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The penthouse at Barratt London's Great Minster House, features Daylesford Organic in the kitchen cupboards

PROPERTY & ARCHITECTURE

The psychology of show homes

From a Porsche key to Fendi cushions, Zoe Dare Hall looks at how developers and designers use strategic product placement to help sell the dream lifestyle



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With some show homes, it's not so much a case of whether the property is right for you, but are you right for it? Through the power of suggestion with strategically-placed branded items, these homes tell us how we should live.

Some brands have become ubiquitous – the achievable decadence of Jo Malone candles in the bathroom and safely trendy Tom Dixon in the open-plan living area. But it's the subtle, niche touches that give a potent insight into who we are meant to be if we get to call this place home.



Aesop and LA Bruket are the toiletries of choice at Banda Property's Parkgate House in

At Great Minster House in Westminster, where apartments range from £975,000 for a one-bed to £6m for a three-bed duplex (barratthomes.co.uk), the kitchen cupboards and fridge are packed with Daylesford Organic granola and juice. Perhaps it's the property equivalent of the old "My other car's a Porsche" sticker; this version means "My other home's in Chipping Norton". You may be living in the epicentre of the British establishment, but you're still a green-minded, country type at heart. In some show homes, one small touch is worth a thousand words. At [Mount Anvil's](#) The Landau in Fulham, where one-bed residences start at £895,000 through [Strutt & Parker](#), a Porsche key sits discreetly on the sideboard. Say no more.

Elsewhere, the lifestyle branding is blatant and all the better for it, thinks Ben Babington, director of residential development at [Jackson-Stops & Staff](#), who was particularly taken by a James Bond-themed study in one apartment, including mini Aston Martins and Martini glasses on the desk and the 007 theme music played on loop. Also etched in his mind is a guest bedroom that flaunted Agent Provocateur branding with pink and black furnishings. "It even made use of archetypal products such as strategically-draped blindfolds", says Babington. He sees it as the marriage of theatre and beautiful homes. "The brands are deployed to make the viewer associate that room with an idealistic lifestyle," he comments.

Books also speak volumes of the lifestyle to aspire to if you become resident. At Goodman's Fields in Aldgate, where flats cost up to £5m (berkeleygroup.co.uk) and most

buyers are “sophisticated City workers”, according to Berkeley Homes, *The Great Gatsby* is the title of choice in the show flats.



A Banda Property show home, with collectors' edition hardbacks from Phaidon on the coffee table

At Alto in Wembley, where [Quintain](#) is transforming the area around the stadium, Alexa Chung's *It* graces the bed throw (and there's a bottle of Bollinger on the breakfast bar). A new look location demands a new kind of buyer – and the young, thrusting demographic seems to be what these developers have in mind.

It's a similar story when reinventing Stratford. [Manhattan Loft Gardens](#), where flats start at £615,000 (harrodsestates.com) will provide the area's first designer landmark and the area's first million-pound one-beds. Seeking to create the same “sense of comfort” he brought to Chiltern Firehouse, Manhattan Loft Corporation's founder Harry Handelsman has requested Aesop products for the bathroom, Veuve Clicquot in the fridge and “exquisite pieces from B&B Italia”.

It would be a waste not to nose around the wardrobe of some of these show flats too as the designer's fantasy image of the eventual buyer continues behind closed doors. [Telford Homes's spectacular triplex penthouse](#) at Parliament House – designed by [Honky](#) and on sale for £6m – displays a collection of select designer pieces including a Stella McCartney evening dress for her and a Thom Sweeney tuxedo and a black Church's brogues for him.

Gucci, Louis Vuitton and Mulberry line the wardrobes in the five-bedroom show houses at the developer [Hill's Ninewells in Cambridge](#), which start at £1.4m. But Banda Property are far more likely to display Acne Studios than Gucci in their developments, which include Radstock House in Battersea, where lateral apartments start from £3.5m (bandaproperty.co.uk).



The exterior of Ninewells, Cambridge

“[Acne] appeals to the more on-trend, brand-conscious buyer. Branded furniture and lighting from designers such as Michael Anastassiades or Apparatus Studio will be familiar to a real design brand junkie – and we think it’s clichéd to place a bottle of Bollinger on the breakfast bar. Our clients are too clever to buy into that kind of overt product placement. You’re more likely to see a set of Bang & Olufsen headphones lying on a bedside table in our show homes,” says Rebecca Wakefield, Banda’s creative director.

David Gamble, director of the interior design team [Edwards Philips Creative](#), is an expert in this kind of persuasive branding. He describes it as “the philosophy of life’s ladder”. He explains: “As a business, we analyse clients, purchasers and even our suppliers in line with this philosophy, the principle being that whatever step we align them to, they want to be one step higher”.

If you want to understand your potential buyers, “it’s vital to understand lifestyle brands and their position in the market,” adds Gamble, whose team work closely with the boutique London developer Dukelease. One of their joint projects is [Hop House in Covent Garden](#), where a three-bed duplex is still available for £1.725m ([CBRE](#)). Among the “accessories synonymous with British luxury”, says Gamble, show flats there were adorned with Fortnum & Mason chinaware and Liberty silverware.

One newly-built house that offers a branded lifestyle on a plate to its future buyer is 76 Ladbroke Grove in Notting Hill, soon to be launched by [Landmass London](#) for £6.95m. Every item has been given the bespoke branding treatment from the towels and crockery to the door number. Even the cushions are custom-made by Fendi. Landmass’s managing director Alan Waxman explains the theory behind luxury lifestyle branding. “We try to give someone what we think they want as opposed to what they might think they want,” he comments, cryptically. “They can’t know that they want it if they’ve never seen it before,” he adds. “That’s the ultimate luxury.”