

Client: Douglas and Gordon
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Spice up your life with a £3.5m Battersea pad

Victoria Beckham's design studio has been converted into fashionable flats. *Andrea Watson* steps inside

The place to live in the post-industrial era is almost certainly a pre-industrial building. Exposed brick, rusted ironwork, concrete pillars – anything, in fact, that might ladder your stockings – are must-have features for a 21st-century city home, but in most of central London they've all been snapped up. So two apartments in Battersea will excite those who can stump up £3.5 million (each), not least because they have been carved out of Victoria Beckham's former design studio.

Sandwiched between two of the Spice Girl-turned-fashion designer's existing businesses, on the first floor of a former warehouse at Ransome's Dock, East and West Apartments offer buyers the chance to live in a creative hub with roots in London's industrial history. You might bump into Toni Mascolo of the Toni & Guy hairdressing emporium, or the fashion designer Vivienne Westwood, the radical architect Will Alsop or Beckham herself. The Spice Girls' creator, Simon Fuller, can keep an eye on her from his

nearby headquarters.

It's impossible not to wonder what will happen to prices in the Ransome's Dock area when

the Battersea Power Station redevelopment, just the other side of Battersea Park, is completed. Charles Mitchell, of agents **Douglas & Gordon**, says prices in Battersea Park have risen on average by 30 per cent over the past three years, whereas in Chelsea they have managed only seven per cent, and his long-term view is that the gap between Battersea and Chelsea will narrow.

"A number of investors view buying

period property and warehouse conversions in the area as a better way to play the Battersea Power Station infrastructure story, because much of the power station will be devoted to diplomatic and commercial space and employees would prefer not live on top of their work," he says.

Ransome's Dock – with its lived-in look, its barges decked with bunting, its green creek, and its splendidly diverse architecture – is the perfect answer.

The dock was built in 1884, named after Allen Ransome – scion of a family of Victorian industrial entrepreneurs, who acquired a foundry in Battersea. Its fame rests

on his grand design to create a facility far upstream that could allow vessels as large as coastal steamers to pass or turn round. This opened up access to vacant acres that rapidly filled with businesses, many of them connected with the food industry.

A bakery, creamery, ice maker and gin distillery were among the ebb and flow of ventures recorded in English Heritage's 2013 survey of London, which describes how Ransome's Dock and its vicinity have been reinvented after years of neglect as a "dockland-style haven of houseboats, new apartments, business centres and restaurants".

Among the latter is **Source**, a restaurant described by the food critic Fay Maschler as "where industrial chic – complete with squirrel lights on copper piping – meets *Little House on the Prairie*". **Source**, at street level directly below West Apartment, is so called because, unusually, it sits above a spring – one of only half a dozen in London.

The floor above, which was vacated by Beckham early this



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year, was rapidly acquired by bespoke developers CLPD. Founded just three years ago by the South African-born accountant Dean Louw and his architect partner Rafael Borrego, the company is devoted to design-led projects and Ransome's Dock provided the perfect canvas for their aspirations.

Work started in April – there's not a moment to be lost if you are a London developer these days – transforming the space into two three-bedroom apartments. West Apartment,

which has a terrace area above Source, measures 2,000 sq ft, slightly larger than East Apartment, which has no terrace but does benefit from views of the creek.

Both have exceptionally large living areas, with polished concrete floors and Minacciolo kitchens to one side. The apartments have been dressed by Vitra and Carl Hansen and art work on loan from Chrom-Art has been chosen to complement the furniture.

A curved oak-panelled wall separates the living space from the bedrooms and bathrooms and contains the “brain” that controls the technology behind the lighting and Bose audio systems.

Everything is tactile and much of it seriously cru, even brutalist. You could probably file your nails on the raw sandstone kitchen units.

Italian suppliers have been plundered for the materials and there are some nods to sustainability – distressed metal worktops – but others speak sheer extravagance: Mutina handmade tiles, antique mirrors, Murano glass basins, Vola taps, Corian baths.

“We spent a lot of time working with Italians and the result is a sensory overload, but the apartments still have an industrial look that links with the building's heritage,” says Louw.

Both properties are for sale through Douglas & Gordon, Battersea Park (020 7720 8077; douglasandgordon.com).



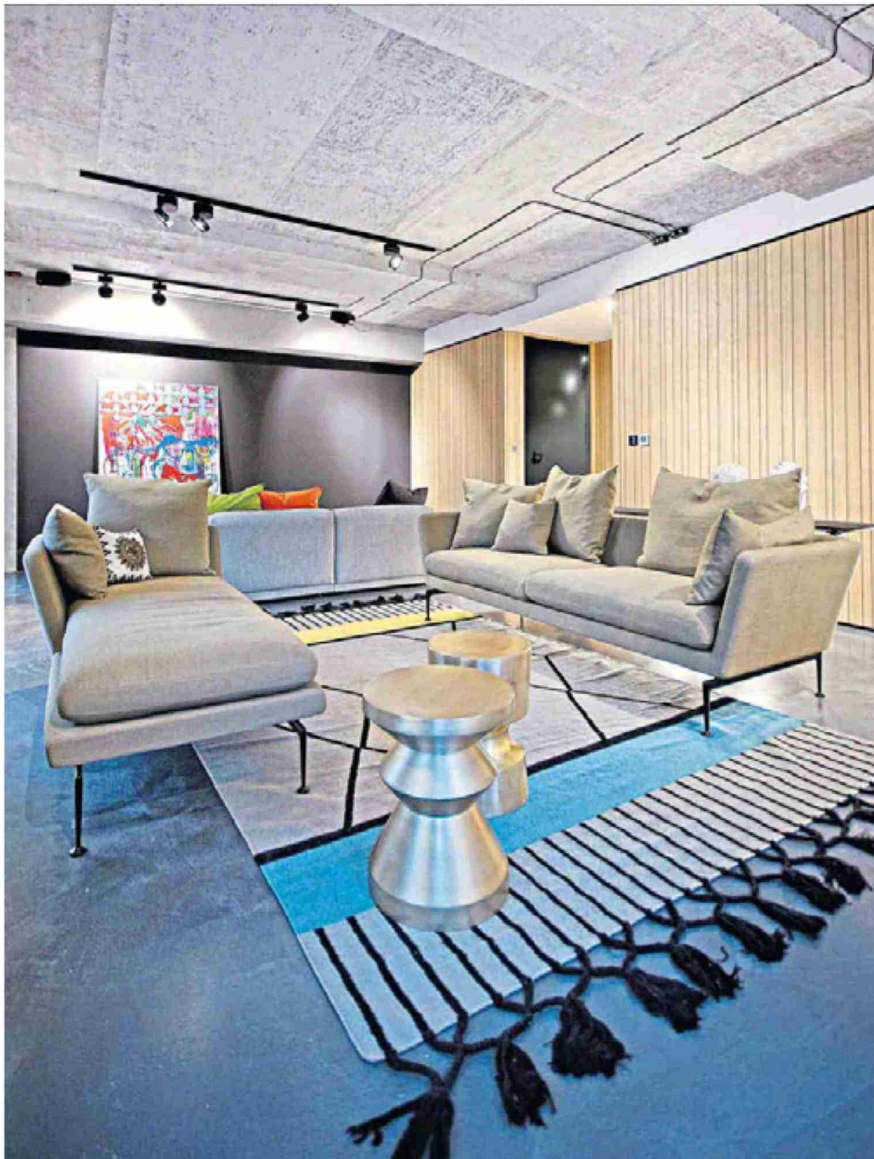
‘It’s a haven of houseboats, businesses and restaurants’



Going posh: Ransome's Dock, in Battersea, where two new apartments in a former warehouse are joining the



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