



Investigating SPACES

Interior design has a big impact on our everyday lives. With this in mind, *Francesca Lee* chats to Battersea-based author Thomas Mogford about his new study and penning his fourth novel, and what he likes most about the area

When I think of a study, I automatically conjure up an old gentlemen's club-style space; dark yet cosy, leather-bound books crammed into bookshelves and papers scattered across the floor. However, when I arrived at crime writer Thomas Mogford's Victorian terrace, which he shares with wife Ali and their two children, I realise my perceptions – which Sherlock Holmes would be proud of – are vastly wrong...

Your workspace is quite different to what I'd imagined; it's modern, light and bright. What was the inspiration behind the look and feel of the space?

To create somewhere I can shut myself away to write my novels. I get easily distracted so we went for clean lines and neutral décor. I knew I wanted to be relatively

self-sufficient within the space, so there's a kettle for inspirational cups of tea, an armchair for relaxing in and a bathroom complete with shower to wash away the crime writing grit of the day.

How did the move come about?

It was part of a much wider building project. My wife and I decided to convert the loft to create extra space, which many people have done around here. Half of it was used for our son's bedroom, while I took the other half for my study. However, when my wife and I extended our family we needed an extra bedroom, so we turned one of the rooms at the back of the house into my study instead. It was a win-win situation as the kids have a floor of their own, while I have a peaceful working environment.

I notice you've positioned the desk against the wall as opposed to against the window, why is this?

When I was at school I'd often stare out of the window and watch the world go by, so I knew that if my desk looked out to the garden, history would repeat itself.

Three pieces of abstract art hang from the walls.

Why did you pick these?

'Real-life' pictures would, again, make my mind wander. My wife and I have put together a small collection of art over the years and I chose these as I admire the shapes, colours, forms and textures.

What books do you have on display and why?

I don't have much room as there are only two bookshelves in my study, so I knew I'd have to whittle my collection down; it was tricky to say the least! I have other authors' crime novels, plus research and travel books to places such as Malta and Morocco where Spike Sanguinetti, the Gibraltar protagonist of my book, goes on his adventures. I attend crime conventions and writers' meet-ups and we're often given a reading list, so some of these are on the shelves too. Personally, I like anything with a fast-moving plot, but it doesn't have to be crime!

I see you have a number of postcards on your desk, why do you have these?

The setting is very important to the books so I like to have them lying around to glance at every now and then for inspiration.

How do you plan your working week?

As my September deadline looms I'm spending Monday to Friday, and sometimes weekends, in the study. I tend to lock myself away from 10am to 3pm then break for lunch. My wife, who also works from home, and I share the childcare. I occasionally still get distracted; whether I can hear my one-year-old having a tantrum or the postman arriving, it's hard to break old habits! One unexpected bonus is the bathroom fan, which makes a whirring sound but doesn't distract me as it's white noise.'

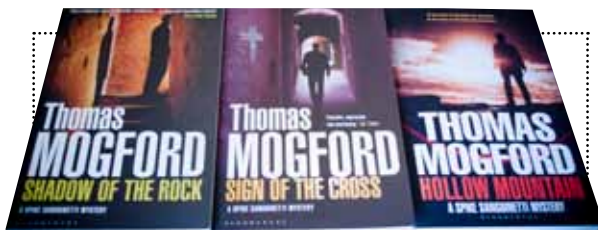
What are you currently working on?

My fourth novel, which is due out next April. Spike will leave Gibraltar and go on his travels to Corfu and Albania, which I'm loving writing about.



In previous interviews you've commented that you've struggled with the planning process, how has this changed?
 My wife offers to read the chapter synopses, which can be a very long and painstaking process. She's very honest and makes brilliant suggestions and then I make amendments to the plot. In the past I used to launch myself into writing but then I'd get writer's block, whereas now I do the groundwork and it flows a lot more. I used to think if no one else looked at my work it was a form of artistic purity, but on reflection I think I was just fearful of having any holes exposed.

You moved into your house in August 2012, why did you decide on Battersea?
 My wife and I both had one-bedroom flats in west London and found that we could get a lot more space for our money here. We love the local community, and we're often found trawling the book collections of charity shops on Battersea Park Road. We also love the fact that Clapham has great transport links to the City and beyond. ■



Thomas Mogford is the author of a series of crime novels following the adventures of Spike Sanguinetti, a lawyer from Gibraltar with a penchant for dangerous cases. The first in the series, *Shadow of the Rock*, was one of the *Spectator's* Books of the Year and was shortlisted for the CWA 2013 John Creasey Dagger Award for best new crime writer. The sequel, *Sign of the Cross*, was shortlisted for the 2014 CrimeFest eDunnit Award. The third book in the series, *Hollow Mountain* was published by Bloomsbury in April 2014.

(thomasmogford.com)

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