

David Bailey's photos defined 1960s London, and his visions of the capital are still in demand — on the walls of new £6m flats.

By **Caroline Scott**

The ultimate developer

David Bailey's front door, on the sixth floor of a converted warehouse in north London, is opened by his son Fenton, a good-looking 26-year-old with beautiful manners. Bailey — as everyone, including his wife, Catherine, calls him — is installed in a leather armchair in the far corner of the room, hair standing on end, looking like a furious owl. "Do you want coffee?" he hollers. "There's no f***** milk. Fen! Make her a coffee."

From up here you can see the London Eye and the Shard, which he says he loves. "It's great. Looks like Stargate." And a lot of offices in different stages of development, which he hates. He hopes the new Google building will obliterate them from view completely. But where, I wonder out loud, does he buy a pint of milk? Bailey, 75 and a chronic asthmatic, says he hasn't touched milk, meat, alcohol or drugs for 40 years. OK, bread, then. He gives me a withering look. "How would I f***** know where the shops are? I work all the time."

He has asked that we don't reveal exactly where he lives, but the view from floor-to-ceiling glass windows on three sides makes you feel you're at the epicentre of London — which, according to Bailey, is "the greatest city on Earth". "I've got my own clock on the side of St Pancras station and my own train set down there," he chuckles. Still standing between construction sites are two Victorian station buildings, with a bridge and their own bit of platform. "They're empty, and I've been trying to buy them all my life, but the council won't let me. I'm working-class. I'm not going to rent."

Bailey has a reputation for being a difficult and waspish interviewee — and pity the poor photographer who has to work under his gaze. He says he doesn't dislike journalists per se. "Just all those silly feminists, as they called themselves in the 1970s. They weren't f***** feminists, they were just unhappy women." And other than his idols — Henri Cartier-Bresson and Irving Penn — he isn't really interested in photography. I mention something about digital and immediately regret it. "Kinell!" he wheezes. "You don't know anything about art, do you? No one does."

His point is that there's a difference between taking and making pictures. "I've been painting longer than I've been using a camera, and photography is just another paintbrush. It's what you can do with it that interests me." His teenage heroes were James Dean and the jazz musician Chet Baker. It was an image of the trumpeter by William Claxton that made him take up photography. "He was such a good-looking guy. I just wanted to create an image of myself looking like him."

Bailey first picked up a camera when he was 13, creating a makeshift dark-room in the coal cellar and using his mother's old cooking tins as developing trays. "I loved the idea that something special came up in this goop. It was kind of magical." Even now, waiting to see how portraits turn out makes him nervous. "I don't take loads — six,



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See more of David Bailey's pictures for the Chilterns in a photo gallery thesundaytimes.co.uk/home



David Bailey lives surrounded by art in his London flat, left and below. Above and right, two of the pictures he created for the Chilterns development



Francesco Guidicini; David Bailey



TAKING PORTRAITS IS LIKE SEX. IF IT TAKES LONGER THAN 20 MINUTES SOMEONE IS GOING TO GET BORED — USUALLY THE WOMAN

sometimes 10. And I talk the whole time. You don't even know when you're being photographed, because it's all about the subject. And I'm quick. It's like sex — if it takes longer than 20 minutes, someone is going to get bored, usually the woman."

Bailey, who is both dyslexic and so dyspraxic that he sometimes struggles to hold the camera, is socially completely disinhibited. He says whatever comes into his head: "Are you wearing contact lenses? Your eyes are very blue. How long have you been married? Have you had botox?" He's relentlessly curious and really couldn't care less what anyone thinks of him.

He's been married for nearly 30 years to Catherine, his fourth wife and mother of his three children (as well as Fenton, they have another son, Sascha, 19, and a daughter, Paloma, 28). His voice gets a bit soft and dreamy when he talks about Catherine. He stops swearing. "She's the best thing that ever happened to me.

I loved Penelope [Tree] and [Catherine] Deneuve. I still love them, we're good mates, but some people you love and can't live with."

He slept with "a lot" of beautiful women (he's vague about numbers), yet his exes — he was married to both Deneuve and the model Marie Helvin — have rarely had a bad word to say about him. "No one leaves anyone," he muses. "I was working in Paris when Deneuve rang and said, 'We got divorced today. Isn't it great — now we can be lovers!' All the women I've been with have had a sense of humour."

And they'd need one. Bailey, it turns out, is also undomesticated. "When Catherine and I got married, I told her, I don't care how much help you have in the house, but I'm not doing anything. Why would I wash a dish when I could be taking a picture?" So they have a housekeeper and a cleaner, and when Catherine goes to a lot of trouble cooking for guests, he says: "What did you bother doing all that for?" She must be a tolerant and saintly woman.

He was, he says, "in retrospect a rubbish dad. I liked it when I could teach them chess — and they all beat me now. It's funny getting old. I still know as much, and I still think the same way. My only angst, if I have an angst, is that there's so much I want to do, and I'm not sure I'm going to have time."

He is a prolific painter, and has many of his own artworks in storage. Others are displayed at his house in Devon — a sprawling four-building affair where he has his studio. The decor is the same as here — kilim rugs, sofas covered in bold tapestries and giant pieces of African and Oceanic art. He has pictures by Francis Bacon, Banksy and Irving Penn. And a lot of "Damien" (skulls, paintings

and bronzes by his good friend Damien Hirst). He bought his first African piece from Sotheby's in 1963 and hasn't stopped collecting. "I think it's the truest form of art, because it isn't about making money. It's like the American blues. They do it because they do it because they do it. It's pure."

The surface I have rested my mug on turns out to be a circumcision table from New Guinea, carved in the shape of a crocodile. Does that make him feel a little, er, uncomfortable? "Only if you're a petit-bourgeois twit. If I go outside now, chances are I'll pass someone who's killed someone. What's the difference? I lived with this tribe for four weeks while they were still cannibals."

Also on the circumcision/coffee table are piles of WHSmith photo albums, the sticky-paged sort regular people put their snaps in. Lots of photographers wouldn't bother. "I'm not lots of photographers. Lots of photographers are morons. Every time I take a picture it's important, and I don't care what it is. I don't do pictures for money, and that's the truth, unless I'm given total freedom."

Which brings us to his collaboration on the Chilterns, a multimillion-pound development in the heart of Marylebone. Bailey has shot 44 pictures, one for each of the flats, which range in price from £3m to £6m. Did they twist your arm? "No. I liked the people and I liked the project." Why do you think they wanted you? "Who else are they going to use?"

He has a point. No one does London like Bailey. The son of an East End tailor, "the nearest thing to actually being Jewish", he grew up in a two-up, two-down in West Ham. His iconic images of everyone from his then girlfriend Jean Shrimpton to the Kray twins defined a generation. Handsome and rakish, he was loathed by feminists because he had a reputation for seducing all his models. Were the 1960s really that great? "Yes!" he says. "For a few hundred people in London. If you were a coal miner in Yorkshire, not so good."

He's not particularly interested in property, unless he can live in it or use it as studio space, and despite producing prints that can sell for up to £50,000 at auction, he doesn't consider himself wealthy. Who do you consider rich, then? "The people who buy my pictures!" he says. Cue much coughing and cackling.

Bailey shot the Chilterns series over three months last winter. He drives himself relentlessly. He has three books coming out next year and two exhibitions, one at the National Portrait Gallery in February, which he will curate himself. He has no truck with museum curators, whom he calls "educated fools".

He isn't frightened of death. "I think about it every day — quite curious, actually." But there is still far too much to do. He wants to paint more. He wants to make a film about his childhood. He wants to do more bronzes, more sculptures. Wouldn't he like to kick back and relax a bit? "Nooo!" he rumbles. "I've never understood retirement. What am I supposed to do, breed f***** budgerigars and grow tomatoes?"

MARYLEBONE EXPOSED

Bailey's pictures will adorn an ambitious scheme that aims to create a new village in the heart of the capital

The Chilterns is a collection of 44 luxury flats being built on a former 1970s car park overlooking Paddington Street Gardens — the first completely new build in Marylebone in five years. Because the developers haven't had to work with listed facades or an existing footprint, there have been few limitations in terms of design and layout. The result is more than 100,000 sq ft of pure luxury.

Thirty-two-bedroom flats and duplexes go on sale tomorrow, with a starting price of £3m; there are 13 three-bedders and one lavish six-bedroom penthouse — available for roughly £6m. For this, residents can

enjoy a gym, a spa, a private cinema, a 24-hour concierge service, underground parking with a car lift and a secure basement wine cellar. Interiors are being designed by Rabih Hage — think clean lines, lots of dark wood, natural stone, blacks and neutrals — and most of the flats have a private terrace or balcony. The unique selling point, according to Paul White, chairman and chief executive of Frogmore, the developer behind the scheme, is that it will feel more like a village

than a block of flats. "Marylebone is a special place — one of London's hidden 'villages' — and we wanted a great photographer to reflect that." Hence the decision to approach Bailey.

White says Bailey set off with his own agenda. "I knew that when he produced the work, we'd either say 'That's great' or 'We can't use it.' You don't tell Bailey what to do. But he's so professional and understands London so well, I knew the latter wasn't going to happen."

The main entrance hall will be spectacular: pure white, with solid oak seats, and lined with original Bailey prints, making it feel more like an art gallery than a foyer. The owner of each flat will also be given a framed print of their choice, along with a signed coffee-table book that has been printed so lavishly, it weighs about the same as a comforting magnum of Dom Pérignon.

White expects inquiries from China and the Far East, as well as London.

"Luxury developments always attract those looking to buy to let, but I think people who love the Chilterns will want to move in."

For Bailey's part, he adds: "Marylebone has an abundance of goodies, from a great fish-and-chip shop to Wigmore Hall and Damien Hirst's office and shop. In fact, the full gamut.

"The best way to see a place is to photograph it. You don't always see a place, a person, a park, until you look at a photograph." **CS**

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