



THIS PAGE: IN VEERE GRENNEY'S ELEGANT DINING ROOM, WITH 1880S CORNICING, A FRENCH OAK TABLE DESIGNED BY GRENNEY TAKES CENTRE STAGE BENEATH A 1930S JANSEN CHANDELIER. THE VIENNESE CHAIRS, CIRCA 1790, ARE IN STRIKING CONTRAST TO THE MODERNITY OF THE SANDY CALDER PAINTING AND ABACA RUG. OPPOSITE: GRENNEY'S 'TEMPLE' LINEN DESIGN LINES THE WALL. DETAILS, LAST PAGES.

GOLDEN GERA

IN A SMART LONDON
TOWNHOUSE *VEERE*
GRENNEY'S CLASSIC
DECORATION EVOKES
THE HANDSOME *FILM SETS*
OF HOLLYWOOD PAST.

PHOTOGRAPHER: DITTE ISAGER WRITER: FIONA MCCARTHY

“IT IS ABOUT *BALANCING*
COLOURS AND TEXTURES
TO MAKE *A ROOM*
FEEL *VERY PERSONAL*”

OVERLOOKING THE THAMES, NATURAL LIGHT FLOODS THE DRAWING ROOM. SLEEK MEETS TRADITIONAL WITH A CHARMING MIX OF CHAIRS BY T.H. ROBSJOHN-GIBBINGS, AN OTTOMAN DESIGNED BY GRENNEY UPHOLSTERED IN SILK VELVET, A FRENCH DIRECTOIRE TABLE, CIRCA 1805, AND CHINESE PORCELAIN FIGURE, CIRCA 1750. THE FRENCH 1930S FLOOR LAMP IS BY JULES LELEU.



OPPOSITE PAGE: THE DRAWING ROOM LOOKS THROUGH TO GRENNEY'S BEDROOM. HERE, GRENNEY DESIGNED THE UNFILLED TRAVERTINE FIREPLACE IN A 1930S STYLE AND COMMISSIONED RUPERT BEVAN OF ENGLAND'S BEVAN & HELY-HUTCHINSON TO MAKE THE DISTRESSED MIRRORS TO MATCH THIS ELEGANT DECO MOOD. **THIS PAGE:** SET AGAINST THE EXISTING FIREPLACE INSTALLED BY JOACHIM VON RIBBENTROP IN THE 1930S IN GRENNEY'S BEDROOM, AN 18TH-CENTURY CHAIR IS PAINTED WITH ORIGINAL DECORATION AND COVERED IN 'BOWOOD' CHINTZ BY COLEFAX AND FOWLER, TEAMED WITH A 1950S FLORENCE KNOLL-DESIGNED COFFEE TABLE ADORNED WITH BOOKS AND A CONTEMPORARY RED LACQUER BOX MADE BY A JAPANESE ARTIST.

THERE IS SOMETHING distinctly old Hollywood about Veere Grenney's name, as there is in the elegant but laid-back interiors he creates for a multi-millionaire clientele based around the world, from London to New York to Mustique. Think of the magical film sets of 1950s Hollywood hits like *The Tender Trap* and *Pillow Talk*, and then throw in Grenney's distinctive decorative Regency-meets-streamlined, '50s-meets-'60s geometric style take on interior design. It's debonair and handsome, yet not remotely old fashioned, and his own home on the embankment of London's river Thames is testament to this refined taste.

Dunedin-born, Auckland-raised Grenney has called London home since the mid-'70s, and has spent much of his time since working in interiors and design, starting out touting antiques on Portobello Market ("A great way to get to know the who's who of the design trade," he remembers) and eventually landing jobs with the likes of Mary Fox Linton, Colefax and Fowler and his own design hero David Hicks. He started Veere Grenney Associates 14 years ago, focusing mainly on private residential projects (he is a man of such discretion that he refuses point-blank to name names) and exciting commissions like the private apartments at Claridge's hotel.

Here at his Chelsea home – with its enviable 21-metre wide, 4.5-metre high proportions and expansive river views – the Peace Pagoda in Battersea Park across the river plays like an MGM spectacle every evening. As the sun hits the gilded peak and golden statues of the temple, "the whole thing comes to life like a Broadway musical," exclaims Grenney. "It's very romantic living on the Thames. I love to sit at the desk in the bedroom and look straight into the river."

The apartment is the first floor of a house originally built on a rare double plot of land in the 1880s for the Countess of Wemyss, designed by Richard Norman Shaw (the influential British architect famous for designing the Savoy Theatre and New Scotland Yard). It is particularly unusual for its enfilade of three elegant rooms which allow the light to flood in and the river views to dazzle.



OPPOSITE: ONE OF THE JOYS OF THE APARTMENT IS THE WAY FRENCH WINDOWS LEAD TO THE BALCONY FROM ALL THREE MAIN ROOMS. THIS PAGE: A MOMENT OF CALM CREATED WITH AN 18TH-CENTURY CHAIR UPHOLSTERED IN GRENNEY'S 'SOUNDNESS', AND AN 1820S COMMODE IN HARMONY WITH PAINTINGS BY BARBARA HEPWORTH (TOP) AND ROGER HILTON (ABOVE THE CHAIR).



OPPOSITE PAGE: IN GRENNEY'S BEDROOM, A 1950S DESK MADE FOR LATE AMERICAN INTERIOR DECORATING ICON BILLY BALDWIN BY JANSEN STRIKES A MASCULINE CONTRAST AGAINST THE SOFTNESS OF CLAREMONT CURTAINS AND UPHOLSTERED WALLS IN A PALE BLUE/GREY ANTIQUE SERGE TWILL. THE BOOKCASE IS FILLED WITH MEMORABILIA AND SMALL PAINTINGS BY GRENNEY'S SISTER, NEW ZEALAND ARTIST SARAH GUPPY. **ABOVE:** THE GENEROUS-SIZED BATHROOM, WITH WALLS IN WHITE STATUARY MARBLE, WAS ORIGINALLY A DRESSING ROOM. THE PRE-EXISTING SMALL BATHROOM HAS SINCE BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO A WALNUT-VENEERED DRESSING ROOM.



OPPOSITE: GRENNEY'S MAGNIFICENT FOUR-POSTER BED, ALIGNED TO VIEW THE PEACE PAGODA IN BATTERSEA PARK ACROSS THE THAMES, IS UPHOLSTERED IN GRENNEY'S 'FERNE PARK' LINEN IN BLUE. **THIS PAGE:** GRENNEY IN HIS BEDROOM, SURROUNDED BY ORIENTAL AND ISLAMIC-THEMED PAINTINGS HE HAS COLLECTED, RESTS AGAINST A BOOKCASE ADORNED WITH 1950S ITALIAN MODELS OF PYRAMIDS AND CIRCLES. DETAILS, LAST PAGES.

Sadly there is not much of Norman Shaw's detailing left, except for perhaps the cornicing in the dining room, and save for an enormous 1930s travertine marble fireplace installed by a previous resident, Nazi Germany's ambassador to Britain Joachim von Ribbentrop, it took two years and much wrangling with those who are governing the listed building to create the cool, calm oasis that it is today.

Textures are simple – clean wooden and stone floors, jute carpets, his own linen designs (launched to great critical success at last year's Decorex in London) furnishing the walls – and colours are muted. Soothing creams and greys are teamed with the odd cheeky juxtaposition of pink silk taffeta on sofas. "Give me pink, brown and greyish whites and I'm pretty happy," he laughs. There is vibrant Islamic art in the bedroom and a collection of post-war abstract art by the likes of Roger Hilton and Barbara Hepworth. Furniture is old and new, with some of Grenney's own designs in limed oak teamed with late 18th-century Viennese dining chairs and 1960s lacquer tables by Karl Springer.

Grenney is a man who understands how people want to live – in creating homes for some of the world's privileged moneyed elite, he focuses on comfort, style and ease. Perhaps it's thanks to his Antipodean heritage where, "there's a spontaneity and effortlessness in the way everyone lives and socialises.

"Harmony and comfort are the driving forces in any room I design," he furthers. "I create rooms, beds, sofas, chairs for living in – they might look beautiful but they also have to work. It is about balancing colours and textures to make a room feel very personal, and also bringing the architecture to life." Proportion and scale are all for this designer.

You'll certainly find little frilliness or froufrou in his décor designs. After all, it is the modern order and preciseness of David Hicks' 1960s designs that Grenney holds so dear (and indeed inspired the simple patterns of his own hand-blocked linen collection), but he confesses he is not above a bit of chintz here and there. "Injecting something slightly off-key, like the old comfortable chintzy armchair in my bedroom where I like to sit and watch television at night. It's a proper old friend," he grins.

"If I am doing a room for someone, I really care about them and not how it will look in a photograph," he reflects. "I want to make them feel safe, to make them feel important. I really want people to have a happy time when they're in that space. Otherwise, what's the point?" **VZ**