

GRAND DESIGNS



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On a roll

Jocelyn Warner's London townhouse is like an experimental canvas, reverberating with the colours and patterns of her many stylish wallpapers

As I'm approaching Jocelyn Warner's north London home, the door swings open and a policeman exits. Jocelyn can hardly be accused of crimes against design – her wallpapers, with their bold motifs and contemporary colourways, have won critical acclaim, and are held in the Cooper Hewitt collection at the Smithsonian Museum in New York. They have featured in movies, TV ads and programmes like *Changing Rooms*; and led to collaborations with leading interior products firms and fashion houses like Ermenegildo Zegna.

In fact, the policeman was investigating a failed burglary attempt in which a brick was thrown through one of Jocelyn's windows the night before. You'd think the last thing she'd want to do is show someone around her home, but Jocelyn is warm and welcoming and remarkably sanguine about the whole thing.

She says of the house: 'It's not normally such a mess,' but so equably that I get the impression that maybe it is. I mean that in the nicest possible way – she's clearly far too

busy and grounded to be one of these uptight interiors types who bring their chilly perfectionism home. Also, she and her husband, Simon, have a six-year-old boy, Gilbert, which must be effective protection against preciousness.

Nevertheless, the house is lovely. It's situated on a quiet, tree-lined street, one of a row of typical London Victorian townhouses with generous ceilings, huge sash windows and converted basements and lofts. The couple bought the Grade II*-listed house six or seven years ago: 'The house hadn't really been touched for years, but the walls were covered with all these wonderful paintings,' she says.

But the paintings hid the fact that the whole place needed rewiring and there was subsidence. At the time, Jocelyn's parents were ill and she soon had a young baby to look after. They also embarked on alterations to the lower ground floor involving opening it up into an open plan kitchen/diner with a contemporary glass box extension, and converting the loft into two bedrooms. It was 18 months before they moved in.---

opposite Jocelyn Warner with some of her critically acclaimed designs

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Upfront
Grand Master
Jocelyn Warner



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The kitchen-dining area is a vibrant family hangout with its graphic pink Kaleido wallpaper; the shelves display photos and assorted curios; one of Jocelyn's lampshade designs in three striking colours **opposite page** One half of the upper-ground living space has rich colours, a dark wood fireplace and bold, brown and turquoise Kew wallpaper



Five years later, Jocelyn still doesn't consider the place finished. 'It's taken all these years of living here to get a sense of how we want to use the space,' she says. She's currently considering changing round the lower ground floor: 'We tend to spend all our time down here, even if we have friends round. I might get a couple of old Chesterfields off eBay and move the dining area into the extension.'

Originally, there was a thick wall of cupboards dividing up the lower ground floor into two small, dark rooms. Opening it up and adding the glass box, along with an opaque glass panel in the back wall where a door used to be, has made the space much lighter. The kitchen is defined by a waist-high partition, but a line of storage cupboards runs the length of the whole floor and concealed lighting glows along the full length of the ceiling. 'It just makes it feel like a whole room,' says Jocelyn, 'instead of a room with a kitchen at one end.'

So far so logical, but what differentiates it from any other thoughtfully designed contemporary space is the wallpaper. It's a candy-pink, trippy graphic pattern, appropriately named Kaleido, which serves as a warm, lively background to the Arts and Crafts furniture she inherited from her architect parents' house in Lewes. Surprisingly, the contrast of the simple, hand-tooled feel of the furniture with the ultra-modern wallpaper seems to work.

The same Kaleido pattern is used on the upper ground floor in a silver colourway, giving it a totally different feel. It is subtle and elegant, and contains iridescent inks which shimmer seductively in the light from the window. The upper-ground living space is bisected by double doors and Jocelyn instinctively complemented the

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darker, north-facing half with the bold Kew paper in dark brown and turquoise. She and Simon nicknamed this darker room, with its rich colours and dark wood fireplace, 'Whisky' – and the light, shimmery other side, 'Babycham'. This description totally makes sense.

If you didn't know already, you wouldn't think that Kew, with its hand-drawn plant pattern, and the obviously computer-generated Kaleido were from the same designer. Jocelyn is inspired by 'collecting things' and her designs have their origin in a wide range of sources: from plants to corrugated cardboard. The process – whether it's hand-tracing leaves onto a wall, or scanning directly from high-resolution photos – dictates the style of the result.

I admire Jocelyn for the fact that she never simply sticks with what she's become known for, but is always branching out in new directions. She started out in textile design, producing scarves at the end of the Eighties for the fashion business. 'It was a very different market then, there weren't the shops there are now and most textile design was very commercial,' she says. She ended up mainly selling her designs in Italy, as they were more creative and receptive to her brighter colours and hand-painted look. ___



Upfront Grand Master Jocelyn Warner

who Jocelyn Warner
lives North London

background Jocelyn graduated from Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts in 1985 and established a studio producing hand-printed scarves for the likes of Paul Smith and Joseph. After taking an MA at Central St Martins she launched her first wallpaper collection in 1999, Larger than Life, featuring oversized lilies. Since then, her innovative papers have placed her at the forefront of contemporary surface design

famous for Elegant wallpapers with bold graphic motifs and use of new techniques and inks to produce iridescent and metallic finishes



'Now people have more confidence and use their intuition about choosing things...they make more intelligent choices as a result.'

Jocelyn went back to college in the mid-Nineties to study part-time for an MA, 'mainly to find out about the computer side of things because when I was at college first time, there weren't any.' This is typical of her experimental attitude to her work. She was among the first designers to push the boundaries of imagery in surface pattern design for the interior market, along with contemporaries like Timorous Beasties.

When Jocelyn produced her first wallpaper – the large-scale, painterly Lily design – the main retail buyers turned up their noses at what they dismissed as 'florals'. She says she can't pin down a moment when she realised pattern was back, but she is certain that 'wallpaper was instrumental, and that in turn revived the textile industry. There was a group of us using new techniques and technologies in inks and printing and then the mid-range companies gradually caught up and it diffused into the mainstream.'

Jocelyn believes the whole pattern revival has led to a sea change in the way people think about interiors. 'It used to be that magazines would declare this season to be grey, and everything would be about grey. Now people have more confidence and use their own intuition when choosing things. They're also more interested in knowing how and why things happen, and they make more intelligent purchases as a result.'

It's clear that she is passionate about her work. Fortunately, her husband is too, as he deals with the business side of the company. Even Gilbert is keen: 'He's dying to have wallpaper up in his room, but he can't decide between two papers,' she says. She's thinking of designing some children's wallpaper, 'but it won't be cutesy cats and dogs,' says Jocelyn. 'I think children have more sophisticated taste than we give them credit for.'

Gilbert's room is at the top of the house in the converted loft along with a spare bedroom. And below him is another spare



room, serenely decorated in the green version of the Lily wallpaper. Jocelyn and Simon's room is on the same floor, sporting a pale, shimmery shade of Oval wallpaper. More mid-century modern furniture is tucked out of the way in the dressing room.

These pieces are teamed with more contemporary furniture and accessories such as the sculptural Le Klint light from SCP, which hangs in the spare bedroom, and an eclectic collection of sculptures and knick-knacks acquired over the years, such as a cast of sea-sculpted sand by an architect friend.

Vases of exotic-looking flowers are dotted around, waiting to bloom – Jocelyn's next designs are going to be based around still lifes. It's strange to think that in a year or so, these flowers will have been transmuted into glorious wallpaper in shimmering, glowing colours. In hindsight the burglar should have waited – a few rolls of that would really be worth taking. ★

Jocelyn Warner [jocelynwarner.com]



this page from top Kew's hand-drawn plant pattern; elegant mid-century furniture features rounded shapes, complementing the wallpaper; the Kaleido pattern looks dramatic on a lampshade
opposite page The pale, shimmery Oval wallpaper dominates Jocelyn and Simon's master bedroom

