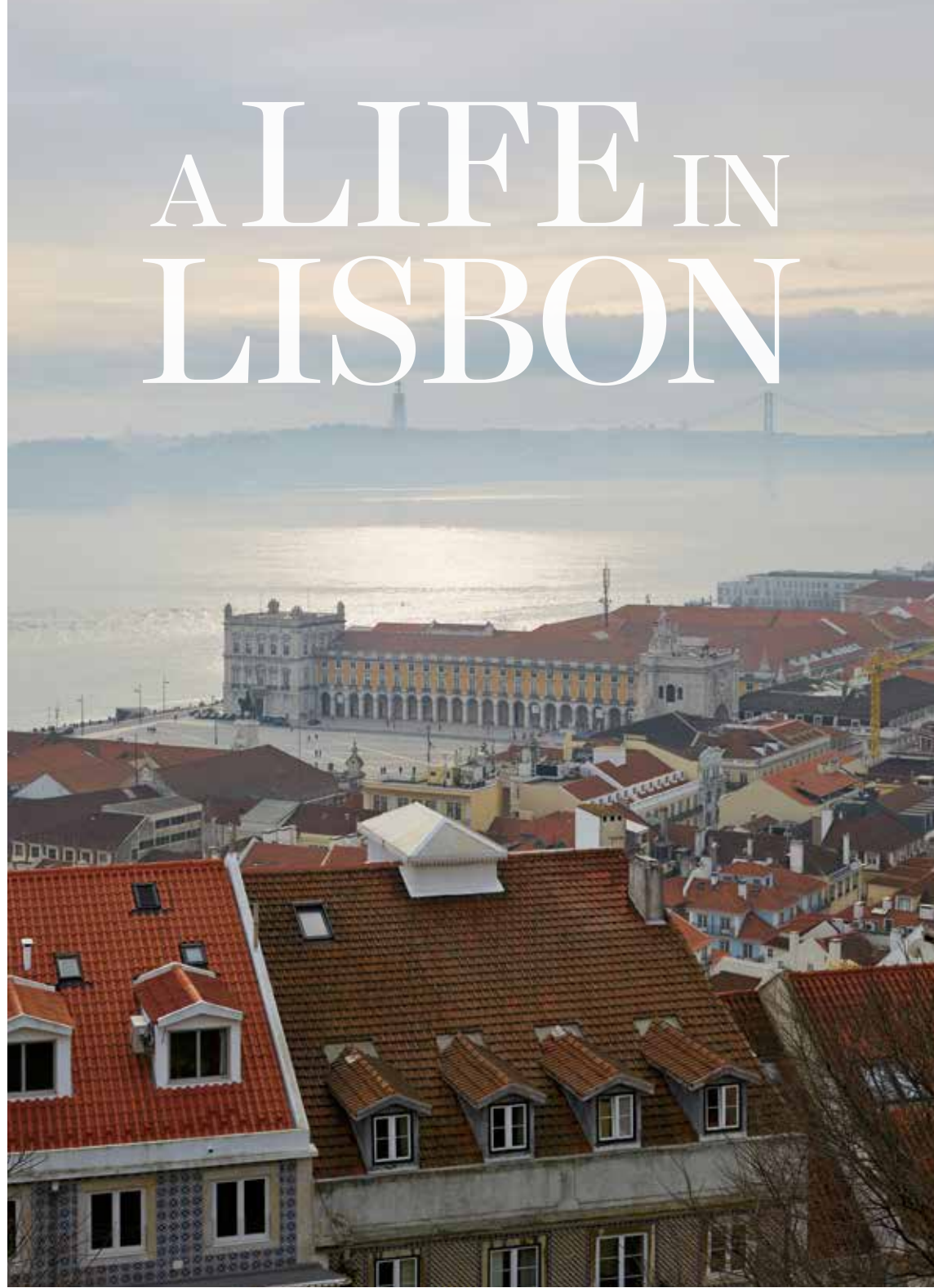


A LIFE IN LISBON



Creative consultant, fashion muse and party planner extraordinaire, Victoria Fernandez, crafted a home in the Portuguese capital where comfort and style quietly coexist.

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Opening pages: The view from a Lisbon apartment takes in the Tagus River. A nineteenth-century English lantern sets off a runner from *A Vida Portuguesa* in the entrance hall. Above: Set against walls painted in Farrow and Ball's Great White, a pair of Polish convex mirrors reflect light in the living room, where a horse-hair-covered English bench contrasts with antique French and English furnishings and a Persian rug.

I wanted the floor not to be a statement: that's why I put in a patchwork of carpets in the same way as the tiles. The tiles are all different through the apartment so I wanted to do the same with the textiles.”

—Victoria Fernandez





TASTEMAKERS WHO KNOW Victoria Fernandez well see her as someone who never follows fashion, but rather inspires it. “When I moved from London to Paris several years ago, I sold all my brightly colored clothes at auction at Christie’s, in what was referred to in the press as ‘the sale of the decade,’” says Fernandez of her legendary reputation for style. Since then, the peripatetic event organizer and design devotee wears only black as a counterpoint to her effervescent nature. “My spirit is colorful enough,” claims Fernandez, whose unique design sensibilities are evidenced in the residences she owns, notably her newest home in Lisbon, a two-bedroom apartment in an eighteenth-century building overlooking the Tagus River.

Known for her innate panache, Fernandez has influenced the work of high-profile designers, such as Missoni, Patrick Cox, Stella McCartney, and Tom Ford, and is often tapped by the *crème de la crème* of the art, design, and fashion worlds to host parties and events, including the 60th birthday bash of architect Zaha Hadid a few years before her unexpected death. “I’m very eclectic,” says the Columbian-born Fernandez, who has designed all of her own homes, as well as those of many of her friends. “But I’m also an art historian, so the sense of place is very important to me in a home.” As such, the interior decor she developed within the elegant two-story dwelling also extends a respectful nod to its rich historic context.

Situated in the Alfama district of Lisbon in the city’s historic center, the apartment occupies the *piano nobile* and first floor of what was once the large freestanding home of a noble family. Later converted into six separate apartments, the house was built in the Portuguese Pombaline style, named after Marquês de Pombal, a minister of King Joseph I who took charge of rebuilding Lisbon after a devastating earthquake and fire had destroyed many of its structures in 1755. The apartment brims with original character and natural light, both of which served as the starting points for Fernandez’s design. “It has very high ceilings and two wonderful balconies that overlook an amazing piazza,” she

“About my lifestyle:
I love to cook and I love to
improvise, I don’t like to
entertain very formally.”

—Victoria Fernandez

says. “Lisbon is a city with the most beautiful light in Europe.”

Wanting a change of scene from her flat in London that would be nearer than her home in Bogotá and more relaxed than her apartment in Paris, a place she had shared with her late husband, Andrew Furniwal, until he died in 1999, Fernandez looked for a year for a home in Lisbon, finally settling on the apartment she now occupies as her primary residence. (Her partner now is Brazilian photographer Army Machry.) Although the original blue and white Moorish-inspired tiles that distinguish the apartment

Previous spread: The living room features one of several expanses of original eighteenth-century Portuguese tiles. French porcelain lamps flank a nineteenth-century English sofa; a pair of chairs surround an ottoman topped with an embroidered Islamic cloth. An English Arts and Crafts mirror reflects light over a dining area defined with mismatched 1920s English chairs and a daybed topped with cushions covered in handwoven Romanian linen and hammam towels from a souk in Marrakech. Left: Around a massive stone fireplace in the bedroom, walls painted in Farrow and Ball’s Cornforth White complement eighteenth-century handmade Portuguese tiles framing the windows.



were heaped on the floor in broken shards “like pieces of a puzzle,” says Fernandez, she immediately knew she had found what she was looking for. “When I looked at the very big living room, which is one hundred square meters, I said to myself ‘I would like to be at home here and make it like the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles to reflect the light and views during the day and the light of a lot of candelabras at night.’” And with that thought in mind, she bought the apartment.

In the two years that followed, Fernandez worked with local artisans to restore the exquisite tile work to its original condition in every room and replace the worn floors throughout with whitewashed pine planks. With the shells of the spaces complete, she then refashioned their interiors with her own personal stamp. Most of the rooms were fitted out with furnishings and antiques she had collected on her travels over the years and had put in storage until the right setting appeared to her to put them back into use.

“They went to sleep for awhile,” she says with a smile.

Anchoring the living room are a nineteenth-century English sofa and pair of chairs topped with plump cushions she recovered with Moroccan hammam towels. “I like English chairs because they are the most comfortable. For me, the most important thing about a house is that it has to be a home, it has to be a sanctuary.” In the bedroom, which once served as the kitchen for the home and features a massive stone fireplace originally used for cooking, a nineteenth-century French bed brings an air romance, as does an antique French garden table.

Ultimately, it is Fernandez’s knack for artfully mixing diverse objects that gives the rooms their sense of soul. Pieces she’s gathered from all over the world—Italy, Sweden, England, France, Morocco—harmoniously come together to infuse the spaces with lively energy. “I like to surprise. My whole life has been about being mysterious.”

Among the elements that reflect this enigmatic side are a pair of convex Polish mirrors she found at the flea market at Clignancourt that set the Versailles-inspired tone in the living room, a sixteenth-century Italian chandelier in

“A house has to be lived in. It doesn’t have to be perfect. Places have to live, not to show off.”

—Victoria Fernandez

the bedroom, an amalgam of lamps from La Mamounia Hotel in Marrakech, which she bought at auction, and a glass globe given to her by her friend the Peruvian fashion photographer Mario Testino. Notably missing from the environs, however, are works of art. “I’m not an art collector, I’m a people collector,” says Fernandez.

While her Lisbon flat radiates with personality distinct from her other homes, a common thread that links her interiors, she says, are textiles. “I love textiles, always different textiles, according to the place and light,” says Fernandez, who turned the entire second bedroom into a dressing room that houses her collection of clothing. Here, she emphasized the Moorish intonations of the original setting with Persian carpets, upholstery fabric from India, and hand-embroidered cloths from Marrakech, all of which bring “good energy,” she explains. “It’s very embracing here, and quite magical.” ■

Previous spread: A sixteenth-century Italian chandelier adds a sense of grandeur to the bedroom, where eighteenth-century geometric Portuguese tiles set off a nineteenth-century French bed and garden table. A pouf covered in gold couture leather lends a note of cheeky glamour.



“I’ve always liked Portugal. It’s a quieter and more mysterious European country.”

—Victoria Fernandez