

WITH THE EVENING STANDARD

# ES

magazine

September 2002

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DAY  
SPAS

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A mother's story

# VICTORIA'S SECRET

Cold Feet's femme fatale on money, marriage and stripping bare on stage



Below left: Heinrich Senft in the dining area. Below right: one of many dramatic, aerial views – the spacious, open-plan living area and kitchen seen from the mezzanine. Right: a central staircase in the living room soars into the double-height space; against it stands a superbly imperious Maria Callas



# He's eclectic

Double-height ceilings, a crow's nest bedroom and a spa in the basement... how one man's passions merge in an easy mix of industrial cool and domestic comfort

**Heinrich Senft makes no bones** about the fact he co-founded Moroccan tiles and antiques shop, Habibi, because of the travel opportunities. It means he can escape Britain's dreary winters by heading to North Africa. All in the name of research, of course. Well, that's one reason. Another is that German-born Senft had always wanted to install a 'hammam' (the Arabic spa) in the impressively spacious basement of his West London home. Yet despite hunting high and low, he was unable to find the right tiles. Then, two years ago, an antique-dealer friend introduced him to Nourredine Somati. 'He told me Fez is a centre for handmade tiles – zellij – which have been made there for thousands of years,' recalls Senft. 'I paid a visit and was really impressed – the tiles have a beautiful glow.'

Inspired by this, Senft went into business with Somati, opening Habibi a year ago. A cavern-like space in a former car garage, it's now filled with deliciously glossy ceramic tiles, as well as antique lamps, intricately carved wooden doors, and rugs. 'Our long-term plan is to stock Islamic goods in general,' says travel-mad Senft, making no attempt to disguise his ulterior motive. 'It means we'll go to other places. Lebanon, Tunisia.'

Converting the basement of Senft's house was no mean feat. In the Second World War it had been an air-raid shelter, beneath a Spitfire factory, and it was waterlogged and rat-infested when Senft first saw it. Now, it's a gorgeously tiled spa whose different elements offer him a self-pampering production line. 'Tradition dictates you have a sauna, then jump in a cold shower, then have a cold bath,' he explains. 'I rest afterwards for 15 minutes, wrapped in a jellaba, sipping mint tea.' With its sofa as wide as a bed, subdued lighting and Moroccan artefacts, Senft's spa is a self-contained haven.

The rest of the house, meanwhile, combines industrial →

WORDS BY DOMINIC LUTYENS PHOTOGRAPHS BY LUKE WHITE



Right: the spa (or hammam) in the basement, with its magnificent sunken bath lined with Moroccan tiles from Senft's shop, Habibi. Below right: the fire-lit, book-lined study

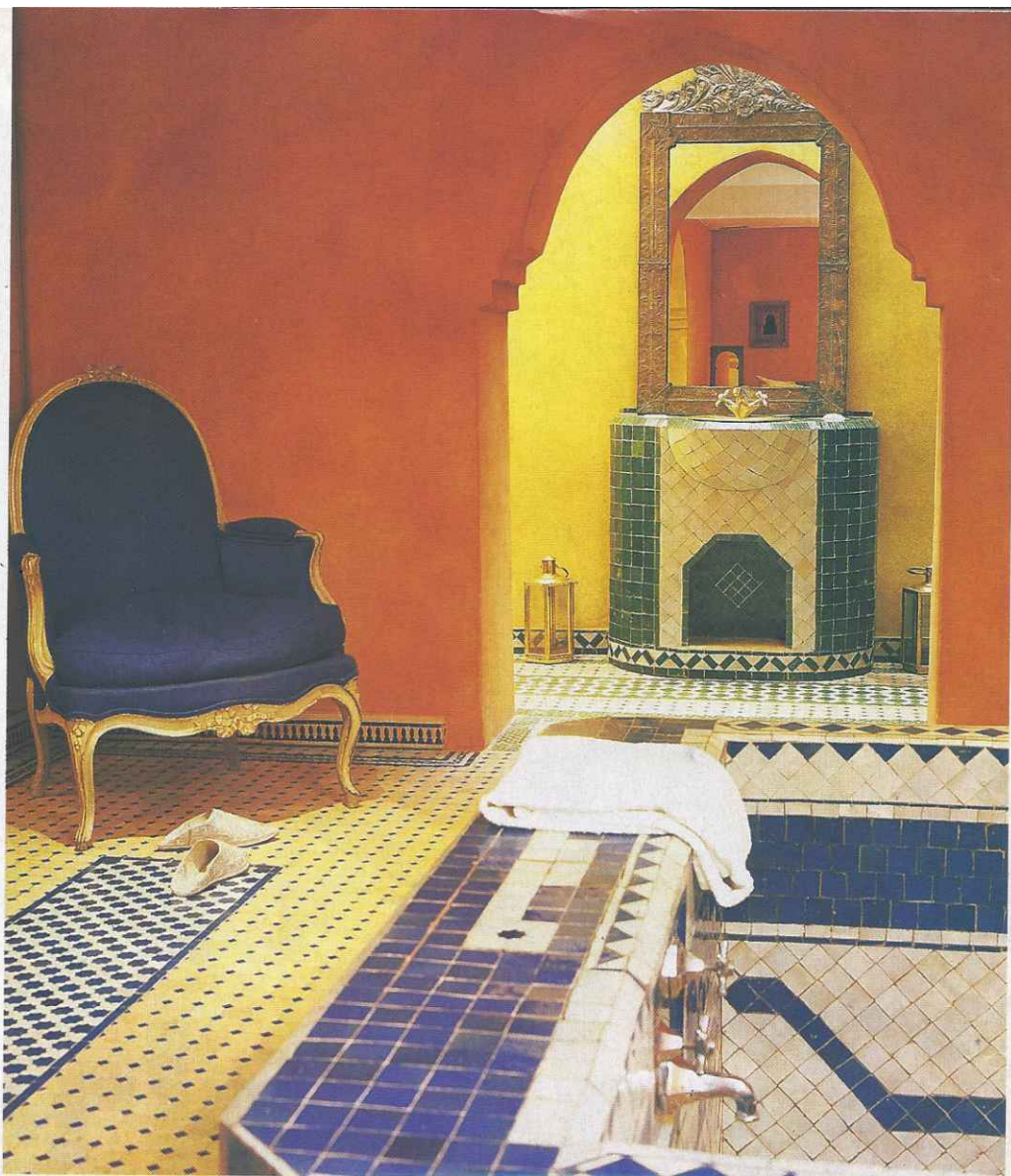
← elements, shabby-chic furniture from around the globe and a huge collection of 20th-century art. 'I don't have a set taste because I'm so rootless. I take things from all the different places I've lived and sling them together,' says Senft, who has also lived in the US, Italy and Switzerland.

Judging by the amount of work that went into his London home, it would appear he's settling down for good. The house was entirely gutted to provide a dramatic, double-height space with the two floors linked by a sweeping, theatrical staircase that ascends first to Senft's study and crow's-nest bedroom, then, via a gangplank landing and stairs, to an eyrie-like guest bedroom.

Supported only by a column and one wall, Senft's bedroom seems to be floating in space and light pours in from the multitude of skylights that punctuate the roof. No vertigo sufferer, Senft loves the dramatic perspectives these features afford. Ditto the complex interplay of jarring angles created, for example, by the contrast between the spiralling staircase and his study's trapezoid floor area.

The industrial elements are cleverly mixed with cosier pieces. The ground-floor surface is concrete mixed with resin and the front door is made of shiny, brushed steel. The furniture, however, is a comfortable mishmash of quirky market finds and pieces snapped up on his travels. Against the staircase stands a cardboard cutout of a superbly imperious Maria Callas which was bought in Brick Lane, and pop artist Robert Indiana's iconic Sixties image spelling out 'love' dominates Senft's bedroom. There are prints of paintings by Magritte, Toulouse-Lautrec and Marie Laurencin and fragments of Peruvian clothing made from vibrantly coloured feathers displayed in simple Perspex frames.

Meanwhile, in the kitchen, nothing could be more emblematic of Senft's lifestyle than the five wall clocks which once showed traders at the London Stock Exchange the time in New York, London, Paris, Hong Kong and Tokyo – perfect for an urban globetrotter's bolthole. ■ *Habibi, 1C Greyhound Road, NW10 (020 8960 9203; www.habibi-interiors.com). The shop is one of several interiors stores in Kensal Rise which will be hosting a show under the name Green House – to coincide with 100% Design, at Earls Court. Green House runs from 26 September to 6 October. For further information, call 020 8960 6060.*



### Heinrich Senft's top five shops

- **Alfie's Antiques Market**, 13 Church Street, NW8 (020 7723 6066). 'Furniture from the Twenties to the Seventies. Highly collectable Art Deco ceramics and posters. Groovy Sixties lighting.'
- **Bazaar**, 82 Golborne Road, W10 (020 8969 6262). 'A wonderful array of late 19th- and early 20th-century French provincial furniture.'
- **Crucial Trading**, The Plaza, 535 King's Road, SW10 (020 7376 7100). 'Beautiful floor coverings in a choice of 175 natural, allergen-free materials.'
- **Green & Stone**, 259 King's Road, SW3 (020 7352 0837). 'A veritable old curiosity shop.'
- **Retrouvius**, 2a Ravensworth Road, NW10 (020 8960 6060). 'A fascinating, highly original architectural salvage warehouse. Forget cast-iron baths, this stocks things such as tardis-like Edinburgh police boxes.'

## Home Help Domestic strife? Let ES's home column fix it

**Q** I'm moving house and my dream is to have a roaring fire. Have you any ideas where I can buy unusual fireplaces?

There is little to beat sitting by a fire on a cold winter's night with a glass of red wine. The following shops and suppliers all know how to achieve the right look and feel, whether you are

after something modern or traditional. **Lasso** St Michael's, Mark Street, EC2 (020 7749 9944; www.lassco.co.uk). This former large Victorian church is an architectural salvage specialist. **Talisman** The Old Brewery, Wyke, Gillingham, Dorset (01747 824 423; www.talisman-antiques.co.uk). You'll definitely find something unique here.

**The Fireplace Shop** 41A Newport, Lincoln (01522 544 160; www.fireplaceshop.co.uk). Each of its fireplaces is handcrafted. **Grate Expectations** 529 Garrett Lane, SW18 (020 8946 9157; www.grateexpectations.com). This fireplace specialist can make a fireplace to any size. It also offers a

full restoration service. **CVO Firevault** 36 Great Titchfield Street, W1 (020 7580 5333; www.cvofirevault.co.uk). Not cheap, but great contemporary fireplaces. Brought to you by Quintessentially, the lifestyle management club. For details, visit [www.quintessentially.com](http://www.quintessentially.com) or call 0800 0 156 998.



