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# THE WORLD OF INTERIORS

**64-PAGE ART AND ANTIQUES SPECIAL INSIDE**

PLUS Anna Wintour's passion  
for pots and the brothers  
who found a lost Leonardo





Facing the fireplace in the drawing room is a pair of painted Regency-style chairs made by Max Rollitt. He also supplied the 18th-century fruitwood mazarin commode





# Click and Collect

Ever since she first struck up a rapport with Max Rollitt, the owner of this mid-19th-century family home has been assiduously picking up furniture and objets from his antique shop. Restored by her, with guidance as well as those goodies from him, the house is testament to both the collaborative process and extreme patience. Matthew Dennison reckons the resulting *mélange* of styles, like that partnership, works a treat. Photography: Simon Upton







**Unequivocally**, antique dealer and interior designer Max Rollitt describes this handsome stone-built house amid trees and white-painted glasshouses as ‘my proudest moment’. Massy and imposing, crenellated and towered, the former home of a member of Queen Victoria’s household, dating from the second quarter of the 19th century, has been restored to life by its owner. For two decades, she has been a customer of Max’s Hampshire antique shop. Her renovation and redesign – assisted by Rollitt – of the new family home she shares with her husband, three children and a dog reveals, he says, her ‘real sensitivity and the patience of a saint’. For him, there is simple, unalloyed pleasure in ‘seeing the fruit of everything that’s been bought over the years’.

At the point of purchase, he remembers, the house resembled ‘the wreck of the *Hesperus*’, dishevelled and unloved. With very little structural change, bar the replacement of floors, it has been stylishly but apparently invisibly restored with what Max calls an ‘untouched look typical of my clients’. He offered guidance on colours, paints, wallpapers and fabrics. His input shaped an evocative *mise-en-scène* punchy with Arts and Crafts details, 19th-century allusions to the exotic East in the form of fabrics and wallpapers by Robert Kime, Schumacher and Allyson McDermott (*Wol* Dec 2006), plus new carpentry and joinery by Somerset-based specialists Artichoke painted in gin-bottle colours. Additional pizzazz comes from the seed-packet richness of jewel-like mid-20th-century still-life paintings and flowers year-round in classic Fulham Pottery vases; panels of original William Morris fabrics are framed like artworks or incorporated within new curtains.

The impact of so sumptuous a *mélange* is sophisticated, robust and exhilarating. Much of the furniture has been bought piecemeal from Max, including an 18th-century commode made in Grenoble that he describes as one of his all-time favourites. ‘I love the colour and the warmth of it. It’s as beautiful a shape as you can imagine, with its feminine, lovely little pointy legs.’ Other pieces came from Christopher Howe and Will Fisher. Max made bespoke items: a Morris & Co-style rush-seated black wooden sofa in the back hall with storage for gumboots below and, in the basement guest bedroom, an American-walnut copy of an Indian four-poster bed found by him in Spain. Injections of the unexpected hold pastiche at bay: a glass-fronted cupboard that began life in Devon as a shop fitting, now full of shells in the drawing room; Whitefriars glass coloured like puddles or gemstones. Pictures hang on chains so that they can be moved and rehung to prevent any suggestion of the static or precious in a house that is primarily a family home, complete with well-thumbed paperbacks and cushions meant for squashing.

Rooms open off a central hall, to which columns of simulated Siena marble add architectural structure and a first zap of colour. Max commissioned a new Turkey runner for the staircase. It incorporates this note of Sienese ochre that is also picked up in the dining room, its walls lined with stained

Top left: the scagliola paint effect on the hall’s columns is the work of the specialist decorators Mathew Bray and Matthew Collins. The curtain fabric is ‘Murillo’ by Le Manach. Top right: the mid-18th-century bookcase was one of the client’s first-ever purchases from Max, who previously dry-scraped it back to its original painted finish. Opposite: two Howard chairs covered in ‘Les Fougères’ by Brunswick & Fils stand on matting from Rush Matters in Bedfordshire







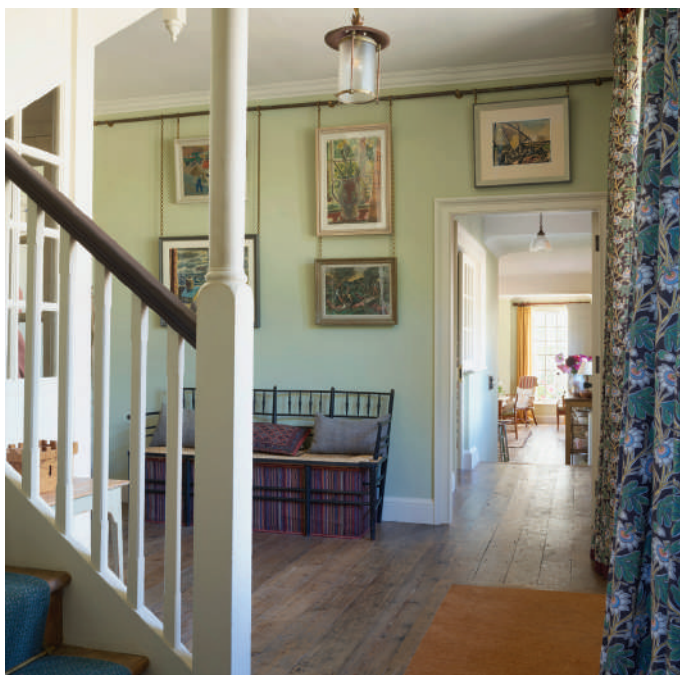






In the kitchen, Fulham Pottery mantel vases designed by Constance Spry are arranged above the Aga. Max supplied the James Shoolbred beech-and-elm Windsor chairs





This page, clockwise from top: the kitchen island was supplied by Artichoke; in the dining room, a handsome early 19th-century Irish mahogany serving table stands on lion's-paw feet to the left of the door; Max made the ebonised bench, with boot storage below, specially for this space in the back hall. The curtains are in Christopher Moore's 'Bannister Hall' fabric. Opposite: the walls are lined in tea paper, which was custom-made by Mathew Bray and Matthew Collins









This page, clockwise from top left: in the main bedroom, ‘Oban’ wall lights by Vaughan flank an antique brass four-poster from Max’s showroom; Claremont’s ‘Cunard’ fabric covers one of his poufs in the dressing room, where jib doors conceal wardrobes; Arts and Crafts wall lights from antique dealer Paul Reeves guide the way in a passage; ‘Tbrahim’ linen from Robert Kime makes up the curtains. Opposite: Morris & Co’s ‘Willow Boughs’ winds its way up this bedroom’s walls









tea paper as a background for treacle-dark early 19th-century Irish mahogany and a painted and parcel-gilt bookcase bought by Max in the Welsh borders. In the pale-painted kitchen, the same rich, honeyed colours recur in the simple blinds and curtains. It is a long, welcoming room of tall windows – Windsor chairs surround a scrubbed table; the dog bed lies in front of the fireplace; and an upright piano again bears witness to this being a family room. A collection of vintage hyacinth vases stands sentinel on the chimney piece. Like the metal hanging light by WAS Benson above the kitchen island, their stained-glass hues point to the Arts and Crafts influence that pervades this handsome house.

There is a Morris-covered sofa in the drawing room, but the heavy hand of the later 19th century is skilfully held in check. It is balanced by painted, sabre-legged, Regency-style chairs made by Max, plump armchairs covered in a white-ground, fern-pattern fabric, ‘Les Fougères’ by Brunswick & Fils, an early 18th-century fruitwood commode and painted demilune tables. Owner and designer have paid their respects to the house’s origins; neither is in thrall to its previous incarnations. The client, says Max, wanted ‘to keep the functions of the rooms the same’. From the drawing room’s curved sash windows are verdant views of tree-pocked slopes and the carefully tended gardens.

Upstairs are family bedrooms. Downstairs, off a tiled basement hall part lined with a collection of old decoy ducks, is a guest bedroom papered in a monochrome design by historic specialist Allyson McDermott. It’s described by Max as ‘so beautiful it’s ridiculous; the quality is crazy’. The room has its own guest kitchen, again built by Artichoke, its design redolent of pantries in a country house, with 19th-century hall chairs in place of kitchen or dining ones surrounding the gateleg table.

To surprise without contrivance is a skill and one that Rollitt and his client achieve repeatedly in these comfortable but considered rooms. On the telephone table in the study are Iznik-inspired ceramics and an old-fashioned phone the inky turquoise of such pieces. Look at the top of the red-painted table, however, and you see a roundel of vintage needlepoint depicting blue-and-white delft. In the same room, a simple, marble-topped cupboard supports a quartet of faux-marbled vases that are simultaneously rustic and rather smart.

Modestly, Max downplays his own part in the creation of this very settled-seeming house, which he describes as his client’s ‘triumph’, after a number of previous successful renovations elsewhere. In truth, the collaboration between designer and client is of long gestation, and the enduring alignment of their twin visions is what lends these rooms an unshowy solidity that will withstand the passage of time. Pieces bought by the owner from Max 20 years ago – the black and gilded Regency chiffonier in the dressing room, for example – are perfectly at home with newer acquisitions; no two pieces fight one another and there are no jarring or thrusting notes. It is indeed a triumph – a shared triumph ■  
*Max Rollitt. Ring 01962 791124, or visit [maxrollitt.com](http://maxrollitt.com)*

Top left: the reproduction embossed bath with a wooden roll is the ‘Jennings’ from the Water Monopoly, which also supplied the double washbasin stand; while taking a soak, the client can lie back and admire their selection of original William de Morgan ruby-lustre animal tiles, which complement the brownish pink of the walls. Opposite: in this bathroom, Max incorporated narrow vertical panels of antique textile into the dyed antique French linen curtains



