

High

rise

**Living the mid-century
dream**

By Frances Ambler
Photography James
Balston

High-rise blocks are sometimes held up as symbols of the failed Modernist dream – a connotation only reinforced by the recent film adaptation of JG Ballard's *High Rise* novel. But the dream is alive and well for some lucky inhabitants. High-rise living at its most desirable can be seen in Frobisher Court, a nine storey, early 1960s build in Forest Hill, London, where space, community and some impressive, well-preserved architecture all coincide. Stopping to appreciate the original silk-screened tiles, the Formica-lined lift and wood and glass detailing in the communal areas means it takes me a while to get up to Luis Carrasqueiro's and Colin Bloomfield's flat.

My admiration only increases on entering. Greeted by a stunning view – the major selling point of altitude living – I can see over trees and rooftops to central London, to St Paul's Cathedral, and further on to the Wembley Stadium arch. Maximised by the large, steel framed window, that view is the focal point of the space as envisaged by the architects, Austin Vernon and Partners. As Luis puts it, "You can't argue with five metres of sky!"

The interior of the flat today

pays greater homage to this view than originally intended. The sliding door that divided the kitchen from the main living area has been removed, opening the space up, and meaning that even boiling the kettle comes with a vista. The master bedroom faces the same direction – from the bed you see the London Eye and Parliament – and on the other side of the flat, facing onto the landscaping of the development, is a second bedroom and bathroom. All are modest in size, but feel spacious thanks to the layout and abundance of light.

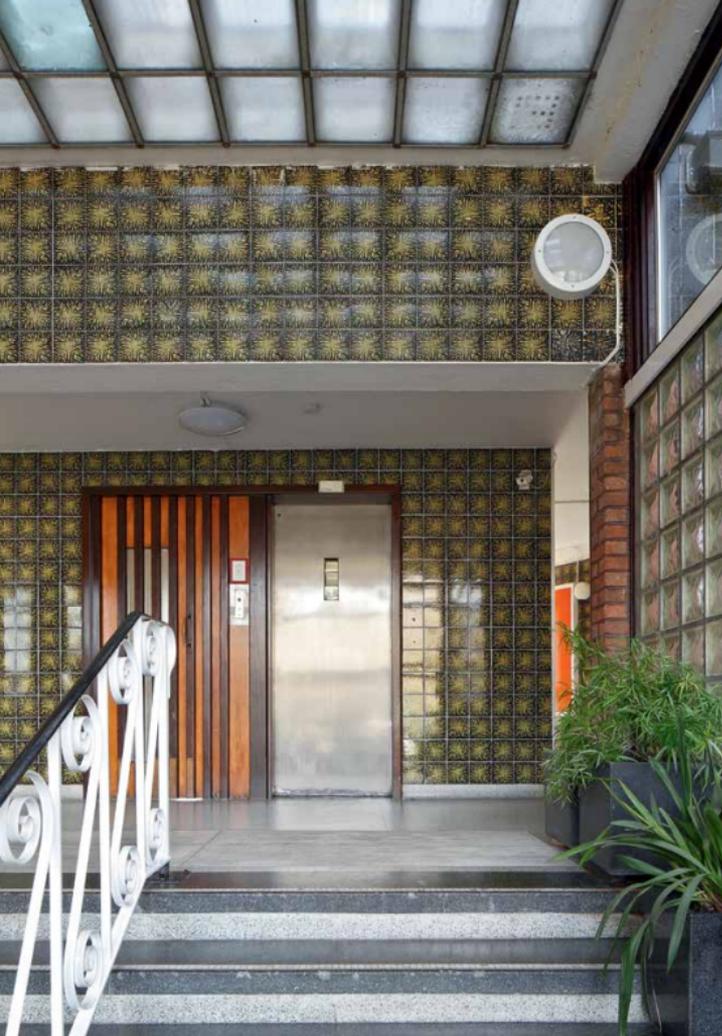
Luis, who runs a small charity, and Colin, a teacher of history and law, have lived here for just 18 months and in that time have truly made the flat their home. The couple have painted the walls a gorgeous grey that makes the colours of their furnishings 'pop', whether the blue of their dining room chairs or the yellow of their coffee table. Although the overall appearance is uncluttered, there are quirky details throughout, whether the solar system model, given to Luis as a former astronomy student, or the selection of postcards displayed on the shelves above their sideboard, frequently changing to reflect

their current interests.

The pair benefitted from the changes made by the flat's former inhabitants (who, incidentally, only moved a few floors up in search of slightly more space). It was they who installed secondary glazing, necessary to keep the flat insulated at this height, in a sympathetic manner that fits the original character. They also made the changes to the kitchen and – being chefs – fitted it out with the professional appliances that Luis, a keen cook himself, loves. The flat also benefits in equal amounts from what previous residents *haven't* done to it, meaning that beautiful details such as the tropical hardwood floor are still intact.

Luis is a firm believer in the importance of "seeing your history all around you", and the couple's global experiences feed into the décor of the flat. Luis's family fled to Portugal from war-torn Angola when he was young, and he says that, looking at his childhood photos, he's always struck by the 1950s and '60s architecture of his hometown, Cubal. Colin, meanwhile, grew up in Napier, New Zealand, a city known for its 1930s buildings. Although still mid-century inspired, the home they have created





Left: silk-screened tiles in the entrance foyer of Frobisher Court. Right: this hatch once opened directly into the flat's pantry, and allowed for the delivery of milk. With the kitchen renovation, the cupboard is now used for storage.



'I never thought I could live somewhere like this. It's a dream'