



IN THE ZONE

Who needs another bedroom when you can have a meditation room, asks the creative Abisola Omole, who has transformed her rented flat into an oasis of calm

Words **Jessica Salter** Photographs **Felix Speller**

It's a surprise to hear from the designer and content creator Abisola Omole, as she leads me into the meditation room in her rented King's Cross apartment — hazy sunset light streaming through the *shoji* screens and warm, reedy-smelling tatamis under our feet — that she rents. This is because the whole apartment is so intensely tailored to the 31-year-old. The meditation room (which also has a large balcony), is actually a third bedroom; the second bedroom has a huge four-poster guest bed and wardrobes filled with Omole's extensive clothing collection, while the main bedroom features a custom-made headboard that envelops her bed, creating a serene feeling that runs through the flat. "Oh yes, I've been quite bold," Omole admits. "But just because you rent, you shouldn't feel like you can't make your home feel like it is yours. You can end up being in a rental for years."



‘A mood board stops you dithering over purchases. If it fits the look and you like it, just get it’



A Samsung Frame TV doubles up as a piece of art on an easel. **Left** Omole in her meditation room. **Above right** A candle chess set by the Australian brand Faum. **Below** The wraparound headboard in the main bedroom was custom-made. **Below right** On the drinks trolley are bottles of Arva Spritz, Omole’s non-alcoholic drink, which she developed with her sister, who is a chef

Omole, who regularly collaborates with fashion brands from Net-a-Porter to Rixo, finished furnishing her flat in four weeks, thanks to a strict adherence to her mood board. “It stops you dithering over purchases,” she says. “If it fits the look and you like it, just get it.” The key to injecting personality into a new build — and swerving rental clichés — is, she says, “avoiding Ikea. It’s far better to build up your look from more than one source.” Her mix of finds are elegant and affordable: a sideboard and sofa from Oka paired with Zara sidetables, mixed in with a green marble bench from the online high-end design marketplace 1st Dibs. (“What people don’t know about 1st Dibs is that you can always haggle.”) In her bedroom she has two Ferm Living reeded glass sideboards to store her shoe collection.

Her approach to decorating is similar to her way of dressing: ahead of the curve but extremely tasteful. Growing up in Milton Keynes, Omole was obsessed with fashion. She read every issue of Teen Vogue (her collection now sits on a console table in her living room) and dreamt of being a magazine editor — something a teacher, whose name she still remembers, told her was unachievable. Undeterred she started a





special inlay for a teaspoon. This month she is launching *Abi's Notebook* on her website — a compendium of all her picks, from interiors to fashion and lifestyle.

Omole admits that she has “pushed the limits of what you can do with a rental — I mean I’ve installed doors”. But she insists that more is possible than most people think. She has been clever — the screens, for example, are held in place with tracking rails fixed to the ceiling and floor with “tiny pins and double-sided tape”, which are easy to remove, while custom-made furniture, such as a kitchen island on wheels, can move from house to house. She also checked everything first with the building manager, before inviting the management team around for a grand unveiling. “Luckily, they liked it.” ■

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fashion blog, which was soon getting more than 100,000 hits a month. As a marker of her teenage success, she was hired by MSN to report from fashion shows before she had even sat her A-levels. After getting frustrated at the facilities available for online journalists at fashion week, she set up a business taking over empty spaces in London, Paris and New York for use by digital creators, with sponsorship from brands. The next step was launching her own design studio, *Studio Arva*, in 2017, designing furniture and soft furnishings, and using a network of artisans — many based in London — to create pieces ranging from handmade rugs to bespoke shelving. Some of her pieces are in use in her new flat, including a white bouclé-covered chair in her meditation room.

Omole combines old and new throughout. The ceramics she has been collecting for years are housed under the kitchen island. New finds include the fun chess set by the independent brand *Faum*, which features pieces made from candle wax (“The idea is that you light them and it adds to the jeopardy of the game”), and the stainless steel cup and saucer by the brand *Service Projects* that she serves my coffee in, with its

