

Treasure SEEKER

Absolutely joins *Matt Goss* in his Shoreditch antiques and interiors shop Pure White Lines to talk about his love of crafting and discovering

Words **CATHERINE HALES**

CATHERINE HALES: *When did you open the shop on Hackney Road?*

MATT GOSS: We opened this one about three months ago. I've been based down in Horsham in Sussex, as we've had a shop down there for about two years.

CH: *How did that one come about?*

MG: It started when I moved back from Australia. I was teaching and playing rugby down in Oz and I had been previously been a teacher at St. Charles College in Kensington, so it was a bit of a career change. It started as a shipping container down in Sussex on a farm where I'd do lots of different painting and ageing of furniture for other shops. Eventually that led to us opening the first shop in Haywards Heath, which was quite successful and led to a second shop in Horsham. It opened on one floor and went to four floors and then that gave me the opportunity to come back into London.

CH: *Why Shoreditch?*

MG: I've always lived East when I've lived in London – all of my friends and family are located here and I know it really well. I used to spend my Sundays at Columbia Road Market, so when the building was offered to me I couldn't resist jumping at it.

CH: *The overall look of the shop is pretty cohesive. Is there a look that you go for each time you change stock?*



●● *WHEN you see
something and LOVE
IT, BUY IT* ●●

MG: Not really, I buy what I'd have in my own house. I do all of the buying and we also make quite a lot of our stock now. In terms of what we create for shops and restaurants, it is all custom-made in the workshop in Sussex where we have a metal worker, a really good joiner and good upholsterers. Whatever people want: different sizes, colours – it can all be tailored.

CH: *So, it's quite bespoke?*

MG: Yes, this marble table here, with the oak legs [points to enormous table], that's made by us, and we do it in different sizes. We've just done a 19ft-long one for a huge country house that weighs 1.2 tonnes. We get more interesting stuff to make too. I love going out and planning, making suggestions...

CH: *What's been your oddest request?*

MG: God, to make? Probably the 19ft long table with the inch-thick top I mentioned before. It was just so heavy. We had a 100 metre walk to get it in because you couldn't get access around the walled gardens. It took eight of us to carry it. We managed to build it so it came in two pieces but it was one of those deliveries where you think, 'Oh my God, I can't wait for this to be over.' But it's also nice because it'll probably be there for 100 years!

CH: *Do you buy many of the antiques and the one-off pieces in the UK?*

MG: We buy all over Europe. We bring a lorry load home every couple of weeks and because I've been doing it for a while now I've got some really good contacts. As soon as they see something they think I'll buy they'll send me the pictures and I'll say, 'Yep, I'll have that.' When I'm over there buying from the big fairs in the South of France, Belgium and Italy, we'll always have a van to bring the stuff back to the UK.



●● I WOULD'NT
like to have A HOUSE
THAT'S kit out in one
FASHION ●●

CH: Any favourite piece that's come from Europe?

MG: My favourite piece is my Saint up there. He's from a church in Belgium and he was the first big decorative piece I bought. He used to be in my bathroom, but since moving to London he's become too big for my bathroom, so now he's in the shop! He's just an interesting one-off purchase, something I'll never find again and I like him sitting there watching over everything.

CH: What got you into this business?

MG: I suppose I'd always enjoyed doing up and restoring furniture and that's what initially got me into it. I started doing work for other people and once I had a client base built, we just expanded. We always make sure customers are happy with what they've got and because of this they keep coming back, so it's enabled us to grow.

CH: Pure White Lines was pretty organic?

MG: Yes, and a lot of people will buy really cool pieces and know that if they ever want to bring them back for a change, we can help with a part exchange or sale. We've got customers internationally now, so we send things to the States and all over Europe - our website helps.

CH: So, the service is very personal?

MG: Very. You also get people coming in looking for you to source bits. They send pictures of an area of their house and a description. Or with Pinterest they'll send me a picture of what they're looking for, and then when I see it at a fair I can either buy it or contact them to see what they think and it can then get brought back and they'll have first option on it.



CH: Does anyone come in and say, 'I need something for this room, do you have any suggestions?'

MG: Yeah, all the time. I love that. We make things bespoke as well, so if they want a mirror or aged glass we can build something in their preferred colour scheme and style.

CH: Is your own house full of stuff?

MG: My house is always really transient because everything in there I sell. Last month, for instance, I sold my dining table and two huge old Eastern European leather pommel horses that I used as benches alongside it, so I've been eating dinner off my lap until I find something else that will fit in. I always say, 'Everything is for sale.' You love everything when you buy it but that's the nature of the job. No matter how much you like it, if someone else loves it you will sell it and you'll find something new. That's what I love doing; the buying is the fun.

CH: What advice would you give to people furnishing their London home?

MG: You've always got to buy with your gut. When you see something and you love it, buy it then and there. I've had so many people fall in love with something, come back a day later and it's sold. I also don't think you have to decorate your house with only old pieces, you can have a mixture. You've got to have two or three key bits in a room and then you can dress it with modern pieces.

CH: Do you have a favourite era?

MG: I buy everything from 17th century bits,

old religious figures and statues through to 1980s really blingy lighting. I like to mix eras, I wouldn't like to have a house that's kit out in one fashion.

CH: I've been eyeing up those bar stools...

MG: They've come out of an old brothel we cleared in Cologne in Germany. We took a lot of the furniture, but they're just the best quality bar stools I've ever seen. You can't get anything of that quality anymore, or with that history. The colours, the years of people sitting on them have aged them really nicely. They just look cracking.

CH: Any upcoming projects?

MG: I've got a 5,000 sq ft barn opening in Sussex. The shop contains antiques all in a lovely setting, so people will be able to visit us in Sussex and explore while sipping on a coffee or a glass of prosecco. If people are kitting out something specific there'll be lots of different examples to help inspire, and obviously all of the photos will be online.

CH: Any celeb clients?

MG: We do everyone. We've had a lot of rugby players and we do a bit for the England team. We've done footballers, cricketers, actors - I won't put any names out there but that's one of the things that's nice about the shop: we can cater for everyone. We've got everything from £5 candles to £20,000 tables. I always love people coming in here and a lot of people just stop in for a cup of coffee and a chat. Whether they buy something or not they love looking around and that's what I always wanted with my shop. People can walk in here and buy stuff their friends will never have. ♦

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