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The pick of the Pimlico Road

In the 1960s, the Pimlico Road was colonised by *haute* bohemian dealers whose clients included aristocrats and rock stars. Now, almost half a century later, a new generation of shopkeepers is establishing the road and its surrounding area as one of London's hottest new design destinations, says Arabella Youens

Illustration by Fred van Deelen



Pimlico Road became a fashionable destination for offbeat, upmarket antique dealers in the 1960s when the likes of Geoffrey Bennison—who would entertain a colourful mix of duchesses and decorators in his theatrical shop laden with gleaming Baroque mirrors—and Christopher Gibbs, an

inveterate antiques dealer and collector known for his expensive but Bohemian taste. Anyone who was anyone would step in to browse.

In the next decade, Ross Hamilton, the Australian dealer and protégé of David Hicks, opened his shop, followed by the quintessential English decorator Jane

Churchill, who established her showroom in 1975 (where she remains to this day). However, the fortunes of the street went on to wax and wane.

David Linley, who lived nearby during the 1980s, described it then as a 'residential and retail backwater'. Some establishments continued to thrive—such as Bennison



Fabrics, which sells fabrics originally discovered and reproduced by Geoffrey—and, during the past 20 years, others have moved in and helped to re-establish the street as a go-to destination for fine things. However, most agree that the latest tenants are precipitating a renaissance in the area.

It was by chance that the directors of the long-established decorating firm Sibyl Colefax & John Fowler found out about the vacancy of 89–91, Pimlico Road after their lease at 39, Brook Street—an address that has been synonymous with country-house interior design since the 1940s—was coming to an end. ‘It was one of the areas we had been looking at,’ says managing

director Wendy Nicholls. ‘We all know the area and have shopped here for years, of course. The large ground-floor showrooms act in two ways: as a space for antique and contemporary pieces and to show the very comfortable way in which we live.’

Another harbinger of good tidings for the road is the limelight-shy dealer-decorator Robert Kime. Manifestly understated, his name rarely mentioned without his work at Highgrove and Clarence House included in the same breath, he has a platinum-level list of clients—but you would never know it. He opened his shop at 190, Ebury Street last December and, in doing so, it marked a return to the area after several years in

Bloomsbury (30 years ago, he shared premises here with Piers von Westenholtz).

The new shop is an Aladdin’s cave of eclectic treasures sourced from far and wide, as well as his whole range of interior and home furnishings.

When antique dealer Will Fisher opened Jamb, more than 20 years ago, he admits that he suffered from impostor syndrome: ‘It was Chrissie [Christopher] Gibbs’s old place and they were enormous shoes to fill.’ The country-house aesthetic lies at the heart of his design ethos and Will has a passion for the unusual and rarefied.

Walk around the creaking floorboards of the beguiling showroom and you’ll come ➤



Above: The Venn mirror by Soane. *Right:* David Linley in his Pimlico showroom

across a variety of esoteric elements, such as an early-19th-century lifesize wooden model of a horse (£48,000) and eye-catching pieces of taxidermy.

Will is optimistic about the next chapter of Pimlico Road's history: 'This is definitely a renaissance and a lot of kindred spirits are here now. It's a mix of cool contemporary and antiques,' he says. 'Jamb is at the traditional country-house end. A bit lived in, like a pair of favourite wellies, but with a sparkle of glamour.'

Among dealer-designer Christopher Howe's regular customers at 93, Pimlico Road was the painter Lucian Freud, who liked to use the 'esoterically shabby chairs' in his portraits. Having started out as a furniture restorer, a passion for collecting soon overtook his original premises on Bourne Street. The shop became well known for its charming haphazardness.

In 1995, Mr Howe expanded into Pimlico Road, where he remains today. The extra space allowed for larger antiques and an expanding range of classic and timeless handmade furniture, and lighting, based on favourite historical designs.



Above: Jamb's Pimlico showroom is home to its extensive collection of antiques



Something of a contrast is the contemporary designer-decorator Rose Uniacke's showroom at No 76. Known as the 'Queen of Serene', Rose started out as a specialist furniture restorer who would also find pieces for her mother, antique dealer Hilary Batstone, to display in her Pimlico shop. She opened her own dual-aspect showroom in 2009, which shows off a carefully chosen mix of antiques and 20th-century furniture as well as new pieces, sparingly displayed in a pared-back, elegant way on untreated wooden floors against clean, off-white walls.

A near neighbour is the bespoke furniture and accessories store Linley. Founded by Viscount Linley (now Lord Snowdon) in 1985, its current livery of mustard-yellow and deep-navy walls set off the expertly crafted wares. If today's Pimlico Road is a far cry from the one he first knew back in 1985, we have him to partly credit for its turnaround: as a member of the Pimlico Road Association, he helped usher in the farmer's market, creating a more cohesive community spirit.

Another member of the association is Lulu Lyle of Soane. She and Christopher Hodson founded the firm, selling beautifully made furniture based on traditional, 20th-century and contemporary designs exactly 20 years ago. Lulu has a passion for British manufacturing, which has included buying the last rattan workshop in England; its exquisitely woven tables and lampshades are available to admire in the shop.

A chance encounter with a half-Tibetan boy whose father was a master weaver in Kathmandu inspired Luke Irwin to set up his eponymous rug collection in 2003. The light-filled showroom is piled high with ➤



Ochre pendants and table (left), Robert Kime's Ebury Street shop (above) and blanc pineapple table lamp by Paolo Moschino for Nicholas Haslam (right)



display over the two-floor premises are made in London.

At 202, Ebury Street, overlooking the small square that hosts the weekly farmer's market, is Paolo Moschino for Nicholas Haslam, the decorative antiques and furniture store owned by interior designer Paolo Moschino. He's heavily inspired by 18th- and 19th-century French and Swedish Gustavian pieces manufactured in the UK and Italy.

An elegant and contemporary aesthetic lies behind Ochre's understated and luxurious lighting and furniture at No 57. 'We feel a strong sense of integrity, individuality and exclusivity underlying our designs,' says Joanna Bibby. 'These values are what attracted us to the Pimlico Road.'

The decorator Joanna Wood has a busy shopfront showing off her extensive range of contemporary and traditional interior-design accessories sourced from small independent suppliers around the world. The whole design district is bookended by two important print galleries: Pullman Editions, which specialises in eye-catching Art Deco posters by leading artists, and Ramsay, a well-known destination for its eclectic collection of prints, both old and modern. 🐦

his designs, which range in inspiration from Swedish to Berber. In a similar vein is the showroom of Michael Reeves (who also dabbles in rug designing). Known for his pared-back interiors, which artfully mix styles and periods, his showroom displays a collection of contemporary furniture, fabrics, decorative items and contemporary art.

Collier Webb was formed in 2011 when caster Geoff Collier and dealer-designer Andrew Webb joined forces; they specialise in creating high-quality metalwork, lighting and furniture.

Joining them on the street is the recently opened showroom of contemporary furniture and lighting designer Cox London. Established by sculptors Nicola and Christopher Cox, all the pieces on

Don't miss

- A pop-up showroom for the fabric and interior accessories house de Le Cuona (www.delecuona.com) opened at number 24 this week—it's a prelude to the company's flagship showroom opening here this autumn.
- The pop-up shop of Fine Cell Work (020-7931 9998; www.finecellwork.co.uk), which teaches needlework skills to prisoners in British prisons, at 41, Pimlico Road.

Where to eat

Como Lario

Reassuringly enduring, having fed locals for more than 40 years; house specialities include *ossobucco alla Milanese* and *tagliolini* with fresh crab and chilli. Decor is white walls and red banquettes.

18-22, Holbein Place (020-7730 2954)

La Poule au Pot

A busy bistro perfect for a summer's day, when you can sit outside overlooking the small square. Unadulterated, old-school bistro fare, including *escargots* and *bouillabaisse*.

231, Ebury Street (020-7730 7763)

Daylesford

Bright, all-day organic cafe and deli for the health-conscious (peas and avocado on spelt sourdough) and marginally less so (native-breed beef-burger). The shop downstairs is good for last-minute foodie presents.

44B, Pimlico Road (020-7881 8060)

No 11 Pimlico Road

Attractively designed and airy gastropub. Does a lively weekend brunch and a long line in sharing plates through to beers, wines and an expansive cocktail list. Good for large groups.

11, Pimlico Road (020-7730 6784)

The Orange

Bustling pub with food, but there's also a dining room upstairs and four comfortable-looking hotel rooms.

37-39, Pimlico Road (020-7881 9844)

Enoteca Turi

Relatively new to the area (it moved from Putney High Street), this family-run Italian restaurant has a menu inspired by regional cuisine that's been updated for contemporary tastes.

87, Pimlico Road (020-7730 3663)

The Sloane Club

Perfectly positioned private members' club with glamorous Art Deco-inspired interiors. There are more than 130 bedrooms and longer-stay apartments, as well as an on-site spa, private dining and space for events.

52, Lower Sloane Street (020-7730 9131)