

# To love and CHERISH

When the music manager Cherish Kaya bought her first home – a flat in east London – she was determined it would showcase her personal style (and cats)



WORDS KATRINA BURROUGHS  
PHOTOGRAPHS LOUISA TRATALOS



**Cherish Kaya** perches on the red “bancatte” in her sunny sitting room and says, “My favourite thing on Earth is just pottering around the flat and watching *SpongeBob SquarePants* on the telly.” The music manager, 35, whose clients include the band Jockstrap and producer James Dring, lives with four rescue cats in a tiny ground-floor apartment in a Regency square in Clapton, east London. Her bancatte is an innovative item of furniture designed with help from her friend Joel Donovan (aka @the\_interiors\_concierge). “It’s called a bancatte because it’s a banquette with a place for the cats to hide underneath,” she explains. “I don’t want everyone to think of me as that mad cat lady,” she adds, rearranging *Monster*, one of her felines, around her neck in the manner of a silky black stole.

Kaya grew up on a council estate near Harlow, Essex, never expecting to be a property owner. When she got the keys to her Regency home, she says she could not believe her luck. “I just feel amazed. You know, I managed to get a flat in London that’s also really gorgeous. I worked really hard for this. It’s the first place anybody in my family has owned. It’s the first place that I’ve ever even been able to think about what my dream interior would be like.”

Kaya moved out of the family home when she was 16. “I moved to London [Kensal Rise, then Clapton] because I knew what I wanted to do.” And what she wanted to do was make music. She was keyboard player in *Ipsò Facto*, a goth girl group who supported the likes of Siouxsie Sioux. She left to play with Florence + the Machine, during the band’s *Lungs* tour, and then joined the A&R team at Columbia. She went on to form her own independent label in the 2010s and joined the Dirty Hit record label in 2021.

She remembers her first impressions of the east London apartment. “As soon as I walked in I was like, this is 100 per cent my flat.” Just over a year ago, when she completed on the property, she set about creating her ideal home, with interiors that celebrated her own

The kitchen larder is painted in Chinese Emperor by Paint & Paper Library. **Opposite top** Cherish Kaya with her cat Monster. **Bottom** The "bancatte" with its adapted base provides a spot for Kaya and her cats to relax. On the dining table are ceramic candlesticks by Joe Sweeney while the wrought-iron chairs are from Porter Studio





Kaya found the rustic wooden chair during a trip to Portugal.

**Left** Above the surrealist bedstead by Joseph Ellwood of Six Dots Design is a painting by Tomo Campbell. The chest of drawers is by Oculus and the limewash paint is Nougat by Bauwerk

**'I do work meetings here. I have my friends over all the time. It's my social base. Home is everything'**

personal style and showcased works by many of her creative friends. There's a metal candelabra by Jermaine Gallacher and ceramic candlesticks in the shape of melting Doric columns by Joe Sweeney in the living room. In the bedroom is an elegant standard light with a conical shade by Joe Armitage and a surrealist bedstead by the metal artist Joseph Ellwood of Six Dots Design. The sofa and cushions are all clad in stripes by Colours of Arley, the fabric studio founded by Kaya's friend Louisa Tratalos.

The London square where Kaya lives, laid out in 1816, is as picturesque as a *Mary Poppins* set: glossy black railings and London stock bricks outside; high ceilings, double doors and fancy plasterwork within. The challenge was to create a bright, contemporary home that also respected the period building. Donovan, before he started his own interiors business, had worked for Frieda Gormley and Javvy M Royle, the House of Hackney founders, on Trematon Castle in Cornwall. He says,



"I was like, aha, this is like a mini Trematon for me. I know exactly what we're going to do."

Floors were restored and soundproofed, and the walls were painted in warm neutrals — the living room in Linen Wash by Little Greene and the bedroom in Nougat lime-wash by Bauwerk. Much of the joinery was built off site and installed swiftly. The furniture, including a minipiano and eccentric touches such as the tented cat litter tray, came later. "I thought, I'm going to make her something that suits the architecture [for the litter tray] and so I got some beautiful fabric from Colours of Arley and I popped on some trim by VV Rouleaux," Donovan says. "I wanted to make it like a Regency cat house."

Art is at the heart of Kaya's interiors, from a 1980 album cover featuring her mother — looking like a young Kate Bush — to a colourful composition by Tomo Campbell. Kaya points to the left of her bed: "You see that boob over there? Self Esteem painted me that!" Is it anyone's boob in particular? "I'm hoping it's hers, or mine." Hanging above the bancatte is one of her favourite artworks, a portrait by Peter J Doyle of his girlfriend, originally bought by her boss at Dirty Hit (Jamie Osborne) to celebrate a successful tour for the 1975. "He bought all of the band and himself and the general manager of the company one of Peter's paintings as a well done for their tour. And then Peter was like, 'Oh, you know what, you should have this one as well. This one was in the office, and I said, 'Jamie, I think it's very important that she comes home with me.' So I put her in the back of my Saab 900, roof down. I was like, bye."

A year on, Kaya and her cats seem utterly contented with their habitat. Her feline family are called Spanish Gary, Monster, Habibi and Yog, who is 16 years old and named after Kaya's musical hero George Michael — "Because George Michael's nickname at school was Yog. My mum's claim to fame is that she was born the same day, same hospital, same ward as George Michael."

As for her newly revamped flat, she says: "I just love being at home. I do work meetings here. I have my friends over all the time. It's my social base. Home is everything." ■

@the\_interiors\_concierge



**Above** On top of the Eavestaff piano sits a candelabra by Jermaine Gallacher. **Below, from left** Over the bedroom's fireplace are wall lights by Joe Armitage and an artwork by IsaLu Ishii. The sofa's stripy upholstery and cushion are from Colours of Arley

