

THE WORLD OF INTERIORS

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Opposite: the dressing room is lined with artist photographs: Bacon, Picasso and, at the top of the stairs, Freud. Pieces of purple porphyry on the mantelpiece look contemporary, despite being ancient Egyptian. The staircase, by Metalworks London, is steel – Hawkins prizes the masculinity that this metal, used throughout, brings to the mix. This page, above left: like the marble-panelled bathroom by Spink & Son, the dealer's home is punctuated with glass panels – transparent counterparts to the floor's 'ley line' – which give sneak previews of adjacent rooms. The bath, taps and radiator are Drummonds. Above right: the bedroom wall is emblazoned with a drawing by Tarka Kings – pride of place above the bush-hammered hearth, on which sits a pre-contact Polynesian poulder in basalt

say, to exactingly high aesthetic standards. Her determination now makes absolute sense as we admire this bush-hammered hearthstone, that bespoke steel-edged shower screen and these window panes of new – but authentically wavy – glass.

Hawkins's need to do things properly was instilled in her by her father, noted dealer JB Hawkins. On meeting Emma's mother, artist Robyn Mayo, the British-born Sandhurst-trained officer gave up his commission to marry her and forge a new life in her native Australia, working once again in antiques. Hawkins senior inspired Emma's interest in collecting as a child, by gifting her curios. When she left school, she headed for the UK and apprenticeships in Scotland and London, finishing up at Koopman Rare Art, before opening her own shop at the age of 21, dealing in taxidermy and natural-history curiosities.

'Back then in the 1990s, these pieces provoked a strong reaction; people didn't appreciate that they had an ecological and social significance. But there were the special few clients who really got it,' she recalls. Just as she grew up with her father showing work at home, Emma's home now doubles as her Hawkins & Hawkins showroom, while she also curates regular collections for Rei Kawakubo's Dover Street Market. Hawkins remains discreet about her client list – though it does include the V&A and many artists. 'A lot of my clients already have most things, but they are curious people who come to me to find unique and unusual objects.'

The walls here are a gallery-like white, but that suggests a level of simplicity belying the careful thought that has gone into each space, from the textured plaster finish in the hallway, by Will Foster

Studios, to the painstaking blend of three other white paints in the gallery room. Against this soft-white backdrop, the ebony-black and dark-mahogany hues of the furniture are crisply defined. 'These dark tones bring warmth somehow, and make everything sing,' she explains. The furniture is a mixture of antique and contemporary and each piece is a worthy talking point – such as the Regency console by George Bullock, which was once owned by the Victorian prime minister William Gladstone. But one's attention is continually stolen away by the objets and artefacts that occupy each surface, thoughtfully grouped but never cluttered. Natural history is her first love: 'There's that element of curiosity and continuous learning, as well as an understanding of the fragility of life and a sense of loss. You are humbled into a realisation of nature's dominance,