

The Angel

December 2014

# resident

## Christmas covered

The gifts, events & places... Islington's finest Yuletide treats



BENEDICT  
CUMBERBATCH  
*On his toughest role yet*

MEET THE  
PRODUCERS  
*Festive dining with a conscience*

# TROO STORY

*It's to do with trees, but not in the traditional Christmas sense...  
We take a closer look at the North Londoner with the bespoke touch*

Words MARK KEBBLE



Splendid  
Squire Dining

**T**he Clerkenwell Collection is something a little different. It's an ever-evolving gallery, store and events space with a much celebrated bar and kitchen, a biodynamic wine cellar with tasting rooms and a tailoring studio – and was where I first came across the work of Tree Couture and Troo Heath-Crew. It's a rather apt home considering her own personal journey to this point.

'I'm not sure I can really say I ever had a career as such, but I have had some amazing jobs,' she smiles. 'I have always been very much open to every opportunity, never ruling out even the oddest offers. I have worked as an artist's representative in Spain, set up and run a spa consultancy, an events management company, as well as a language school in Copacabana. I have run a sleep laboratory in Harley Street, worked as a translator, and a journalist for the first ever environmental Earth

Summit. I have sold villas, ice lollies and gemstones. I've loved everything I've done, but none more than what I am doing now.'

That says something about Tree Couture. After learning woodwork – including a stint on a course in Islington – Troo caught the bug and her breathless descriptions of wood as a material will convince those who have never given it a second thought. 'Wood is an organic material that never stays still,' she says. 'It moves and breathes and shrinks and expands – it is the Gemini of the natural world, always on the go. Every Tree Couture piece is essentially a celebration of wood – in all its sumptuous colours and tones, its solidity and strength, its durability and its inherent beauty as well as in its intrinsic value. It is a noble

material and every one of my designs has to do that justice and ensure that it lives on for generations to come.'

Joining forces with two entrepreneurial friends of hers, their

collaborative idea was to create limited edition collections of immaculately handcrafted pieces. 'We're all about

*Every Tree Couture piece is essentially a celebration of wood and its inherent beauty*



Ménage A Bois  
nest of tables



Lime Tree  
Coffee Table

### Online

To find out what role the Brazilian rainforest played in Tree Couture's creation, visit [theresident.co.uk](http://theresident.co.uk)



The  
Clerkenwell  
Collection



Troo working  
on her next  
masterpiece



Ah-Mwa in the making  
in the Tree Couture  
studio

creating strong, beautiful pieces of furniture that last – sort of contemporary antiques,' Troo states. 'We have no interest in mass-production or manufacturing and handcraft only small numbers of our collections from our London atelier.'

A delightful mews building in Crouch Hill – 'I've always considered myself a North London girl,' says the much travelled Troo – the atelier is where all the hard work takes place and where Tree Couture's special creations take shape. Although it's probably a tad too late to request something very different this Christmas, Troo believes the work they do should be embraced throughout the year. 'Special requests come in all year round,' she says. 'Most of our pieces offer bespoke options so clients, if they wish, can specify personalised elements of detailing, such as species of

wood inlay, colour of leather or suede for the interior, glass type, internal configuration of the drawers and so forth. A piece that excites the imagination for a very special gift particularly at this time of year is our Ah-Mwa – a large jewellery cabinet that can store, curate, and display a significant jewellery collection. It's our most expensive piece as it's incredibly involved, with a few hundred painstakingly handcrafted wood components, and all lined in hand-stitched soft Italian leather. Each one takes many weeks to make, but is a spectacularly special collector's piece.'

With a new building recently taken on in the same Crouch Hill mews, it seems like the roots are in place for a period of sustained growth for Tree Couture. Although Troo doesn't expect much time

off at Christmas, are there many places in the area that she feel comes into its own over the festive period? 'Lots!' she exclaims. 'But there are two that really stand out for me. The Clerkenwell Collection is a magical place throughout the year, but at Christmas it's extra special. Full of surprises and delights. My other favourite is my little local Italian restaurant. I have eaten in some of the most celebrated Italian restaurants in London, but not a single one comes close to Il Piccolo Diavolo at 11 Crouch Hill.' Merry Christmas indeed.

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