

WHERE
LONDON
UK

WHO
ZOE, MERLIN,
MAX, RIVER

WHAT
CONVERTED
FACTORY

An old shoe factory converted into a crisp, contemporary loft

“We create houses with our minds, our hands, and our souls,” say architect couple Zoe Chan and Merlin Eayrs. The young duo are shaking up the architecture and interior design worlds with a daring lifestyle and business model: instead of looking for clients, they look for properties, buy them, and move in with their two children, Max (4) and River (1). Then begins a slow, immersive, creative process where Zoe and Merlin take time to fully absorb the space’s atmosphere before envisioning a new, highly crafted interior that honors the property’s vernacular history while infusing their contemporary sensibility into the space’s volumes and materiality. It’s an organic method that can take up to two years, allowing the duo a creative freedom that thrills the senses and touches the soul.

Called The Beldi, this generous London-based apartment, located in an old shoe factory, was converted by Zoe and Merlin into a verdant oasis in the lively Shoreditch district. After peeling back the layers of time to expose the building’s bare industrial charm, the couple combined imperfect handmade materials and

traditional techniques inspired by their travels to Morocco and China to create a cozy, open space with some sharp contemporary lines. The view over the treetops of nearby St Leonard’s church inspired the delicate “fennel,” “avocado,” and “olive” green shades, which softly invite the outside in.

Craftsmanship is at the very heart of the duo’s approach, and the eye-catching floor sets the space apart: laid by hand using zellige and bejmat tiles, the neutral herringbone pattern and basketry motifs gently articulate flow and movement around the apartment. This feeling of fluidity is instilled all through the space with sweeping lime plasterwork and smooth oak carpentry, while luxurious, handcrafted elements—including a green lacquered bench by Sue Skeen, Jochen Holz glassware, and the bedrooms’ hand-painted quilts by Faye Toogood for Once Milano—complete the utterly refined and cohesive composition. The next work currently on their list is a Hampstead house nested in nature—a new, exiting playground for this wholly creative family.

