

# Make yourself at home

Katie Cox pops in to James Harvey British Art and finds an art gallery with a homely twist

I SPENT 20 years flying around the world selling incredibly expensive paintings for multi millions of pounds and I just thought, it's not fun," says James Harvey, owner of James Harvey British Art on Langton Street, Chelsea. "It would give me much more pleasure to sell you something and for you to go home and have it as your treasured piece and tell all your friends that there's a fantastic little gallery in Chelsea. Give the guy a ring, he's really nice." You get a sense from Harvey that this really is the gospel truth. After escaping from the big art game 18 months ago having worked for some of the biggest players in the market, to start up his own small gallery of 18th century to contemporary British art, it seems as though it couldn't suit him more perfectly.

The Chelsea premises from which Harvey sells his wares is also his home that he shares with his

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wife Flora, two-year-old daughter Willa and puppy Humbug. This unorthodox set-up, he believes, works to his advantage because what could be further from the stereotypically frosty image of art galleries than “a wife, child and dog running around the place.” The effect truly is as relaxing as Harvey



aspires it to be because, as Humbug nuzzles into my leg and Willa regards the “funny lady” quizzically, I am forced to laugh and any preconceived notion of Bond Street froideur is instantly dissolved.

Attending the beautifully appointed gallery and meeting its immaculately presented owner feels more like popping over to a friend's house for a cup of tea and a chat. That his clients should be lifelong friends seems exactly what Harvey intended when he set up his gallery-cum-home. “People have to want to buy and what makes you want to buy is a relationship. If I form a relationship with someone in their 20s, by the time they are in their 60s and successful in their career, the relationship will still stand. So I see an investment in people now as a reward 20, 30, 40 years down the line.”

Harvey believes passionately in art and that art doesn't have to be expensive, elitist and



unaffordable. “I always feel like I'm on a crusade – Flora tells me I sound like I'm a preacher and I should get a little soapbox and stand outside.” But it is this passion and his work ethic that sets Harvey and his gallery apart, with paintings costing £1,000 hanging happily next to ones with price tags into the hundreds of thousands.

After an hour and a half spent in this beautiful corner of Chelsea, I step out of the gallery back in to the real world and I am heartened and surprised by the fact that I am walking away from my future art dealer and friend.

James Harvey British Art, 15 Langton Street, SW10 ([jamesharveybritishart.com](http://jamesharveybritishart.com))



L-R: PORTRAIT OF CAPTAIN SIR GEORGE MONTAGU, JOHN FRANCIS RIGAUD (1742-1810) | SIR JOHN FRECHEVILLE RAMSDEN, SIR ALFRED MUNNINGS | SIR CHARLES BUNBURY'S BLACK RACEHORSE "SMOLENSKO", JOHN MOST SARTORIUS (1759-1828) | THE EAST INDIA COMPANY'S FLEET, JAMES WALES (C.1746-1795) | ALL OTHER IMAGES BY PETER JOHNSTON