



## KEEPING UP WITH THE ECCLESTONES

*If you include the cinema, sauna and bowling alley, there are 57 rooms in Tamara Ecclestone's Kensington mansion. The irony is she spends most of her time in just three of them*



REPORT Vinny Lee PHOTOGRAPHS Paul Massey



Clockwise from far left:  
the bar on the first of  
two subterranean levels;  
the bowling alley; the  
informal dining room;  
Tamara Ecclestone  
with her husband,  
Jay Rutland, at a charity  
gala in London in May







**A**ppropriately for someone from a family with an estimated worth of £3 billion, Tamara Ecclestone lives on the most expensive street in London. A five-bedroom flat here recently sold for £25 million; Ecclestone's place has 57 rooms. So approaching her mansion on Kensington Palace Gardens is intimidating. Armed guards and policemen are highly visible as they protect the neighbouring embassies that line this tree-shaded enclave. Ecclestone, her husband, Jay Rutland, and their five-month-old daughter, Sophia, have lived in this exclusive neighbourhood for just over a year.

The eldest daughter of Bernie Ecclestone, Formula 1 president and CEO, is the co-founder and CEO of the multimillion-pound cosmetics company Show. She's not too shabby at property investment, either. Her home has almost doubled in price since



its two-year renovation was completed in 2013.

The red-brick house, built in the early 1900s, has six storeys – four above ground and two below – so you can more than double the £25 million cost of the five-bed apartment, then add a further £18 million for the building works and custom-made interiors.

In person, Ecclestone is straightforward, and more attractive than she appears in photographs, albeit with a fair amount of lavishly extended eyelash fluttering. She comes across as a well-spoken, savvy and home-loving 30-year-old, completely smitten with her daughter, but still focused on her

**'The minute I walked in, I knew it would be a wonderful family home. It had a great energy. I felt it could be a home for life'**





**Clockwise from top left: the staircase to the basement with gold-leaf mural; the dining room; the pool with backlit onyx on the wall; the exterior of the grade II-listed building; Tracey Emin neon over the fireplace**

business and charity commitments, Tamara Gives Back and the Formula 1 balls she hosts in aid of Great Ormond Street hospital.

Sitting in the grey, silver and white-themed informal dining room, Ecclestone explains why she invested in this particular property.

"It's rare for these houses to come on the market," she says. "The minute I walked in, I knew it would be a wonderful family home. It had a great energy. I felt it could be a home for life." And this was before she'd met and married Rutland.

For the renovation and remodelling, Ecclestone "embarked on the journey" with London-born, Los Angeles-based Gavin Brodin.

"I met Gavin through friends," she says. "He'd done up lots of houses in Los Angeles but none in the UK. I wanted something that wasn't a designer-label look. I wanted a home that was a bit different, but also very personal; somewhere I'd be warm and comfortable." ➔



Brodin's previous dealings with actors' antics and rock-star temperaments stood him in good stead when it came to coping with the numerous regulations and restrictions that come with working on a grade II\*-listed house on crown land in the Kensington Palace neighbourhood. "Many of the original features had to be kept and we were limited in the removing or replacing of walls," he says. "Anything we wanted to do had to be approved both by the listed building authorities and the Crown Estate."

Much of the original moulding and wood panelling and many of the fireplaces remain, but have been subjected to months of painstaking french polishing and hand finishing, restoring them to their former glory. The amount of work and attention to detail involved are best illustrated by the gun-metal grey finish of the wood panelling in the ground floor entrance and hall. "It was produced from a blend of 13 colours, polished and finished with seven different techniques," says Brodin.

When it came to the decoration of the house, Ecclestone says she surprised herself with how interested she became.

"Petra [her younger sister] was always the arty one, experimenting with fashion and drawing, so it was a bit of a revelation when I found myself enjoying this part of the project so much," she says. "I gathered tear sheets and ideas, the way I did for the design of my wedding dress, and used them as inspiration. I also spent a lot of time at Chelsea Harbour looking at fabrics and carpet patterns and really loved choosing photo frames, vases and bed linens. The little things are important, even in a project of this size."

Much of the cabinetry and furniture was custom-made, including the one-tonne crystal chandelier in the entrance hall. "It's a unique design," says Brodin. "It was made in Italy as a one-off that won't be copied or repeated."

Other stunning features include the art deco black and gold mural on the staircase down to the basement. It is made from a combination of bespoke trompe l'oeil and bas relief on linen with handpainted gold leaf. The stairs lead to the two lower levels, which house a bowling alley, bar, club room, billiard room, cinema, sauna and swimming pool. The pool area has a spectacular wall of back-lit black onyx, each piece cut and matched to achieve a seamless chevron pattern.

When asked about this world below stairs, Ecclestone replies that she would "rather entertain at home than go out. We have great birthday parties for our friends, and sometimes just a few will come over for drinks and a game of snooker with Jay or to watch the football or Formula 1 on the big screen in the cinema."

Upstairs there is an array of contemporary



From top: the cinema in the basement; the garden

### 'Petra was always the arty one, so it was a bit of a revelation when I found myself enjoying this project so much'

art, including, over the fireplace, a Tracey Emin neon heart with the words "Tamara and Jay always", which was a wedding present from Petra. "Buying artworks and photography for the house is something Jay and I enjoy doing together," says Ecclestone, as she lists the galleries in London and Los Angeles that they have visited.

But after all the time and money that have been spent on creating this home, things are being changed again. The arrival of Sophia has initiated a second phase of work "to make it a more child and family-friendly place".

The glass grand piano has been removed from the sitting room and replaced by a large lounging sofa where all the family can relax. A guest bedroom and bathroom have been

made over into a pink and white nursery – with ample shelf space for gifts from doting grandfather Bernie. Ecclestone picks up one recent present, a small antique filigree doll's pram.

"Dad's a mad collector," says Ecclestone as she puts the delicate pram back on the shelf. "He's always buying things at sales and auctions." Another guest bedroom is being turned into a playroom, but it is already filled with toys. "Hand-me-downs from Petra – her daughter Lavinia has grown out of these." It's refreshing to know that even multimillionaires are not beyond hand-me-downs.

After a busy year of moving house, getting married and having a baby, how is Ecclestone settling into her 57-room home?

"Since Sophia was born we seem to live in three rooms at most: the kitchen, where I make breakfast – that's my forte; the sitting room, to relax and watch TV; and our bedroom where Sophia also has her cot."

And has she got to know the neighbours with their gun-toting guards? "Well, they haven't popped in for a cup of sugar yet," she says with a laugh. ■