

Toy stories

Colour and kitsch collide in this Brazilian couple's flat, transforming it into a corner of Rio in London

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Ask graphic designer Eduardo Lima and costume designer Mauricio Carneiro to tell you why they moved to their two-bedroomed 1970s flat in north London and they'll probably tell you about Eduardo's goddaughter who lives nearby. Or how much they liked the green spaces of the communal gardens and nearby Parkland Walk. But that's only half the story. Press a little harder and you'll find out that the truth has more to do with a small plastic toy created by Hans Beck in 1974. "We have a collection of over 2,000 Playmobil figures, kept from our childhoods and added to ever since," confesses Eduardo. "One of the best things about moving into this apartment was unpacking them all. We've never had the space to display them before – and they make me smile every time I walk past them. I sometimes imagine them having little parties while we're out."

The pair met at a fashion show in Brazil 18 years ago and bumped into each other again at a bar a week later. When Eduardo told Mauricio that he was returning to London, Mauricio's reply was simple, but momentous: "May I come with you?" They've been together ever since and a civil partnership in 2007 (later converted into a marriage) made it official. "He is my soulmate – my everything," says Eduardo, who co-runs MinaLima, the graphic design agency behind all the props for the *Harry Potter* and *Fantastic Beasts* films as well as the wider Wizarding World franchise. Luckily, a 20-minute conversation about colour – orange and green in particular – on that fateful first date and a shared love of Playmobil meant that they were on the same page when it came to decorating the flat they bought in 2004.

They started by creating a white backdrop for their colourful collections. "The previous owner had painted everything mustard yellow – even the ceilings," says Eduardo. "We almost wrote it off as too small and too yellow, so I'm glad we saw its potential – even if it did take three coats of paint." Once they'd finished decorating, they set about unpacking the Playmobil figures, displaying them by type in a vintage, glass-fronted cabinet. "They are arranged in groups – policemen with policemen, pirates with pirates – to stop it from feeling too cluttered," explains Eduardo.

Niche interests: alongside their book collection (immaculately housed in Vitsoe shelving) Eduardo Lima and Mauricio Carneiro collect vintage lettering, tin toys and Playmobil figures. They have more than 2,000 of them on display





Bring it home

Bright colours with a groovy toytown twist

Task lamp £72, Wild & Wolf (amara.com)

Wallpaper £65 per roll, Orla Kiely (fashionwallpaper.co.uk)

Buzz Lightyear £30, disneystore.co.uk

Cassey cabinet £599, made.com



Small wonders: top, tin toys in the dining room mirror against Orla Kiely wallpaper; left, Brazilian religious iconography and far left, Harry Potter 'Daily Prophet' print

Print £79, minalima.com



Eames chair £495, heals.com



"There is an element of curation, but not too much."

As well as Playmobil, the pair also collects the letters E and M in vintage 3D characters – an assemblage which started with the light-up green E perched on the arm of the sofa that Mauricio bought for Eduardo. "Now he gets really upset that there just seem to be more Es in the world than Ms," laughs Eduardo.

Other collections include the religious iconography typical of Brazil displayed against a bright green (Eduardo's favourite colour) wall in the hall, the Disney merchandise in the master bedroom, the tin toys that line the dining room mirror, and books – lots of books. "There's an amazing Oxfam bookshop local to us," says Eduardo, "and we seem to come home with another five or 10 every weekend." The couple invested in the 606 Universal Shelving System by Vitsoe for their library when they moved into this flat.

"Vitsoe is life-changing. It hasn't moved a millimetre since we had it installed."

Collections taken care of, they turned to furniture, settling on the Bo Concept sofa that fits so perfectly into their lounge area, alongside a collection of house plants. "Brazilians do love their plants," explains Eduardo. The flat is arranged around an open living-dining area, with a small kitchen, two bedrooms and a bathroom off the L-shaped corridor that connects it to the front door. The 1960s

'My mum hated her Formica chairs so much, she eventually threw hers away. They're really expensive now'

teak dining table and Formica chairs are exact replicas of the ones both Eduardo and Mauricio grew up with.

"My mum hated them so much, she eventually threw hers away," laughs Eduardo. "They're really expensive now. We managed to find ours about six years ago." The wallpaper behind the table is Orla Kiely for Habitat and the Eames RAR rocking chair was a wedding gift. The mid-century aesthetic, the Brazilian-inspired cacophony of colour and pattern, and the nostalgic collections are all part of creating a home from home.

"I've been in London for over 20 years, so I feel very comfortable here," says Eduardo. "I miss the people and the food more than the country itself, but I think that's because we've created a little corner of Brazil in our apartment. It's the same if you visit any of our Brazilian friends. It's like walking into an apartment in Rio." ■ minalima.com