



# TOMORROW PEOPLE

They may be all about borrowing from and celebrating the past, but these five individuals capture the pioneering mood that's happening right now. Treating home as a muse and interiors as expressions of creativity and personality, they're at the forefront of a new lifestyle where upcycling, vintage, salvage, antiques and, holding everything together, a quest for sustainability, are creating a compelling aesthetic of born-again beauty

WORDS LOMA-ANN MARKS IMAGES © JIM MARKS



# JO WOOD

Vintage lover, model and eco-campaigner, Jo Wood's values are part of her life – in her home, style, organic beauty brand, and as ambassador of global environmental movement Project Zero. She's recently returned from filming *Celebrity Island with Bear Grylls*

**W**hen I was nine we moved to an old vicarage. My dad was an architectural model maker, and one day as he was doing his job he noticed this place and said, "What's that old building?" and they said, "That's an old vicarage; they're going to pull it down." So he went to have a look at it and put in an offer of £5000. I think that's why I love old

houses; I can't ever imagine living in a new one. My mum was a doll collector and doll maker, so she always had old material around – old nighties that she'd cut up and make into little nighties, so I've always loved all that. I used to wear my granny's dresses!

'I've always been about living organically and looking after the planet. I recently got the award for Greenest Family, at the People's Environment Awards. My younger son Tyrone runs Project Zero with Michelle Clarke; he's mad about cleaning up the planet, which I'm proud of him for. They started it in New York, and now they're here. They've got all the Edition Hotels to go plastic-free, and Soho House will, too.

'More and more people are going that way. Finally we're realising what we're doing to the planet. Landfill is just outrageous. When I was doing *Celebrity Island*, one thing that absolutely horrified me was seeing the amount of plastic on the beach. Thousands of bottles, flip-flops, rope, fishing nets. Before I went I was like: "I'm going to start picking up all the plastic when I get there, do some kind of a sculpture." But when I actually stood there and looked at how much there was... it was just awful. If everybody made an effort, it would change the way manufacturers worked, and they'd have to look for an alternative. I did a little protest recently with my granddaughter and niece at

Waitrose. We went to the self-checkout, and as my niece scanned the produce with plastic I unwrapped them, and my granddaughter put them in our bag. Then I put all the wrappings back in the trolley. So we just walked out with a bag of unpackaged veg! I once asked, "Why are you putting plastic on cucumbers?" They said they wanted to separate organic from non-organic. They could use a sticker.

'With all my love of eco and organic, I think why buy new clothes all the time when there are so many ways to be creative with old ones? Same with my stuff at home. I'd rather re-cover my couch, which I love, than buy a new one. I've covered it four times. My brother Paul [Karslake] is an artist and we're going to do a YouTube project where we find something that's been scrapped and turn it into a piece of art. You can turn anything into something beautiful. I'm currently working on a new book, putting together all my old photographs from the 70s, 80s and 90s – all these mad pictures from my life! Plus backstage passes, old Rolling Stones concert tickets, and room keys which I used to draw on.



'It's all about individuality. When I came back from *Celebrity Island* we went to Panama, and everyone said, "Do you want to come to the mall? There's Chanel, there's D&G." I said, "No, I don't want to do that!" Why would I go and see the same stuff there as I can in London? It's the same thing with furniture – so

many companies want us all to be the same, look the same. I think we have to have character and individuality, otherwise we'd be little clones, living in boxes that are the same, all dressing the same and looking the same! That's not for me.'

>> [jowoodorganics.com](http://jowoodorganics.com) and [weareprojectzero.org](http://weareprojectzero.org); the latest series of *Celebrity Island with Bear Grylls* airs on Channel 4 this autumn

'I was horrified by the amount of plastic on the beach – thousands of bottles, flip-flops, fishing nets'



**INSIGHTS**

- **Scour markets.** I bought a chandelier at a Miami flea market – it's all pearls – for \$90, and carried it home with me.
- **Lots of my stuff I've had for years.** I won't let go of it, but I just change the display and move it around to get a fresh look. I like to see all my stuff, and look at it. I appreciate things of beauty.
- **I love Alfies Antique Market in London.** I got a 50s lamp from there. I love old lace sheets too, and heavy linen. I fall in love with stuff! You don't have to spend a lot.
- **Be creative.** In my house in Spain, I discovered an old table frame and an old bit of wood. I got someone to shorten the legs, put the wood on top and varnish it, making a lovely coffee table. It's got history. That's what makes it interesting.

For Jo, reclamation is about looking after the planet, as well as expressing individuality

## INSIGHTS

- **Buy what you like, but as you go through your buying process, your taste will alter.** You'll see how something is a good thing, or not so good, and that takes time and experience. I have to buy just looking at a photograph – you have to make a call, and it can be thousands of pounds. When I first began, I made lots of mistakes. Still do, but not so many.
- **Don't buy something for the space, or say 'it won't fit'.** If you love it you'll make it fit. You do regret the things you don't buy – I still think about the things I missed! Just buy it if you can afford it.
- **There are always trends, so the way to go is to stamp your own personality on your home.** Mine's quite dark and moody – you'll see that in the things I buy.



James can't resist unrestored items that come with a bit of history or a story to tell

# JAMES GOOCH

After a career in TV, James Gooch started Doe & Hope, an antiques dealership specialising in rare and decorative pieces. Supplying to film and TV shows such as *Game of Thrones*, his cinematic style and keen eye sees him with an impressive client list including Stephen Fry, Jemima Khan and The Prodigy's Keith Flint

In 2009 I decided to quit TV. I've always loved old things; I collected old coins when I was very young. My granny left me about £5000 when she died, and I put that into building a website and getting stock. I had no idea what I was doing! But I did two days a week at Debden Antiques in Essex, so I could build up my knowledge. I've found that the antiques business is totally different to working in television, but I studied film and I've applied that visual thing to how I present the stock. I tend to sell in groups – it's like set decorating. If I have a piece I know what it'll go with.

'I'm drawn to stuff that's not restored. It has to have that story to it, to tell you where it's been before rather than have that all erased. The first thing I bought to sell was a child's rattle; it would've been for a christening present. The best deal I've done was a painting by one of the world's most famous forgers, Han van Meegeren, but it was one of his own works. That sold really well. The antiques trade is a bit like gambling – you get a shot of adrenalin, a kick every time. But it's hard to buy the right thing at the right price. It's nice to own these things, but ultimately it's a business and you have to try and detach from them – although if I'm really attached to something I'll give it a higher price, then if it sells I can tell myself it was worth it!

'I love this shoe [pictured]. It was behind the fireplace in our house, called Shoe Cottage. I can see why people would find it slightly strange, but I find it evocative. It was used to ward off spirits. They would also put dead cats or cat heads under floorboards or behind the fireplace. This was the time of witch hunting, in the 1650s. The shoe has been preserved really well behind all the bricks, and likewise the cats become mummified – I've sold a few. I don't like big game, that's not classy, but I do my own little taxidermy thing, with all the right certificates. I do small pieces, like little birds. I bought this huge harp, Regency period, completely distressed, and I got a barn owl and positioned it on the top. I do projects like that occasionally, putting things on something you wouldn't expect.



'I personify pieces; I see them as speaking things. The stuff around you affects who you are. Saying that, my own home is full of okay stuff, but I sell the best. I've got a couple of good pieces – a really primitive Queen Anne dining table with two leaves and a nice

Georgian painted chest. My wife got sick of me selling the sofas. Before I had my showroom all the stock was in my house, so she'd come home and find the sofa gone, with nothing to sit on! Thankfully that doesn't happen now.'

>> [doeandhope.com](http://doeandhope.com)

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# JAY BLADES

A social entrepreneur helping young people into work through furniture restoration, Jay has become a TV hit, starring in *Money for Nothing* and *The Repair Shop*, with his furniture upcycling enterprise and business Jay&Co a coveted brand. He's in the current series of *Celebrity MasterChef*

I'm originally from a poor background and I wanted to give back to young people. The people I work with are like me, maybe not academic but brilliant with their hands. I wanted to show them, "Look, this is what you can do". At the moment if you're from a poor background there are three alternatives: crime, sport or music. If you don't do any of those there's not much choice. I wanted to show that design is an option, that you can like pink fabric and styling! The young people I work with are quite urban and they think all that's just a feminine thing, but it can be for everyone. I teach them, too, how to make money from nothing, to make a piece and then sell it.

I've always been interested in design, but I focused on furniture as when I co-founded Out of the Dark (my first charity) we were based in High Wycombe, which was the furniture capital of the world. Ercol, G Plan and Parker Knoll are all based there. At one stage there were 500 workshops making 5000 chairs a week. When I got into it, I knew nothing about furniture or painting, but I learnt how to do caning, rushing, French polishing, and how to upholster.

Then Out of Dark folded, my relationship ended and I gave up my house. A friend said, "I'm going to look after you". He had a massive building, which is now my workshop, and he said I could go in there and "do your arty-farty stuff". From there I've set myself goals on everything, and began Jay&Co. I looked at big companies and saw they do ranges. I thought, I'll do that too - and I do it with a lot less budget and a lot more flair! Saying that, I call my house 50 shades of beige. It's magnolia everywhere. It's because every colour pops to me, everything glows. And if you're always in colour, and you work in colour, it can become too much.



'The TV thing has been a surprise. *The Guardian* did a video on me, it went viral and I was contacted by numerous TV companies because of that. In the first two series of *Money for Nothing* Sarah [Moore] was the sole presenter, but from the third series onwards I'm co-presenting with her. We get on really well, but we're like chalk and cheese. She's proper posh and I'm common as muck! Each episode takes a minimum of nine days to film because we're at the dump waiting for stuff to come in; that takes time. The popularity of *Money for Nothing* and also *The Repair Shop* is because people want to do things up themselves now. They don't want to throw things away, so what they are actually throwing away really is rubbish! I've had to wait up to two weeks for something decent to work on before now.

'This industry can be quite middle class, white and posh and I bring a bit of diversity. Some great people have helped me along the way. Heals have been phenomenal to me. And Sir Terence Conran and Sean Sutcliffe of Benchmark. I use a lot of Timorous Beasties fabric - they've given me loads of free stuff. They all champion what I'm trying to achieve, because this is a way of living. We can't keep consuming, so what's the next best thing? Make do and mend, see what you've got already, recycle and reuse. I want to help people live uniquely. That's what it's about. There's a lot of thinking about what I do.

'I'm actually in TV so I can sing about the young people. I'm saying the same things I was when I was a small charity, but now that I'm a brand... I thought, I need to become something so people will listen. When you're on TV, I don't know why, people listen to you. I use that to my advantage.'

>> [jayand.co](http://jayand.co); *Money for Nothing* and *The Repair Shop* are available on BBC iPlayer

'I wanted to show that design is an option, that you can like pink fabric and styling'

Jay knew little about furniture upcycling when he started out, but was focused on his goals



## INSIGHTS

- **I've studied and watched the big brands.** My competitors are DFS, IKEA and Furniture Village. I don't look at anyone else who does what I do. I look at established players. But I've always known how to sell.
- **Not every piece of furniture speaks to me.** You have to sit with it, sometimes for up to six months.
- **There's a blog I'm working on, it's all about support and love.** I'd like Jay&Co academies across the country, teaching people to do what I do.
- **Since working with young people, I've always had a saying:** every action you take, will it take you where you need to go?

Sara's house renovation using reclaimed materials led her to reassess her way of life



#### INSIGHTS

- **Be curious.** Actually go to a salvage yard, see the possibilities.
- **Initially, it can be difficult knowing what you need or want.** Yard owners are really helpful, and give ideas. It's nice to have a face-to-face conversation.
- **Take your time.** There's lots of pressure to have everything perfect in your home, straightaway. But allow your space to introduce itself. It helps you think more cleverly. The upside is you can find magic in things you never thought would work.
- **My mantra for Reclaimed Woman, and myself, is:** 'The examined life is worth living.'

# SARA MOREL

With a background in fashion PR, Sara changed her career, and her life, and started Reclaimed Woman, a consultancy helping sustainable brands communicate and individuals choose eco clothes and salvaged homeware

**R**eclaimed Woman started a year and a half ago. The journey to it began when I bought my flat, my first home, which I was able to do thanks to a career in fashion and PR. I decided to renovate and I was initially driven by the aesthetic of reclaimed materials. But as I began to learn more about sustainable sourcing, it spurred a change across my whole life. I always say: "I left fashion to reclaim my life." All the pieces I'd found and made my home with inspired me to change every aspect of my lifestyle, including fashion. I came full circle. Reclaimed Woman is all about the choices we make when we're dressing ourselves or dressing our homes.

'At first, I didn't know where to look for salvaged pieces, and even now it takes more research and also dedication to put the time in. There are some amazing things online and during my travels I visit architectural salvage yards. I became obsessed.

'Lighting and bathroom pieces can be a challenge, as things need to be beautiful but also functional. I had a great builder and I might have a dream of seeing these amazing things I find, but you have to work out what's practical. But like anything, it's a choice. Once you find a wonderful piece you think, "How can I fit that in?" It sets out the design route of your whole space.

'Lots of pieces in my kitchen are from buildings in London. I've got a staff noticeboard from Kings Cross station that I use as cabinet doors. The key piece is organ pipes [pictured] I got from the Architectural Forum, which they salvaged from a church in east London. I found practical ways to use

them: at the end of my fireplace, as part of my Arts and Crafts cooker hood and the leftover bit for decorative purposes. Thankfully, my husband Mike is on-board with the whole salvage lifestyle; he's made some beautiful reclaimed shelves.

'Choosing reclaimed is a talking point right now. We're learning that curiosity makes you feel because as soon as you know the story behind something, you care about it more. It adds value to our lives, and also to the person that made, saved or kept it. Social media, especially Instagram,

does help because you're exposed to things that maybe you wouldn't be otherwise. My favourite thing about it is that it connects you. But it can be a negative thing too, encouraging you to have something new to wear or show. It's fine to have multiple posts, with you wearing the same thing!

'It's really easy to get caught up with fast fashion and homeware – from my previous job, I've got more shoes than anyone should own in a lifetime! But for me, right now, I don't consume in that way any more. I've found the best way to live more sustainably is to do it with something you care about. For me it's fashion and interiors. You have to feel it, otherwise it's like being told off.

'There is a trend to live more eco, and with any trend there's a danger of it dying. But from a point of need, we can't continue the cycle we're on. We're gradually learning that you can upcycle things in a really useful, beautiful way. And it's so important to know that there's not one aesthetic – that's the danger of a trend, when it becomes a look and gets overdone. But choosing reclaimed isn't just a look, it's a lifestyle.'

>> [reclaimedwoman.com](http://reclaimedwoman.com)



'choosing reclaimed adds value to our lives, and also to the person that made, saved or kept the item'

# SONALI SHAH

Presenter of one of TV's most popular shows, *Escape to the Country*, Sonali also works on *The National Lottery Live* and the *Today* programme, and is ambassador for The Prince's Trust and The British Asian Trust. She's currently renovating her own home

I see a lot of reclaimed pieces and antiques on my travels around Britain filming *Escape to the Country*. We have lunch at a lot of garden centres, and actually they're good places to pick up things like crates and milk bottles. I've started to collect bits of furniture for my home renovation but I've had to control myself. If I'm driving for the show and I see a reclamation yard I'll just stop! Normally they're in the middle of nowhere, so it's been good to have the chance to visit these places. My home is a 1930s Arts and Crafts house – can you believe that previous owners blocked up the fireplaces? The large chimney is not even used so we're going to resurrect it, turn it back into what it should be. I want to celebrate that the property is in a conservation area, even though it's in London.

'Interiors is in my blood, and I've always been interested in property and design. My family built our home from the ground up when I was 12. We're from East Africa, and during the recession in the 90s they really didn't expect to find a plot of land in Greater London. But although they did a great job – and recently I helped them renovate it – they couldn't bring much from back home, and what they did bring, they've mostly got rid of. We talk about it a lot, and I think it's a cultural thing. You showed your success by buying new things; there was a slight embarrassment at keeping the old. It was like... well, keeping up with the Kumars or the Patels!

'So many people from the subcontinent who've kept their old furniture couldn't actually afford to buy new, but now they're the lucky ones! Today Indian antiques sell for a fortune. Although many families didn't keep their furniture, they did hold on to jewellery and saris. At weddings people

don't give cash or presents, they give jewellery. This bracelet [pictured] belonged to my grandmother. It's from Persia with Minakari work, which is produced by tapping the enamel onto the gold. I've got lots of beautiful vintage saris, too, including one that belonged to my grandmother, made from real gold thread.

'I want to include my heritage into my new home. My taste is very much country retreat, stripped back, and I want it to give a fresh look to older stuff, whilst incorporating East Africa. For instance, kitchen countertops are a Western idea, but in Kenya everyone sits on the floor and cooks – my grandmother still rolls out her chapatis on the floor. So I've got some short cooking stools and I'm going to display them in my new kitchen. I've spent the last couple of years designing and planning – there's nothing like going around Britain and viewing hundreds of properties, seeing what works, what doesn't. It's an education in periods and styling, and keeping the styling to suit the house.

'The popularity of *Escape to the Country* may be because of that sense of nostalgia, with old places reminding us of childhood, and creating characterful homes. Perhaps it's us wanting to keep our memories. It's great that reclaimed, vintage and antiques are becoming more accessible – they shouldn't just be for the few. People are much more conscious now of knowing the history and provenance of pieces. When I'm visiting houses on the programme, home buyers are always asking, "Why is that stone outside? What are those markings there?" People want to know why things exist.'

>> [sonalishah.co.uk](http://sonalishah.co.uk); *Escape to the Country* is available on BBC iPlayer



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## INSIGHTS

- **There are lots of good antiques places around Primrose Hill in London.** Devol kitchens are great, and have an antiques bit.
- **My dad's a pharmacist, so I want an apothecary's cabinet to represent our medical heritage.** It's so nice to celebrate your family history.
- **I'll definitely go shopping to East Africa.** You can buy a lot of reclaimed wood there, so I'll be scouring the markets in Mombasa.
- **Reclaimed pieces are so big in gardens.** It's okay to mix things up – garden stuff inside, old with modern. There's no right or wrong way – although everyone does have an opinion!



Sonali wants to recapture her lost family heritage in the décor of her own home