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MAGAZINE

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My bromance with the dictator

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By William Leith



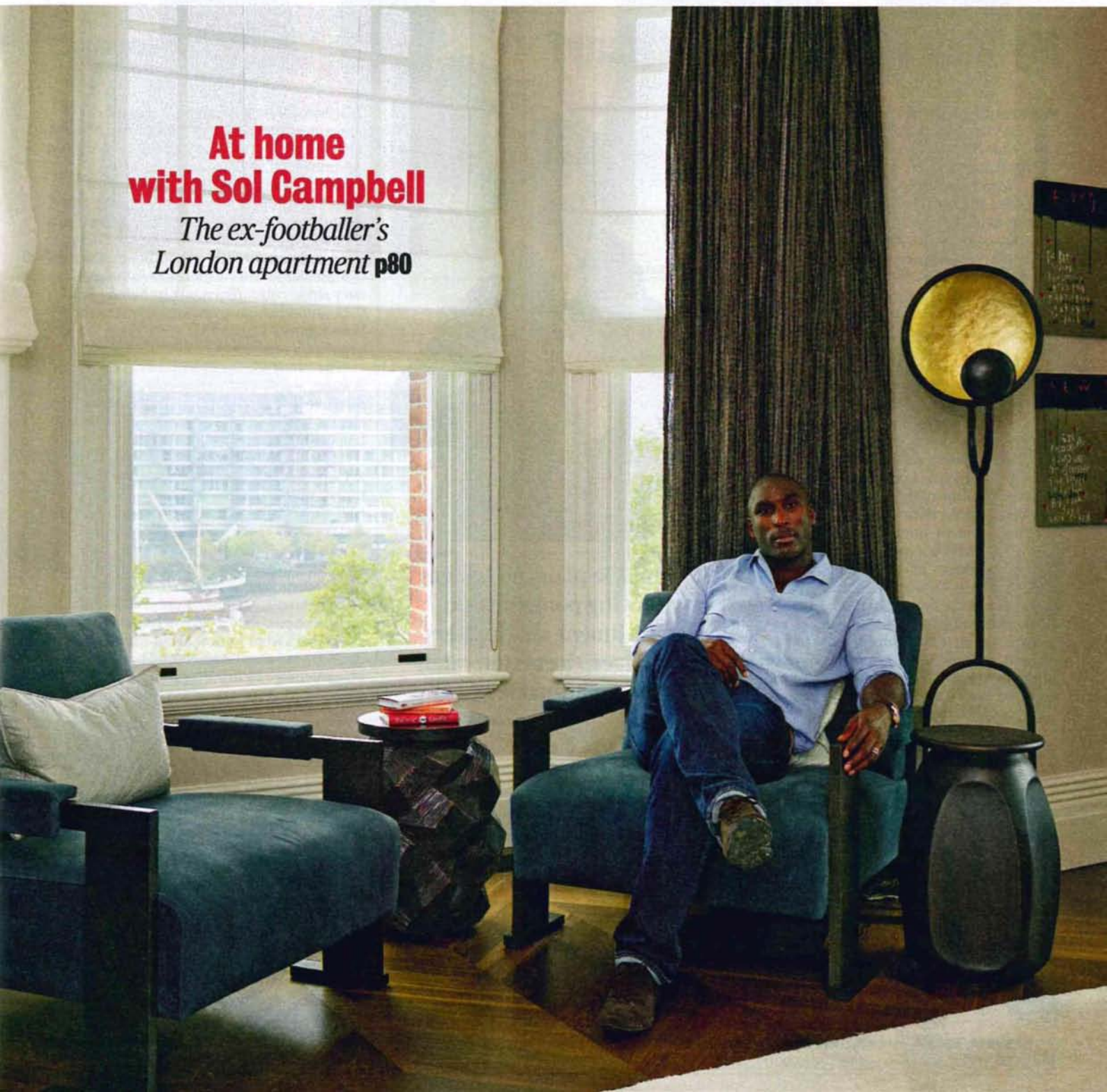
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THE STYLE PAGES

**At home
with Sol Campbell**
*The ex-footballer's
London apartment p80*



FROM ARSENAL... TO CHELSEA

Former footballer Sol Campbell staged a sit-in at his estate agents to find his West London apartment. His wife did the decorating. Good teamwork

REPORT Vinny Lee PHOTOGRAPHS Darren Chung



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organic





Fiona Barratt-Campbell's surname reflects the men in her life: Barratt comes from her late grandfather Sir Lawrie Barratt, founder of one of the country's largest property developers; Campbell from her husband, the retired footballer Sol Campbell, whom she married in 2010. But it is at your own risk that you suggest she is either a trailing WAG or that her interior-design business is a hobby.

"I started my own business seven years ago, having trained in London and New York and worked with various companies," she says with a twang of her native Newcastle accent, and her determination to do things her way is illustrated by her diary for this summer. While heavily pregnant with her second child, Ethan, she was either on site overseeing the refurbishment of her new Pimlico store, FBC

'I've been interested in property for a long time as an investor, but I am also keen on what goes into a room,' says Campbell

London; checking on the Chelsea flat that was being gutted and rebuilt as a home for herself, Sol and their two-year-old daughter, Isabella; or in foundries and workshops across the North of England, supervising the production of her new 32-piece furniture collection.

In the recently completed 2,400sq ft apartment, on the top floor of a period mansion block, Fiona sits in the window seat of the kitchen-dining room and talks with enthusiasm about persuading metal workers more used to shipbuilding to construct the

bases for her console tables. "It's mind-boggling how much goes into the production process," she says, then lapses into a dissertation about carbon dioxide and sodium silicate that even a chemistry teacher might find difficult to follow.

When I suggest that her furniture designs, some of which are in the Barratt-Campbell home, are masculine and robust perhaps because of Sol's 6ft 2in frame, Fiona laughs and says, "No, it's because of my solid northern roots."

Parts of the collection are inspired by the Roman heritage of the town of Corbridge and neighbouring Hadrian's Wall area, where her family are from, while other pieces have a distinctly African feel.

Meanwhile, Sol sits comfortably in a chair named after him. The frame is angular and in a patinated bronzed metal, with subtle reptile-print, blue-grey leather upholstery.



"I've been interested in property for a long time and invested in some, but I am also keen on what goes into a room," he says. It was he, in desperation, who staged a "sit-in" at an estate agent's office until they came up with properties that hadn't yet been processed or put on the market, and in the end found their home.

Much of the artwork in the apartment was chosen by Sol, while some is from the Flowers Gallery, which is also supplying pieces for Fiona's new shop. There, they will be shown alongside her furniture, ceramics by Steph Black and lighting by Christopher Boots and Lindsey Adelman. One of Adelman's ceiling lights is a feature of the apartment's sitting room.

Also in this room is an elongated sofa designed by Fiona and made – also in the North of England – by George Smith. The bookshelves are stacked with art books and



Clockwise from top left: the entrance hall; sitting room with coffee table inspired by one of

Fiona's photographs; the main bedroom with silk wallpaper and Cheyne bed; Fiona in the hallway

Sol's collection of old cameras, from Rolleiflex to Polaroid. The couple share an interest in photography – Sol in the more technical side, while Fiona enjoys taking pictures. One she took on holiday in South Africa, of a patch of dried, cracked mud, inspired the cast-bronze top of the coffee table in front of the fireplace.

The decor of the apartment is in subdued shades of brown and grey. "I kept the palette simple and used textures to create interest," says Fiona. So where one wall may have panels of high-gloss walnut, another surface will have fossilised marble, another a façade of patinated bronze, textured like curls of planed wood. The only room that has a flurry of disorder and a sprinkle of pink is their daughter's bedroom, on which Isabella has already stamped her mark. ■

fbc-london.com; fionabarrattinteriors.com