



BEYOND THE PALE

Interior designer Rose Uniacke has a simple recipe for a stylish home: start with a blank canvas, add texture and let it evolve. And the proof it works? Her own eclectic space. By Ruth Corbett. Photographs by Chris Tubbs

DESIGNER AT HOME

White walls in the main bedroom, left, show off the chandelier from Unlacke's shop; an extension houses the kitchen, right, where black slate units contrast with a 60s Italian light





INTERIOR DESIGNER ROSE UNJACKE DESCRIBES HER DECORATING STYLE AS 'STRONG'. She works with tough, masculine materials, such as concrete, steel and stone, which she then softens with fur, cashmere, silk and crystal. 'I'm interested in comfort and generous open spaces,' she says. 'And I like mixing things, particularly old and new furniture. When you grow a collection of furniture over time, a home really feels like a home.'

Unjacke began her career as a gilder and furniture restorer. She spent three years living in a French chateau and it was here that she began collecting furniture and lighting from the 1930s and 1940s. 'My mother, Hilary Batstone, had a shop in London, and I would send things on to her to sell,' she explains. 'When I came back in 1997, we set up shop together.' The shop became known for its spare, elegant and thoroughly modern approach. The idiosyncratic style on offer brought in new customers eager to achieve similar strong, timeless interiors for their own homes. 'Before I knew it, I had my first substantial commission,' says Unjacke. 'It took off from there. The work kept coming.'

Rose Unjacke Interiors was soon established and she began

Unjacke, above, is a fan of neutral, modern interiors; her dining table is by Piet Hein Eek at Rabih Hage, and she dressed the inexpensive chairs with smart linen slipcovers, right; artworks arranged all over the house work brilliantly against the white walls, below



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working on various projects, remodelling and furnishing homes from chic London addresses to the Marquess of Bute's incredible Gothic house, Mount Stuart. Unjacke's aesthetic is rooted in her upbringing in a lovely old family house in the Oxfordshire countryside. 'Mum had very good taste and the house was always beautifully done. The minute I had a place of my own, I was constantly rethinking and redoing it.'

Fast forward a decade or so and Unjacke now lives in west London with her husband, film producer David Heyman, their new baby and three of her four older children. The house, an elegant Victorian gem, is a perfect ►



The sitting room is a combination of textures, with silk, velvet and leather furnishings. The bathroom sink, bottom, is marble



Vintage pieces, such as the Venetian mirror and antique lamp add glamour to the bedroom, right and below left

◀ showcase for Uniacke's distinctive, eclectic style. 'What was appealing about this house was the fact that it's wider than most built during this period: the rooms are square rather than long and thin,' she says.

Although the bones and shape of the place were good, Uniacke stripped everything out, opened up high arches between rooms, took out all the radiators and floors, and started from scratch. A wall of glazed doors reaches across the entire back of the house and folds away to reveal a leafy garden, while a new side extension with glazed roof creates a light-flooded dining area. The ground floor is now almost entirely open, with steps leading up from the kitchen and dining space to a sophisticated double reception room.

The walls were painted white throughout and the floors downstairs are covered in pale antique parquet reclaimed from County Hall. While interiors fashion in recent years has been all about pattern and wallpaper, Uniacke has resisted this particular trend. She's not swayed by fashion and has stayed loyal to her preference for a blank canvas on which to add texture, colour and comfort, as well as beautiful objects and artworks. 'David and I collect modern art and

photographs. The Sigmar Polke in the kitchen is our latest piece and I love it,' she says.

While Uniacke might design specific pieces such as sofas and armchairs to fit a particular space, totally custom-made environments are not to her liking. Throughout the house, vintage pieces such as a fabulous pair of leather 1970s chairs and centuries-old mercury-glass mirrors are mixed with 18th-century inherited antiques and Danish pieces from the 1950s.

Upstairs, a bedroom and bathroom are linked by a full-height opening, and are the most indulgent of personal spaces. In the bathroom, grey carrera marble lines the shower, while Italian mirrors reflect light. In the bedroom, luxurious drapes sweep the floor and a fabulous crystal chandelier glitters above.

Having carved a unique niche in the world of residential interiors, Uniacke now has her sights set on hotels and restaurants. 'I'm dying to do a hotel. They are often quite sterile environments and I think I could bring something new to them,' she says. Something tells us it's only a matter of time before we are drifting through a beautiful hotel lobby designed by Rose Uniacke. Now there's a pleasant thought. ■
For details, visit roseuniacke.com.



UNIACKE'S TIPS FOR LUXURY LIVING

- Unify the scheme by using the same flooring throughout. Antique floors give a lived-in look. Look in salvage yards.
- White walls needn't be dull. Paintings and drawings will bring life and colour to your home and can be easily updated.
- Customise a set of dining chairs with fitted linen slipcovers for a fresh finish.
- Mix and match furniture styles for an interesting look. Vintage pieces go surprisingly well with super-modern kitchens and bathrooms.

