

THE INSIDE



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They're the bright young things making London's homes pop — and bringing #interiorsinspo to your Instagram feed. From the cactus guru to the art aficionado, *Frankie McCoy* meets the capital's new in-crowd

PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEPHANIE SIÂN SMITH CREATIVE DIRECTOR LILY WORCESTER



William Morris has a lot to answer for. The Victorian designer and leading figure in the Arts and Crafts Movement famously declared in 1880: 'Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful.' Thirteen decades on and London is taking that statement — particularly the last clause — very seriously. Interiors are hot right now. Maybe it's a desire to hunker in a gorgeous bunker away from dismal global affairs. Maybe, as the fashion and interiors worlds draw ever closer (see Shrimps x Habitat, Dolce & Gabbana x Smeg, Preen's jaw-droppingly beautiful homewares), we want our homes to be as well-dressed as we are. We can point to Instagram as one of the main causes of this. There are more than 50 million #interiordesign posts and all of our interiors gurus are Insta disciples. Posts are split between inspiration — Instagram as public moodboard — and, well, showing off. And why not? Now that the internet gives us access to treasure troves around the world, kitting out your home has become an art form. The trend has brought a new crowd of influencers to the fore — many of whom are friends and offer each other mutual support. Say hello to London's interiors insiders...



Laura Jackson



Gynelle Leon, left, and Kitten Grayson



THE FLOWER POWERHOUSES

Gynelle Leon didn't take a conventional route into the horticultural world. Before launching London's first succulent and cactus boutique — Prick — in Dalston, the 32-year-old was a banker with an MA in forensic science. But a breakup sparked a huge re-evaluation of her life: Leon sold her flat, went travelling around South America and came back full of botanical knowledge. Knowledge that Kitten Grayson had been building for years. The florist, 33, has worked with blooms for more than a decade and met her husband, a flower wholesaler, at New Covent Garden Market. Although they focus on different aspects of home horticulture — Grayson creates extravagant party displays (*above left*) for the likes of L'Oréal and Proenza Schouler, while Leon's cacti are more subtle sources of 'wellbeing' — both are hyper aware of sustainability. Grayson helps clients replant the flowers she provides for parties, while Leon has nature on her side: 'Cacti can outlive us. I have one that's 54 years old.'

What flowers are we going to see this autumn?

Grayson: 'Dramatic, layered, textured flowers are very popular; towards Christmas there will be lots of white roses, jewellery colours and rosehips.' [@bowbelle;](#) [@kittengraysonflowers](#)

Portulacaria, £19, and Sinocrassula, £24 ([prickldn.com](#))



Laura Jackson wears GUCCI dress, £2,860, at [matchesfashion.com](#). LOEFFLER RANDALL mules, £325 ([loeffler-randall.com](#))



Vintage Sanderson wallpaper in Laura Jackson's sitting room

THE 21ST-CENTURY HOMEMAKER

'People are mad into interiors right now,' laughs Laura Jackson, 32. 'Just as we became obsessed with taking pictures of food, now we're taking pictures of our bedrooms.' The TV presenter, food writer and interiors maven, who has collaborated with Habitat on her own range, is in the middle of doing up her house in Forest Gate — 'It is so stressful!' Just after finishing her 'calm oasis' of a bedroom, bathed in Farrow & Ball's dusky Pink Ground, the ceiling fell in; when she couldn't find the mosaic flower pattern she wanted, Jackson hand-tiled the bathroom. She loves website 1stdibs, 'although it's really expensive so I find something I like then look for something similar on second-hand websites', predominantly eBay. Instagram is essential. 'Instagram has made finding new wallpaper brands, new prints, a tiny homewares shop in Australia, really easy.'

As a long-time renter pre-Forest Gate, Jackson is conscious of the impact clever design can have on a small, bland flat. 'You can't just paint it blue. You have to curate key pieces to style it.' Jackson's thing is posters. 'If I go to an exhibition, I always buy a poster. When I was a kid and went on holiday I'd take my posters and put them up in the hotel because I wanted my room to be comfy.'

What would you save in a fire?

'Some sofas from eBay that I had recovered in a beautiful white and green squiggle fabric.'

@iamlaurajackson



On wall, top: *The Green Chair* by Rose Electra Harris, £185; right, *Red Palm* by Jonathan Schofield, £650; leaning against wall, *Sun* by Richard Hart, £450, all at partnershipeditions.com. Azilal runner, £395 (edit58.com)

Georgia Spray, left, Lisa Mehydene, centre, and Matilda Goad

THE SET DRESSERS

The first rule for matching art and homeware to your home? Don't do it! So say Georgia Spray, 29, Matilda Goad, 29, and Lisa Mehydene, 39. Spray is particularly adamant: the art historian founded Partnership Editions in 2017, an online platform selling pictures from emerging artists. While she'll advise on styling her often exclusive original artworks — Venetia Berry's sinuous nudes (£200) go very nicely on floral wallpaper, for example — she insists that 'art is there to tell a story, not just sit in the background. You should be daring.' Goad agrees: the creative consultant's 'eclectic' style is evident in her homewares line, which is about to launch in Liberty. She focuses on the small stuff that Generation Rent can easily move between flats, such as gorgeous lampshades — 'things that bring a bit of spark' — and flowers: 'Whatever's in season, so recently I've been having endless sunflowers.' Meanwhile, Mehydene, a former advertising director and proud Moroccophile, features vintage rugs and cushions on her website edit58.com — 'a



Orlando's Lamps by Rose Electra Harris, £170, at partnershipeditions.com

relatively inexpensive way to bring colour, texture and warmth'.

Where are your secret antique haunts?

Mehydene: 'I go to Kempton Market, and Lille every September, for the flea market. But everywhere is a potential shopping ground.'

@georgiaspray; @matildagoad; @edit.58



Cutlery, £130 for a set (matildagoad.com). Rug, POA (edit58.com)



Rachel Chudley, left,
and Lucy Barlow



THE REDESIGN MIND-READERS

Lucy Barlow and Rachel Chudley have very different fanbases. Barlow, 32, founder of Notting Hill's Barlow & Barlow design studio, has to 'encourage clients to be braver' and spends her life trying to convince them that her much-adored leopard print has a place in their home ('I explain that every grand English country house over the past 500 years would have had leopard print, that it's not a naff Eighties thing!'). 'Nine times out of 10, they'll say they like the Soho House vibe,' she laughs. 'I actually think Soho House style will become a historical period in interior design, like art deco or Bauhaus.' Meanwhile, Chudley, 32, deals with hugely creative people at her Bethnal Green practice. 'If [my designs] don't blow their socks off, they're guaranteed to be disappointed. I live in fear of a client saying, "I'm underwhelmed".' The Courtauld-trained designer, whose favourite project was making a boy's bathroom look like outer space (complete with star floor tiles) practises what she preaches in her own home — a converted stable in Bethnal Green featuring Donald Kaufman blue walls, curtains made from Rajasthani silk and leopard print galore.

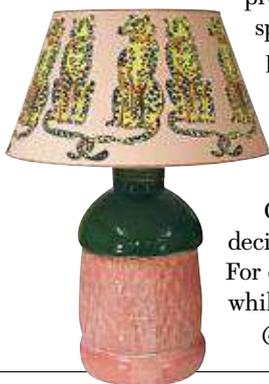
Top tip pre-redesign?

Chudley: 'Paint everything white before making any decisions. A blank canvas gives a good idea of the space. For example, one room might feel dreary, so would need cheerful wallpaper, while the light in another room might be so beautiful, it should stay white.'

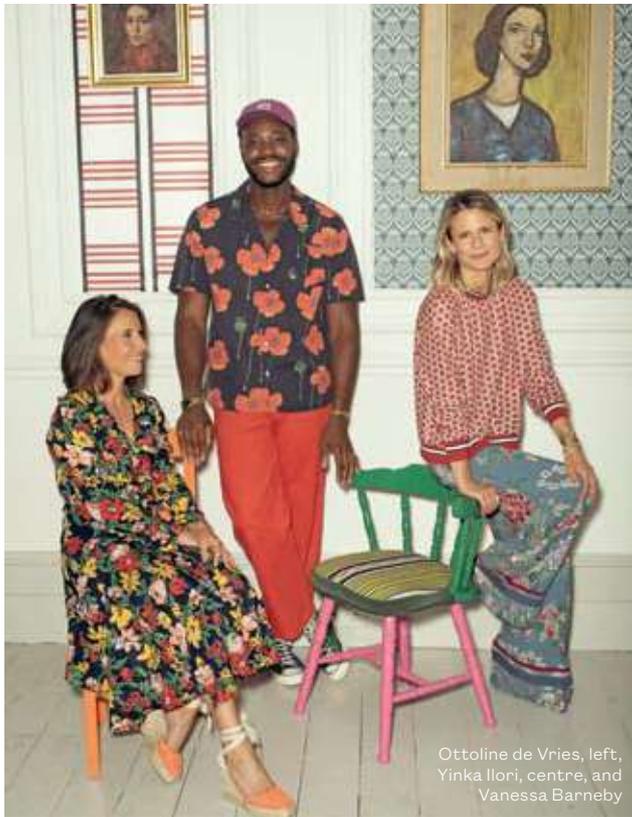
@barlowandbarlow; @rachelchudley



Left, Pineapple lamp base, £295, with Barlow & Barlow x Susannah Garrod lady leopards shade, £145 (barlowandbarlow.com). Chudley loves Fee Greening's ink drawing, above, £300 (feegreening.co.uk)



Rachel Chudley wears BORGIO DE NOR dress, £1,380, at hamcds.com. Lucy Barlow wears ALICE + OLIVIA dress, £715, at hamcds.com. Hair and make-up by Céline Nonon at Ferris Manduca using Salsley skincare and Kerastase haircare. Shot on location at Mapesbury Road (mapesburyroad.com)



Ottoline de Vries, left, Yinka Ilori, centre, and Vanessa Barneby

Helping Hand chair, right, POA. On wall, left: Composition No 4 wallpaper, £165 (ottoline.nl); right, Artichoke wallpaper, £87 (barnebygates.com)

THE TABLE GURU

It all started with Dita Von Teese. Fiona Leahy, 46, was working with Jade Jagger organising events at jeweller Garrard in 2005 when she hired the burlesque performer for her first European performance. 'Long story short, I ended up doing Dita's wedding to Marilyn Manson.' The pictures of the gothic County Tipperary wedding were then seen by the Queen of Doha and Leahy suddenly became the woman to call for multi-million-pound parties around the world, featuring hundreds of butterflies, 3D-printed tablescapes and monochrome-dressed camels. Emilia Wickstead, Charlotte Olympia, Noor Fares and Preen are just a few clients seeking Leahy's services, which include her signature 'chintzou-flage' aesthetic: chintz layered on chintz layered on chintz, 'so if you were wearing chintz, you'd be camouflaged. We're not in a time when it's tea lights and white tablecloths.' Thank goodness. But what else does the ultimate party host recommend for the ultimate bash? 'Lighting is major, so everyone's bathed in a beautiful glow that makes you look like you've been dipped in honey, and

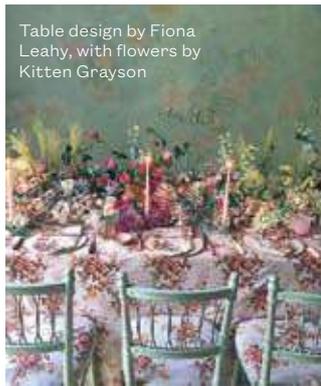


Table design by Fiona Leahy, with flowers by Kitten Grayson

I love anything Mexican, so whenever I do a dinner party I hire a mariachi band.' She'd ban mobiles too. 'A big thing now in LA is that you put your phone in a ziplock bag, so you have it with you but can't use it. I think that's very chic.'

Best place for a London party? 'Maison Assouline. I also like the dirt floor decadence of Petersham Nurseries, and I love Claridge's, of course.'

@fionaleahydesign

THE BRIGHT SPARKS

Yinka Ilori doesn't just see four legs and a seat when he looks at a chair or a table: he sees a story. 'I try to tell a narrative,' says the 32-year-old from Shepherd's Bush, who upcycles old furniture into his signature brightly coloured pieces. 'I'm very inspired by my Nigerian-British culture, which means colourful fabrics from Lagos, Dutch wax prints, Swiss voile lace, with British style and minimal, almost Scandi design.' This instinctive return to one's roots is key for his fellow designers too: Vanessa Barneby, 42, a former *Vogue Living* editor, drew on her rural upbringing in Hampshire when it came to designing her first collections for Barneby Gates, the wallpaper firm she co-founded, which has since gone on to supply Prince Charles with wallpaper for Dumfries House in Cumnock, Edinburgh (Deer Damask in duck-egg blue, FYI). Likewise, Dutch designer



Ottoline de Vries is an uncompromising tulip lover, peppering them all over her designs. The 40-year-old wallpaper designer was so obsessed with the stuff that she papered her entire rental flat, well aware that she'd have to rip it off when she moved out. Another thing they all have in common? A desire to get us all adding more colour and pattern to our homes: 'Pink and red', if Ilori has his way. 'These colours make me happy and people always want to have a chat when they see colourful fabric.'

How should timid decorators approach wallpaper?

Barneby: 'Don't use it in big rooms. I like to paper smaller rooms, like loos, in big patterns, including the ceiling (also known as the fifth wall).'

@yinka_ilori; @barnebygates; @ottolinedevries



Top, Watermelon wallpaper, £87 (barnebygates.com). Above, Psychic Shibori wallpaper, £165, and Chintamani Trellis fabric, £95 per metre (ottoline.nl) Inset, Ijoko Agba chair, £1,500 (yinkailori.com)



Fiona Leahy