries, collecting furniture from as far afield as Japan, Kazakhstan and the Philippines and, closer to home, France and Germany. More recently, while working for charity Manchester Aid to Kosovo, in Pristina, Arja found the antique floor runner for her living room. 'If I love something, I'll always love it – I won't get fed up with it. I would rather change what's around my furniture than throw anything out. I prefer minimalist styles such as Art Deco but with all my pieces squeezed in the cottage it doesn't look very minimalist!' she laughs.

Using a reputable shipping company was crucial to making sure everything arrived from France in good condition. 'A top-quality firm is expensive but a worthwhile investment. If something gets damaged you might get your money back from the insurers but you'll never get that treasured piece back.'

In each room stylish displays of unusual objects add character and personality. At the top of the stairs a blue striped ceramic bowl sits next to a giant photography book and a kimono hangs on the wall in her dining room. And Arja's Finnish heritage shows through her love of Iittala vases and geometric pendant lights. Even with all her belongings, the cottage feels spacious, thanks to the limited colour palette. Extra-large limestone tiles appear to lengthen the downstairs floor space and the glass dining table, which shows the floor underneath, also helps make it feel airy.

'I love being able to shut the world out as I walk into the front garden and close the gate behind me, but I can also enjoy the village atmosphere that's right on my doorstep,' says Arja. 📖

FOR STORE DETAILS SEE 'WHERE TO BUY' PAGE