

# HOUSE & GARDEN<sup>®</sup>

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*Plus*  
COUNTRY  
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SPECIAL

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**STAR DECORATORS**

★ ROBERT KIME ★ NINA CAMPBELL ★  
★ VEERE GRENNEY ★  
★ PENNY MORRISON ★ DAVID MLINARIC ★

# THE AUTUMN EDIT

WE REVEAL WHAT'S NEW, WHO'S WHO  
AND THIS SEASON'S NEW FABRIC COLLECTIONS

*In his new book, the New Zealand-born designer VEERE GRENNEY discusses the key elements of his decorating style. One of these is a sense of Englishness that is ever-present in his work – and inextricably linked to the countryside*

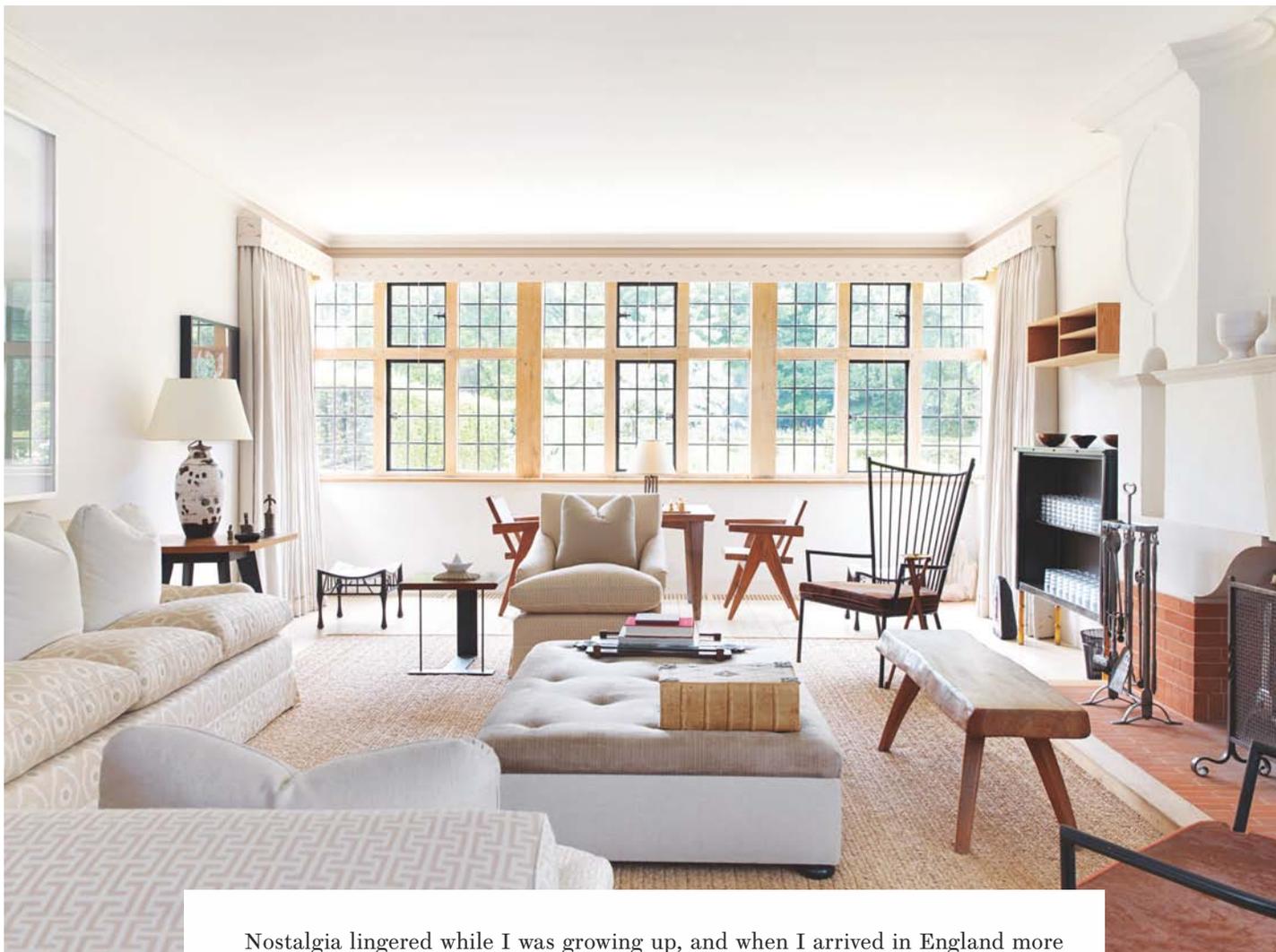
## A SENSE OF PLACE

LUCAS ALLEN: SIMON UPTON/THE INTERIOR ARCHIVE



**I** was born in Dunedin, on the South Island of New Zealand, as the second of four children. I had a conventional, comfortable upbringing, blessed with solid family values. My parents were both from England, but their backgrounds were quite different. My mother was from an affluent middle-class family, my father from working-class east London via the London School of Economics. They would probably never have met if it had not been for the Blitz. They were married six weeks later and then spent four years apart, separated by the war. After they were reunited in peacetime, they escaped from their differences by running away together, flipping a coin to choose between South Africa or New Zealand. ▷

**FAR LEFT** Veere Grenney. **ABOVE** His lurcher, Rio, with a view of a formal canal from the drawing room of The Temple, Veere's house in Suffolk



ABOVE At this house in Hampshire, Veere furnished the drawing room with twentieth-century pieces by Pierre Jeanneret and Charlotte Perriand.

BELOW Wild flowers in the garden of the same house



Nostalgia lingered while I was growing up, and when I arrived in England more than 40 years ago, I came to a place that already existed in my mind. The thing about Englishness is that it is impossible to describe. As a non-Englishman who now lives in England and does all the things that represent Englishness, I would say it is linked to the countryside — a house is not complete without a garden. It does not have to be grand, but a garden and a house do belong together.

As the child of English parents I have had the benefit of observing Englishness as an outsider. My feeling for this quality of Englishness is conjured on these pages in the pictures of houses I have decorated. It is a feeling of settled calm and welcoming comfort, the enduring natural world of gardens or pastoral landscapes seen through a tall Georgian sash window or miniaturised through a gridded frame of leaded lights.

Describing a room of his own, the late, great designer David Hicks once opined that ‘the best kind of English rooms are those which contain a cosmopolitan collection of different pieces of furniture, books, drawings, and objects that are somehow sympathetic to each other; in a space with a decorative theme, however simple, all of which goes to make up a cosy, interesting, and individual atmosphere.’

My own country boîte is an eighteenth-century folly standing among wheat fields in John Constable’s Suffolk. In the drawing room my white lurcher, a long-coated hunting dog beloved of poachers and gypsies, stares from her pink surroundings down the reach of a formal canal in which nameless gentry once fished for their pleasure and leisure.

Then there is a generous house in Hampshire. It was designed by Edwin Lutyens in his own peculiar interpretation of an Arts and Crafts vernacular, with pitched roofs and boxy neo-Elizabethan panelling, ▷

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CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE The Temple was built as a folly in the eighteenth century. This entrance hall in Oxfordshire has painted panelling and a bleached oak staircase. Dahlias, pleached lime trees and a picket fence in Veere's garden at The Temple. Chippendale furniture and freshly cut flowers in a Georgian house in Wiltshire

small-paned mullioned windows and modest little rubbed-brick fireplaces in every bedroom. The house is decorated in muted distemper colours, with a judiciously chosen mixture of painted furniture and well-made, uncomplicated pieces from all periods set against rush matting and scrubbed oak floors. There are ceramics here by that most English of potters, Grayson Perry, along with his subversively scurrilous *Map of an Englishman*, rich fabrics by William Morris, and gleaming lustreware painted by William de Morgan. Potting sheds and garden bothies are fully equipped with trugs and secateurs. The whole ensemble has a grace, proportion, and craftsmanship that answers to the Arts and Crafts tradition, or a contemporary interpretation of that.

A more modest red-brick Berkshire farmhouse, pictured in the book, has new laid-brick floors that look as though they have always been there and bachelor bedrooms furnished with iron bedsteads tucked tight with plaid blankets. In contrast, the grander stone-built English country houses, with formal topiary gardens and long approach avenues, always have Agas and generous fireplaces to sit in front of, billiard rooms and stone-flagged passages, utility rooms where boots and coats are stored, and chintz; grandeur and modesty side by side □



*This is an edited extract from 'Veere Grenney: A Point of View' by Veere Grenney and Ruth Guilding with a foreword by Hamish Bowles (Rizzoli, £50), which is out on September 18*



# Rita Notes

RITA KONIG celebrates the art of making the most of the smallest rooms in the house

PHOTOGRAPH CRAIG FORDHAM

It is often in those small rooms that might not look so promising that you can find the fun in a house. When you are planning your new house – or even re-working your existing house – make sure that every square inch is working for you. Just as there is no point in having large, grand rooms no one ever goes into, there is no point missing out on those extra spaces that can bring joy on a cold, wet Tuesday evening in October.

There are often odd spaces no one is sure what to do with. For example, that room on the half landing, does it just get a desk in it? We have a long, skinny room in our house that was the entrance hall before the building was converted. When I see one of these small spaces, I almost always want to put a slouchy day bed or sofa in it with a large television. Do not just give it a desk and think you can make a lovely study – unless you are really going to decorate it beautifully. A desk with all the wires facing you as you enter the room is not appealing.

There is also the spare room. Steven Gambrel ([srgrambrel.com](http://srgrambrel.com)) created one of the best little bedrooms in his own New York town house, which he made from a sliver of a room off a half landing. He put an ikat fabric on the walls and has a pair of single beds, one along the long wall and the other across the end. You can almost hear the whispering of children after lights out.

Give rooms like this thought. The inclination is to ignore them, shove leftover bits of furniture in there and wonder why they are not that nice. The good thing about going to town in a small room is that you need less of everything. So throw it some love and think how divine it will be to have TV suppers while sitting on a comfortable sofa. This is the room, by the way, that your best sofa should be in. I like Christopher Howe's 'Spaniel' design ([howelondon.com](http://howelondon.com)). Put fabric on the walls, have really good lighting – such as lamps from Robert Kime ([robertkime.com](http://robertkime.com)) and Pooky ([pooky.com](http://pooky.com)) with dimmer switches – and shut the world out.

Rita in Veere Grenney's spare room in London



*Give small rooms thought – the inclination is to ignore them*

A bar can be fun and special, even in the most minuscule space. Lacquer it, gild it, mirror it. Consider having a sink and the wherewithal to make ice, and make sure you have proper ice trays – mine are from Lakeland ([lakeland.co.uk](http://lakeland.co.uk)). Bars used to be so much more commonplace. My grandmother had one behind mirrored doors on the half landing to her drawing room. We have all become so obsessed with making extra space using our side returns that we have lost sight of these hedonistic little areas.

Even a boot-come-flower room is exciting. I love the idea of having the space to 'do' flowers; it is a place to store vases, with a sink where one can come over all Lady Pulbrook. Consider letting your laundry double as a flower room, with integrated appliances, a lovely big sink and shelves above for vases and baskets. To be honest, all these little rooms are gathering up into quite a large house, but if you only have one of them, it is worth giving even the smallest space a little pizzazz □



**2** This bedroom in Norfolk has a cheerful feel thanks to the designer Veere Grenney's use of yellow. He chose his own 'Belvedere' wallpaper in straw, £76 a metre, while the matching linen fabric, £150 a metre, can be seen behind the beds and on the valances. The more intense shade on the throws creates layers of colour. [veeregrenney.com](http://veeregrenney.com) **3** The yellow paint in this room draws the eye up and creates a sunny aspect on grey days. Paint specialist Edward Bulmer selected a lampshade and cushions in a similar hue for a harmonious effect. [edwardbulmerpaint.co.uk](http://edwardbulmerpaint.co.uk) **4** Take away the lacquered Chinese cabinet and golden-hued curtains, window seat and chairs, and this is actually an understated dining room. But the combination of all these with the pale walls creates an exciting contrast. The curtain fabric is 'Pienza Cardo' by C&C Milano in the yellow-natural colourway. It costs £195 a metre. [cec-milano.com](http://cec-milano.com)



**5** This is a bold colour statement by anybody's standards. Painting all the units and walls the same colour could be overwhelming in a large kitchen, but it is a clever trick for creating a sense of uniformity in a small kitchen or boot room. The photograph was taken to show off a paint collaboration between Plain English, Adam Bray and Sue Skeen. [plainenglish.co.uk](http://plainenglish.co.uk) **6** Yellow and green conjure up the buttercups-and-brambles palette of the countryside. Here the walls were painted in Papers and Paints' 'Deep Celadon Green'. A similar chair to the one pictured is I & JLBrown's 'Champagne Chair', £750, which can be painted any colour. [papersandpaints.co.uk](http://papersandpaints.co.uk) | [ijlbrown.com](http://ijlbrown.com) **7** In the hall at Bowood House in Wiltshire, yellow paint allows the magnificent cantilevered staircase by Robert Adam to stand out in relief. It also complements the deep-toned antique furniture. [bowood.org](http://bowood.org)