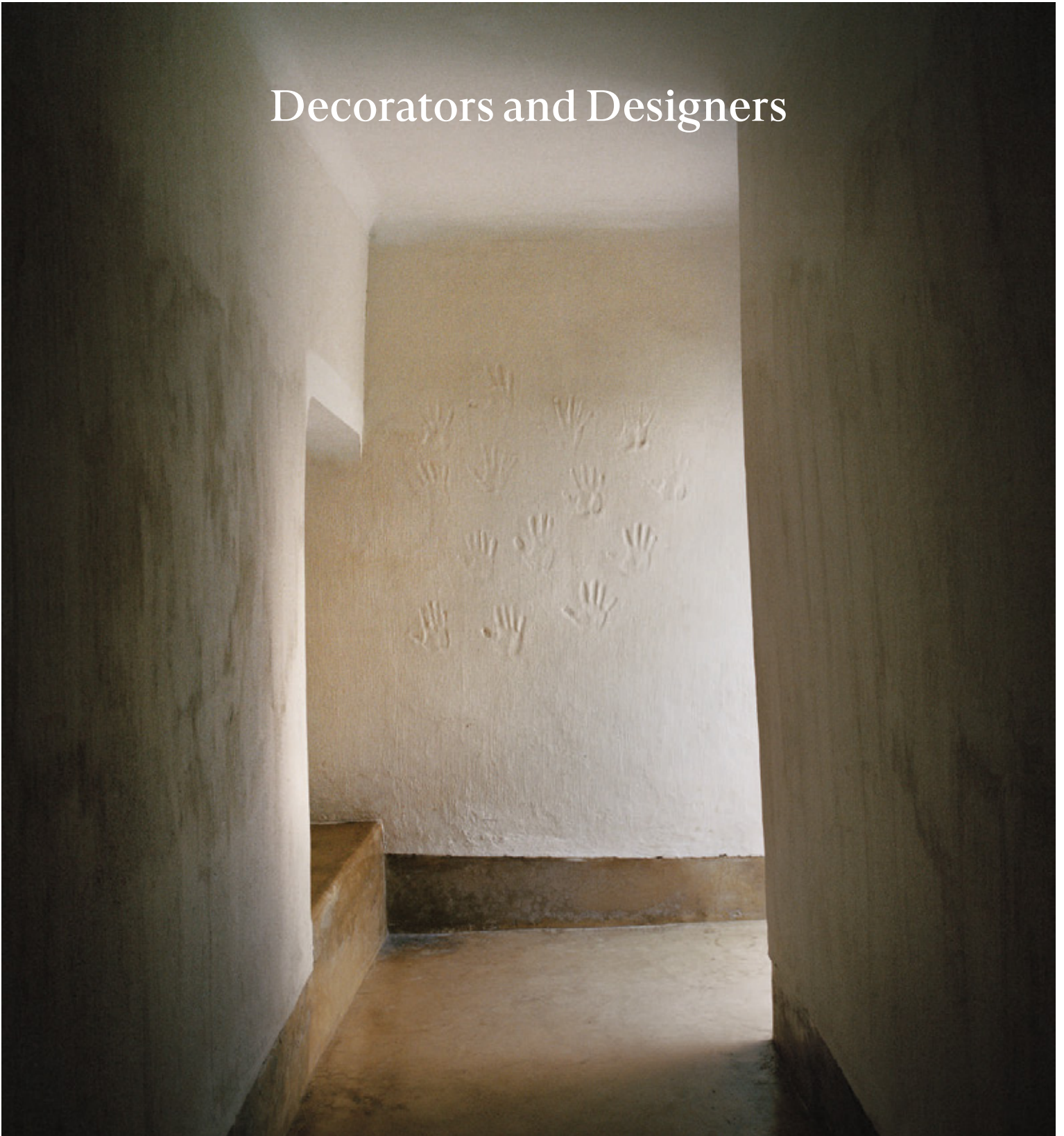


THE WORLD OF INTERIORS

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Decorators and Designers





VEERE WAS HERE

If you look at this elegant family home in west London and think it bears all the hallmarks of a certain top-of-his-game interior decorator, you wouldn't be far wrong. The lacquered walls and cosseting velvet-lined bedrooms, the assured mix of mid-century furnishings with much older antiques, that seductive sense of quiet luxury and all-enveloping calm... Yes, it is indeed a house just like Grenney makes, declares Augusta Pownall. Photography: Henry Bourne



Previous pages, left: in the hall, two c1900 Scottish ebonised chairs from Rose Uniacke sit either side of a Cox London console table with a top of Belgian blue stone. The ceiling light is a Paavo Tynell number from the 1940s picked up at Modernity in Stockholm. Right: the sitting room is a clever mix of high drama and polished restraint, much to Veere's satisfaction. 'When you look at all the upholstery it's quite neutral,' he says. 'But there are lots of pops of primary colour in silk on cushions, which are much easier to control.' These pages, above: a printed velvet by Fortuny – 'Glicine' – forms the curtains and pelmet, the scalloped edge of the latter perfectly outlining its main motif. Opposite: a pair of George III tables bought at auction at Christie's flank a banquette by Veere Grenney Associates. Dating to 1970, the coffee table is by the Belgian designer Ado Chale. Sitings editor: Hamish Bowles



Above: glimpsed from the hall is a c1785 giltwood open armchair from Gerald Bland in New York. Underfoot is a custom-made carpet by Beauvais. Opposite: this room has the air of a pavilion, thanks to the treillage covering the walls and ceiling – a Veere Grenney Associates design, like the painted feather-back chairs and burnt-orange ‘Verandah’ seat fabric. The curtains and pelmets here are made from ‘Toile des Travaux’, a Twigs fabric from Simon Playle, while Carlton Davidson supplied the antique wall lights and Venetian ceiling lantern



The high gloss of the dining room's chocolatey walls is the result of careful application of layer upon layer of lacquer – ten in all. 'Rita König [the interior designer] always calls it lickable,' says Veere. Only the black-glass-and-steel table – one of his designs – outshines them. It's surrounded by a suite of c1770 Chippendale chairs and topped with a pair of Jean Després candelabra from the 1960s. Hanging above it all is a 'Fragile Future' made of bronze and real dandelion seeds by Drift from Carpenters Workshop



Early on a drizzly autumn morning, Range Rovers on the school run speed through London streets past armies of staff taking small, perfectly coiffed dogs out to do their business on pavements you could eat your dinner off. If the cost-of-living crisis has started to pinch, nobody told SW10. Already you can hear the hum of machinery working away behind the façades. The good burghers of Brompton are building. Among all this hubbub, one street of stucco-fronted houses is a relative haven of calm, and an exclusive address even for this postcode.

This particular house on that particular street was transformed from a ‘rather dismal state’ into just such a haven by Veere Grenney, whom regular *WoI* readers will know as a magician with the ability to marry the sort of elegant interiors that your friends will admire with the comfort we all crave from a home. ‘The owner’s wife went to a house that I’d done by chance and adored it,’ Veere tells me. ‘It’s so much better to see something that someone’s done. We all look at magazines, but when you touch and feel it becomes a different thing.’ The family of seven moved out for two years, and the transformation began.

As well as selecting the fabrics, fittings and furnishings, like all the best decorators Veere offers something else less concrete; you might call it an appreciation of the way to live. But how to live when you have busy international lives and five children? At the very top of the house, under the eaves, is a playroom cum homework room cum television room that works for everyone from primary school up to university age, with a nanny’s bedroom next door. When I visited, a map of Isle of Wight shipwrecks was laid out on a Saarinen ‘Tulip’ table, with pots of pens and pencils at the ready.

The four children still living at home have a bedroom each on the floor below, complete with their own marble bathrooms. One flight down is the main suite, which feels almost like an apartment in its

own right. The stairs were painted from attic to hall by decorative artist Alistair Erskine in what looks close up like a very small repeat check, and from a distance like gloss paint the colour of a Scottish hillside in the rain. Veere describes it as a ‘paper bag colour’, albeit a bag hung with exquisite Renaissance pencil drawings. ‘They look wonderful on that colour,’ he declares. He’s not wrong.

The main bedroom has beautiful dark-green silk walls that are the perfect backdrop for a pair of miniature Dutch portraits on either side of the bed. Both bathrooms are pure white, with scalloped-edge curtains in hers and a glass chandelier in his. His dressing room houses neatly pressed queues of clothes worthy of Savile Row, while hers is an altogether more inviting affair, with a squishy sofa, a writing table that looks over the garden and an island – ‘brilliant for packing’ – replete with orchids, books and trinkets.

Veere picked up one particularly eye-catching piece – a gorgeous inlaid jewellery box – in Paris, where he goes to source items from antique shops and markets for every project. ‘You see something you love, and you bring it in to see if it works, and, if they like it, they have it,’ he explains. Sometimes he might see something for a house he finished four or five years ago. ‘If you go out looking for things, it’s quite difficult,’ he continues. ‘Say, for example, you need a set of plates for an alcove, or a lovely pair of candlesticks, it often takes a long time to acquire them if you’re very discerning, which I’m afraid I am.’ A guest bedroom in shades of white and taupe completes the suite: ‘I suppose if someone’s snoring, they’ll use it!’

Down those fabulous stairs again, past an office lined with grey suede which smells deliciously like a stable, and you arrive at the formal living rooms on the ground floor. ‘They’re such wonderful houses to work on as the volumes are so enormous,’ Veere says – and he should know, having decorated two others on the street in the past few years.

In this house he wanted to make the most of the clients’ ‘completely and utterly eclectic’ museum-quality art collection, so the reception rooms were designed around the work. First off, panelling and cornicing were restored, parquet flooring laid, and a pair of columns installed between the two drawing rooms, all in keeping with the period of the house. An off-white blend of silk and linen on the walls adds a suitably grand but neutral backdrop for the paintings, while silk cushions in primary shades pick out colours from the works. Damask curtains add the requisite drama.

What could so easily feel like a vast space has been cleverly portioned into different zones. ‘If you’ve got a great room like that, the last thing you want is one seating area, which makes the rest superfluous. You can pull things around a bit, but generally it’s divided into a few intimate spaces.’ A music room at the back leads on to an utterly charming trellised jewel box of a room, which the family uses all the time. ‘Because it’s all windows, it feels almost like a pavilion,’ says Veere. ‘It could be down the garden!’

On the other side of the hallway is a breakfast room with gesso walls, deep as divots, but perhaps the most sensational wallcovering of all is downstairs, where ten coats of lacquer have conjured up a dining room as glossy and rich as molten chocolate. ‘You’ve got this juxtaposition of a David Hicks-type carpet, a Modernist dining table and a wonderful set of 18th-century chairs, with the shimmering walls and the extraordinary paintings,’ Veere says, clearly delighted with the result. ‘It’s quite a statement. I think it’s dead cool.’ So cool that he’s just given the hall of his own flat the same treatment.

The one thing he was less keen on was the pool, which lurks in the basement together with a sauna, massage room and gym. ‘I absolutely loathe them and I always make my position very clear,’ he says with a shrug. ‘In a home, in London, it’s just not what I’d go for. But that’s me’ ☺



At night the owners are cocooned by bedroom walls upholstered with a plush Altfield silk velvet and by bed curtains made from two Namay Samay fabrics – ‘Nilufer’ and, for the lining, ‘Alya’. Topped with a bespoke shade, the lamp was converted from a Chinese baluster vase and was picked up at Tarquin Bilgen



Above: reflected in a 1950s Italian mirror in one of the dressing rooms is a giltwood chandelier of similar vintage, an 'Ysolde' table lamp from Dorian Caffot de Fawes in Marylebone and a 'Thebes' stool from the Veere Grenney Collection. Here again the walls are fabric-lined – this time with Namay Samay's 'Jali', which was specially woven in a soft-pink colourway for the project. Opposite: white on white in the wife's en suite bathroom

