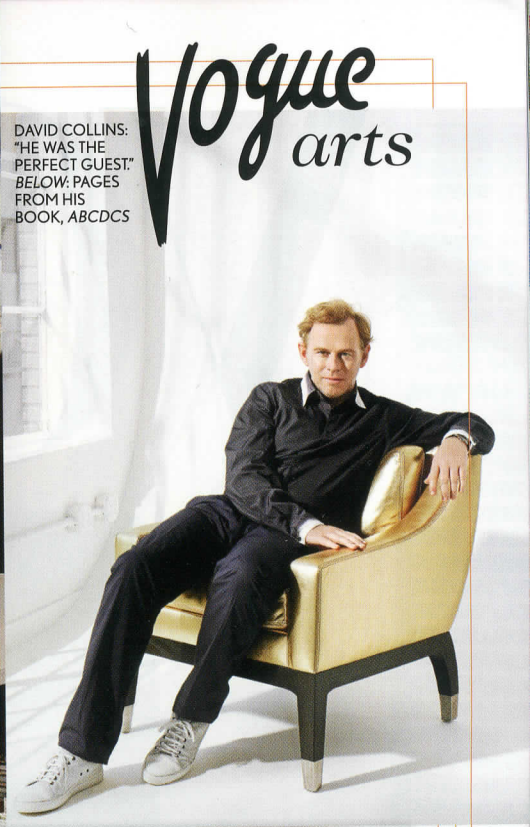


Vogue arts

DAVID COLLINS:
"HE WAS THE
PERFECT GUEST."
BELOW: PAGES
FROM HIS
BOOK, ABCDCS



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:
THE ARTESIAN BAR AT THE
LANGHAM, VOTED BEST BAR
IN THE WORLD, 2012; WITH
HIS FRIEND MADONNA, 1995;
MASSIMO AT THE CORINTHIA



C IS FOR CHIC

An ABC book about architect David Collins's influences makes an elegant epitaph, says Fiona Golfar

David Collins loved a party. He was the perfect guest. His gossip was first-rate: "You didn't hear this from me," was the classic line he would tantalise us with before delivering some delicious morsel of society scandal. The 58-year-old Irish architect with the warm, lilting voice and the spontaneous laugh was responsible for some of the chicest spots in town. He was the grandmaster of creating environments in which the best quality of gossip could flow - the Wolseley, Locanda Locatelli, J Sheekey - all stages for the drama of life. Every space was as glamorous as the lifestyle he embodied, from the pale perfection of the Blue Bar at the Berkeley hotel to the dusty pinks, pistachio and lilacs in the smoky mirrored Connaught Bar, illuminated with his trademark low, low lighting.

David loved design. He was mad about fashion, especially Lanvin (he was thrilled to host a dinner for Alber Elbaz at his West Kensington home), but what he really loved was showbusiness. Madonna was his



best friend, and he was fascinated by the stardust that sprinkled the world he moved in. He brought the same rarefied thrill of exclusivity to the spaces he designed - each a stage from which one would be as entertained by one's fellow dining companions as you might be by the food. He knew how to "stage-manage" a dining room to wonderful theatrical effect, with top tables to both gawp and preen at. This was not done out of snobbery; David was like an old-school impresario, and restaurants, hotels and bars were his stages.

Sadly we lost David last year. It was shocking and sudden. Blue, his favourite colour, was the appropriate word for the mood that prevailed. But now we have something to remember him by - a book he had been working on. *ABCDCS* is a visual A to Z of David's work and influences.

It's a great shame that such a publication has become his postscript: we were cruelly robbed of the chapters to come. But, thanks to his vision, his presence is still felt in every space that he designed. And the show goes on. *"ABCDCS: David Collins Studio" is published by Assouline at £50*

