

The Angel Resident
April 2015
Circulation:10,303

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CATCHING FIRE

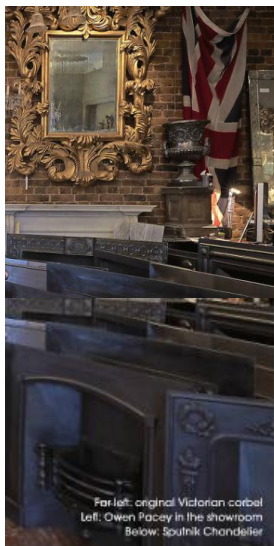
Renaissance London has quite a story as it prepares for the next chapter



Bottom row, left to right: part of the lighting collection, original Georgian marble, original Victorian corbel

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homes

It was two decades ago that an unfortunate incident changed Owen Pacey's business. 'I'd been involved in an accident, which resulted in a detached retina and a trip to Moorfields Eye Hospital,' he recalls. 'Shoreditch was very different in 1995 and it was a pretty rundown area, a no man's land really. But when I came out I noticed this derelict old pub. I'd been looking for new premises to really expand and it was perfect, space for my shop downstairs and a flat for me upstairs. The rest is history.'

The site became home to Renaissance London, Owen's company that offers original and reproduction fireplaces and made to order grills to fit your chosen fireplace, together with complete restoration and fitting. With pieces sourced from all over Europe, Renaissance London has built a unique reputation as one of the foremost experts in antique fireplaces and fine architectural pieces in this area.

A company born out of a passion – 'I love the history of pieces and properties and soon I had acquired a collection of original period fireplaces from all over Europe' – Owen has worked with a host of high profile clients, from One Hyde Park and Shoreditch House, through to pieces for Gilbert & George and Georgia May Jagger. However, none of these illustrious names take the mantle as his favourite project. 'That was for Mert (Alan) and Marcus (Piggott), the two fashion photographers,' he says. 'They wanted to recreate an entirely authentic French interior, so the project demanded a lot of homework on my behalf, researching the period and products. Then we agreed on some bespoke high end reproduction designs that were absolutely accurate. It was fascinating and amazing working with such artists.'

Owen won't reveal all his tricks of the trade when it comes to his reproduction process – although he does give an idea of the workmanship that goes into hand

carving every detail, nook and cranny – but it's clear what these fireplaces add to any given home. 'A fireplace really makes a statement by instantly adding drama, glamour and history to a room,' Owen explains. 'The right fireplace, appropriate for the property, has the ability to make a house more alluring to live in and more attractive to future buyers, and I've been told it can add up to 5% on [the value of] a property. The aesthetic value for choosing an antique or fine reproduction fireplace is immeasurable. It also makes sense to invest in a working fireplace as they can help save on heating bills too.'

Some 20 years since first stumbling across a building that was ideal for Owen's showroom, it has had a bit of a revamp to house a new lighting range.

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Visiting the showroom today is an eye-opening experience, a real feeling of stepping into an Aladdin's Cave. It's full of stunningly reproduced fireplaces

that sit nestled amongst striking lighting, mirrors and architectural salvage. The Sputnik Chandelier is hot right now and a sign of why Owen wanted to add to the showroom experience, but turning attentions to the future and it looks very dark indeed.

'I'm seeing a huge demand for black fireplaces, both originals and reproductions,' he says on the current 'in thing'. 'They make a striking statement in a room and appear artistic and stylish, plus they work in both contemporary and period interiors. Many black fireplaces were painted over and when stripped back you expose a striking black surround. Karen Millen asked me to put in a black fireplace a few years ago and since then I've really seen a growing trend.' Owen Pacey may have first come to this area due to a problem with one of his eyes, but two decades later he's seeing very clearly indeed as he leads the way in antique restoration.