

Food/Arts/Entertainment/Shopping/Property

ISSUE 405 / 22 NOVEMBER -  
6 DECEMBER 2019 / £3

   
@BathLifeMag

# Bath Life

THE BEST OF THE CITY

COMMUNITY  
SPIRIT  
IN OLDFIELD PARK

# RIOT OF COLOUR

**GLAD  
TIDINGS  
WE BLING**  
BATH'S FINEST  
JEWELLERY

**THAT'S  
A WRAP**  
THE ULTIMATE  
CHRISTMAS  
GIFT GUIDE



# WHITE LIGHT WHITE HEAT

Tucked behind The Royal Crescent – an enviable location by anyone’s standards – interior designer Sean Symington struck gold when he and his partner decamped to Bath from London earlier this year

*Words by Lydia Tewkesbury  
Photos by Crescent Photography*



Sean Symington’s home has the feeling of a gallery. Bright white walls accented by art – or home furnishings that really might as well be called art – sit comfortably next to one of the most impressive coffee table book selections we’ve come across in a while. It’s the sort of space where you feel yourself becoming gradually more chic just by being there and reading through Sean’s extensive library – travel and design feature heavily – as you sip on the perfectly poured flat white.

**How long have you lived in your house and what did it look like when you bought it?**

We moved to Bath from London in July. My partner received a position as an ophthalmologist in the Somerset area and we decided on Bath because of its culture, restaurants, architecture and easy transport

to London. Our house search was a bit challenging, because there weren’t many options we could both agree on. However, this house was actually the first one we saw. We kept coming back to it because we saw its potential. When we first got the house, it was damp and dreary with wall-to-wall carpeting and yellowed plaster walls. We immediately pulled all the carpet up, installed dehumidifiers and painted every surface white.

**What was your vision for the décor of the interior of the house?**

Our apartment in London was a maximalist’s dream. We had collected lots of objects and antiques from local auctions and markets. When we made the decision to move to Bath, I wanted to re-evaluate what was important to us and pair it back a bit. I was inspired by our travels to tropical destinations and really wanted to bring this sense of calm home. I wanted our home in Bath to feel uncontrived, relaxing and informal, while still incorporating only the belongings we truly love from our previous home in London.



*“Design is a process  
that never really ends”*

## RESIDENCE

### What are the common pitfalls that people fall into when redecorating?

I think people have this belief that decorating is a sort of paint-by-numbers exercise or there are right and wrong rules to follow when decorating your home. They match their cushions with the walls and buy a full matching suite for their bedroom. I am so against this soulless and repetitive look because I feel your home should be a reflection of you. Your experiences, your travels and the things you love should be reflected in your decor. My mantra is that anything can work in a room if you truly love it.

### In your opinion, which room should you start with when redecorating and why?

This is a hard question for me to answer because whenever I move into a new home, I immediately get to work redecorating every room simultaneously. I can't stop until each room is exactly how I envisioned it. I think if someone is considering redecorating, I would start with common areas like the sitting room as it really is a space for gathering, entertaining and relaxing. This can then set the tone for the rest of the house.

### Who or what are your inspirations when it comes to style and décor?

I have so many inspirations when it comes to my interior design style. Legendary designers such as David Hicks and Dorothy Draper are among my favourite people to

draw inspiration from. That being said, I also often pull inspiration from my travels. For example, my favourite item in the house is a large blue and white ginger jar that I purchased from a market in the South of France. It now sits on a plinth in the hall outside our bedroom. The colours of this piece dictated the wallpaper in the bathroom and the colour scheme of the bedroom. The same can be said for a collection of emerald green Vista Allegra crystal goblets and a set of Bordallo Pinheiro cabbage-ware that I purchased on a trip to Portugal. The green of these pieces is so vibrant and they tie the entire sitting room together.

### What local shops did you source your homeware and accessories from?

Places like India Jane and Oka are staples for reproduction antiques. I have many unique things, including printed lampshades and blue and white ceramic stools from Oka. Neptune is a fantastic source for everything from kitchens to furniture. When I have time, I often go for a latte and peruse the massive store on Walcot Street for inspiration.

### What are your favourite independent homeware shops in Bath?

Every day I drive by Anne Le Coz's shop on Lansdown Road and I am so inspired by the beautiful printed silk lampshades in the window. Similarly, Rossiter's of Bath always has a stunning display and they are always on trend. I love their use of bold prints and colour.



The living room is Sean's favourite for snuggling up with a blanket after a long day



Sean populates his home with favourite pieces found on his travels around the UK and abroad

# RESIDENCE

## Do you have a particular favourite room or is there any part of the house you are particularly proud of?

I love every room in our house. However, I guess if I had to choose, I would say that the sitting room is my favourite. It's where we spend most of our time in the evenings after long days at work. I light a candle or three, pour myself a glass of wine or a gin and tonic from the bar and watch TV under a warm blanket. The room is cosy and calm, which is what I need after a day of design.

## What was the most challenging room to design?

My favourite room, the sitting room, was also the most challenging to design. It is a strange, almost L-shaped room, which makes it hard to furnish. Thankfully a round library table that we had from London fit perfectly at the front of the room. I put a palm tree in a basket on top of it and surrounded it with my favourite books. It acts as almost a front hall table and makes use of an otherwise useless space.

## What do you want people to feel when they enter your home?

I want people to feel like they are on vacation. I wanted the house to feel tropical and relaxed. The goal is for people to come in, have a drink and unwind.

## What did you learn from designing your own home?

I learned that sometimes less is more. Our bedroom in London was very dark and moody and I am so much happier with our bedroom here in Bath. The room is paired back, bright and calming. I feel rested when I wake up and it honestly feels like I am on vacation every day.

## Whose house would you like to have a snoop around?

I would love to look around the late Tony Duquette's house in Los Angeles. He was an iconic set designer and the king of maximalism. His house would be a visual feast of objects and art. I often look through his book *More is More*, which sits on my table in the sitting room and I am in disbelief at the beauty he created in many realms of design.

## Does the interior of your home reflect your personality?

Yes, absolutely. All of the furnishings, objects and art were collected by us throughout our time in the UK and on our travels. My job as an interior designer has a major impact on our home, as I am always exposed to new fabrics and materials. I honestly want to reupholster our sofa or have new cushions made every month. Design is a process that never really ends.

## Finally, what's the nicest thing anyone has ever said about your home?

"This is so chic!" ■

For more: [www.seansymington.com](http://www.seansymington.com)

Got an amazing local home?  
Want it to feature in *Residence*?  
Contact [lydia.tewkesbury@mediaclash.co.uk](mailto:lydia.tewkesbury@mediaclash.co.uk)



*"My mantra is that anything can work in a room if you truly love it"*

Books make a room