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# Another country

*The couple behind antiques business Jamb Limited loves stately homes and lives with a stuffed giraffe and crocodile – in Camberwell. **Caroline Kamp** pays a visit*

Photography by Simon Upton



**Animal magic:** Will Fisher and Charlotte Freemantle at home. It's both a passion and a profession to collect antiques – including taxidermy



I'm no sooner through the door of his Camberwell home than Will Fisher is holding up a set of enormous 19th century walrus tusks. "I'd been looking for a set of these for about three years," he says, marvelling at them and explaining what a rare find they are. His wife Charlotte Freemantle tells me that she expects them to lie around for months while he works out where to put them. "The thing about doing things the way Will likes to is that it takes five times longer," she smiles.

It rather neatly frames the dynamic of the couple behind Jamb Limited, on Pimlico Road. Will is an English country house-obsessed antiques dealer and a bit of a daydreamer. Charlotte, his business partner and wife, takes a more practical view of things, such as whether or not his acquisition of a 9ft-tall taxidermy giraffe head and neck might scare their young

children, Eliza and Monty.

Jamb sells antique and reproduction chimney pieces and lights which evoke the aesthetic of Robert Adam, William Kent and Sir John Soane. It's a look that is evident in the interior of their home. "The children hate it," Will says of the bare floorboards and walls, in a Paint Library shade called Slate. "And my mother keeps asking when we're going to carpet it." We are standing in the hallway, which is "a tribute to the Horniman Museum", where items mounted on the wall include a dog's head, inscribed 'Ragland, died 1st September 1920', and the spiky jaw of a gharial (a fish-eating crocodile). "Eliza told her friends she had a crocodile at home, but she forgot to mention it was stuffed," says Freemantle.

Their Georgian house is on a quiet residential street and is marked by a Victorian bay window stuck on the ▶



front; an "ugly duckling" addition which Will is very fond of, and one might say is his one concession to modernism. From the light switches to the furniture, there are few 21st century additions, although I did spot a dishwasher. Even the lights have filament bulbs which give off a subtle glow. All the lights in the house are antique, or reproductions which they

make and sell, often in a smaller scale than the original, and they are stunning. A new range is coming this autumn. On a grey day it might be quite gloomy in the basement kitchen, yet looking out the window, up the giant stone staircase (transplanted from a country pile) towards the spire of the church they were married in, it all feels incredibly romantic.

**Past triumphs:** Fisher is running out of room to display his antiques collection

The couple bought the house around eight years ago and moved in with a newborn baby. There were half rotten carpets and live wires hanging down and Will decided the first thing he would do was build a neoclassical pond at the foot of the long garden. "It became my obsession" he says. "I soon ran out of money and we still had the whole house to



do." They moved out for six months during renovations, which turned into two and a half years.

Charlotte's patience was severely tested when Will purchased the giraffe: "What don't you understand about having two children under five?" she asked. "We're not living in Blenheim Palace." The need for a large clear out coincided with them being forced, in 2012, to move out of their old showroom and into the current premises. Will was "seduced by Christie's" and given three months to get together 500 lots with a total value of up to £1m. What followed was a nerve-wracking experience of going through all of the

*"You have to judge it on merit and ask yourself – is it junk?"*

things he had acquired over the years, trying to make sense of his personal collection as a group, cataloguing it and then attaching a price. The risk of failure loomed large; would people respond to it? If not, he was set to make a colossal loss. In the end it was a triumph; with bidding wars over some Elgin Marble-like stone tablets, the sale closed at £3.9m.

For a dedicated collector like Will, who

brings a seriousness to his work, this was validation and, with hindsight, an invigorating challenge. English country house has not exactly been the most fashionable style of furniture to be acquiring in the past 20 years, not least because of its inconveniently large scale for most London homes.

That said, Will believes that there is also an overlap with what he does and the current trend for industrial chic. "In many senses the two are interlinked," he says. "The obsession with surface, bare bones and integrity." Could country house dealing, by default, become the next big thing? He certainly hopes so. Contemporary furniture holds little interest for him commercially and doesn't spark his imagination. "With antiques the origins, the designer, so much of the information is lost so you have to judge it on merit and ask yourself – is it junk? It's like learning a language," he says. "It's an understanding built upon hours of anxiety and looking. But you can become blasé. Complacency is the killer."

Charlotte and Will have another interior design project on the go at the moment, renovating a property on Hanbury Street in the Jamb aesthetic. It will serve as a kind of showcase of what they can do, just as their own home does now. As Will puts it: "There's always more stuff to buy". ■

[jamblimited.com](http://jamblimited.com)