

FULL OF BEANS
Guess what's on the
menu this week!



UNCOMMONLY GOOD
SHERIDAN SMITH
GETS TO GLAM UP

LITTLE MISS MINIMALIST
Fashion goes a bit strict –
and a lot seductive

TANK GIRLS
What makes a woman
join the Forces?

MISSONI ACCOMPLISHED
Meet the new face of the
Italian design dynasty

stella

Photographs by James Merrell



LEFT IN THE SITTING-ROOM AN 18TH-CENTURY COMMODE IS FLANKED BY A PAIR OF CHAIRS COVERED IN GRENNEY'S OWN 'SOUNDESS' LINEN. THE LARGE WHITE RELIEF IS BY ALAN REYNOLDS
RIGHT THE DINING-ROOM WITH ITS LIMED-OAK TABLE BY PAUL BELVOIR, A 1930S MAISON JANSEN CHANDELIER AND LATE-18TH-CENTURY CHAIRS, FROM A SET OF 50 MADE FOR A PALACE IN VIENNA

A MUTED RECEPTION

From the perfectly restrained palette to the padded linen walls, everything about this flat speaks of quiet luxury.

Gareth Wyn Davies is silenced by the splendour of it all

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ou can learn a lot about a man from his curtains, and you can learn a lot about curtains from one man. And those in Veere Grenney's London dining-room - in a pale linen of his own design - have a wonderful old-fashioned elegance and are just that bit grand. Like him, too, they have their lighter, less formal side - in this case, a reverse of contrasting patterned cloth, a neat touch, like a shot of brightly coloured satin lining in an otherwise perfectly sober Savile Row suit.

Lovely as they are, perhaps the most impressive - and, indeed, telling - thing about them relates not so much to their appearance as to how they're made. The bindings are a strict three-eighths of an inch wide, as per some arcane curtain-maker's law, and cut on the bias, to ensure no pucker and the most regimental hang; the



INTERIORS

pelmet is the result of many experiments with cardboard prototypes, which were placed in situ and summarily rejected until Grenney, like some exacting suitor, settled on the One.

Fastidious? Oh, yes and then some. But then fastidiousness and other qualities besides have served Veere Grenney's career well in the 40 years since he arrived in London from New Zealand. For the past dozen of those he has run his own highly successful company, and forged a reputation as the go-to decorator for impeccably tasteful interiors (not forgetting, of course, quite nice curtains).

The fastidiousness was given full rein when he bought a first-floor flat in an 1870s Richard Norman Shaw house in Chelsea, which has been described as 'the finest Queen Anne Revival domestic building in London'. So much for the exterior; inside was a different

story, the flat having lost pretty much all of its original features over the decades. Not that you'd know it now. Pass through the hall into the sitting-room and a few things strike you. First, the view of the Thames, which, framed by the window uprights, takes on the appearance of a serene impressionist triptych. Second is the sheer, unadulterated, when-can-I-move-in luxury of the place. Walls of a soft lilacy-grey linen add to that sense of quiet glamour (quite literally - the wadding between cloth and wall gives the room, in Grenney's words, 'a wonderful hallowed acoustic') and form a harmonising backdrop to a covetable

collection of post-war British art and a wildly divergent mix of furniture. Well, I say mix but of course nothing happens in Grenney's world by accident and this, unsurprisingly, is no haphazard arrangement. Being the rigorous sort and a stickler for 'geometry and harmony',

Grenney points to a 1950s glass ashtray. 'Absolutely vulgar. But I do like a bit of bad taste. It makes it all more real'

Grenney spent an inordinate amount of time playing around with his 1960s Karl Springer lacquer table, Liberty arts and crafts stool, English Regency commode and pieces from other periods before and after until he arrived at a satisfactory composition. And then he devilishly threw in his one bit of kitsch, a (perfectly nice, it must be said) 1950s glass ashtray. 'Pretty hideous, absolutely vulgar,' he says, emphatically. 'But I do like a bit of bad taste somewhere. It makes it all more real.'

Leading from the sitting-room is the palatial main bedroom, with its stately marble bathroom and walnut-lined dressing-room off. Here you find the same restrained palette and same magical 'mix', for want of a better word, of furniture, including a regal four-poster topped with a boxy pelmet inspired by David Hicks and hung with curtains of his own block-printed linen. 'It is impossible to describe the feeling of sleeping in

a four-poster,' he says. 'It is like being back in your mother's arms. Every client I do one for thanks me for it.'

With all due respect to Grenney, perhaps the most striking of all the features is one for which he can't actually claim credit - a moderne travertine fireplace reputedly installed by Joachim von Ribbentrop, who lived in the flat during his time as Hitler's ambassador to Britain. Grenney liked it so much that it became the model for two replicas in the reception rooms, which form an enfilade with the bedroom at the front of the flat. These too are crowned, mantel to cornice, by foxed mirror. Like linen on walls and chalky colours, you'd be right to think this a weakness of Grenney's. It even runs along the back of a travertine-topped buffet in the dining-room. 'Oh that,' he says, eyeing said mirror. 'That's to stop gravy splashes marking the wall.' ●

veeregrenney.com



CLOCKWISE FROM MAIN PICTURE IN THE SITTING-ROOM TWO 1950S ROBSJOHN-GIBBINGS CHAIRS, A REGENCY TABLE AND A VELVET-UPHOLSTERED OTTOMAN SIT ON RUSH MATTING; IMAGES OF THE MIDDLE EAST ON ONE WALL OF THE MAIN BEDROOM - THE ARMCHAIR IS COVERED IN A ROBERT KIME LINEN; MORE ART AND A JOSEF HOFFMANN CHAIR IN THE MARBLE AND GESSO BATHROOM; A 1930S LAMP BY JULES LELEU AND GRENNY'S 'VULGAR' ASHTRAY

