An exquisite sense of understatement is inherent in Rose Uniacke's work: it lies in the thoughtful mix of antique and modern pieces she selects for her Pimlico Road showroom, and in the refined and comfortable interiors she designs for clients / By Ruth Corbett

## Rose Uniacke

Rose Uniacke's shop-cum-studio on London's Pimlico Road is nothing short of ravishing. The antiques dealer and interior decorator first opened up here in 2009, but this year has seen the original space extended, reconfigured and reopened. And wow, what a breathtaking experience it now offers. An antiques shop quite unlike any other, Uniacke has drawn on her considerable ability to handle space to create this series of spare, white rooms that are populated by a truly eclectic melange of beautiful pieces from different periods. "We burst through into next door, got rid of the stairs, doubled the size and created a dual-aspect space, with the shop at street level showing antiques and 20thcentury designs and a big design studio downstairs, which also houses my bespoke furniture range," explains Uniacke.

Against the quiet buzz of creativity that emanates from Uniacke's design team, one can browse and marvel at the tightly

edited selection on show. "I buy across disciplines and ages and I don't specialise," she says. "We might have academically important pieces or those that are simply very striking." To prove the point, currently available is a pair of highly covetable 1950s leather-upholstered easy chairs by Frits Henningsen, a c.1900 dodecahedron pendant lantern by Alfred Loos, a late-18th-century Irish George III oval mirror and an Anglo-Indian campaign chest, c.1820, as well as Uniacke's eponymous collection of modern furniture, lighting and accessories. All gorgeous in their own right, but made even more so when displayed in this airy, pared-back environment. "With prudent use of space, texture and materials, I like to show how antiques and bespoke pieces can co-exist," she says.

Uniacke's clean, lean decorating aesthetic is both refreshing and mature, and stems from a mixed bag of life experiences. Originally trained as a gilder >

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT: Interior designer and antique dealer Rose Uniacke; spare but supremely elegant, the Mayfair HQ of fragrance brand Jo Malone sums up Uniacke's style; Jo Malone's cream and black packaging was a reference point

80/81







/ALTO/

P.80-84\_Rose Uniacke EB.indd 81 29/08/2013 18:26

"I LOVE OPEN, COMFORTABLE, SPACIOUS INTERIORS THAT FEEL WELCOMING, BUT THAT HAVE SOME EDGE"

and furniture restorer, she moved to France in 1994, set up home in a chateau, and from there built her early career, buying pieces of 1930s and 1940s furniture for her mother, Hilary Batstone, also an antiques dealer. "I returned to London in 1997 and we set up shop together. Not long afterwards, a customer asked me to decorate his home and my interior design business took off from there."

As an interior decorator, Uniacke's portfolio is staggeringly good and ranges from cool city apartment refits through to elegant town houses, to commercial premises and grand stately homes. Feted for her ability to create urbane, refined interiors that reflect her clients' characters and lifestyles, she has several projects on the go at once. "My style is based on a historical understanding of shape and form, that mixes exquisite furniture from different periods with modern design,"

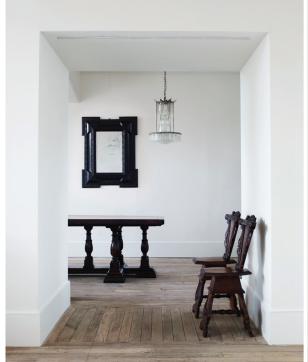
she explains. "I love open, comfortable, spacious interiors that feel welcoming, but that have some edge."

Her latest high-profile client, fragrance house Jo Malone, is her first experience of designing for a brand. It wanted its new, Mayfair-based headquaters and event space to epitomise a sense of cool elegance, and Uniacke was invited to make it happen. "My brief was to create something that was brand conscious and that would draw upon the understated luxury of Jo Malone, so I used their packaging colours, lots of black accents and kept everything very simple but very comfortable, so it would perfectly echo what they do."

The result is an impressive five floors and nearly 650 sq m of restrained opulence: chalky walls, raw wood floors, bespoke chandeliers and metal lightfittings depicting oak-leaves to reflect the botanics used in the famous scents. >

OPPOSITE: "I buy across disciplines and ages and I don't specialise," says Uniacke of the stock at her Pimlico Road showroom. Pieces include a pair of carved walnut Italian chairs, c.1900, and a sprawling, sculptural mid-20th-century yew bench

82/83









/ALTO/

P.80-84\_Rose Uniacke EB.indd 83 29/08/2013 18:27



Pieces from Uniacke's bespoke range – vast sofas, tables and elegant lighting – feature throughout. "My own collection started with cashmere blankets. When I couldn't find what I wanted, I designed my own. The same goes for the furniture: there are versions of pieces I might already own and love – simple designs that have a classical reference – as well as modern pieces, made using traditional techniques."

Uniacke says that even growing up, she loved furniture and that she reorganised and repainted her own room often. Her mother was an early influence: "She had very good taste and her houses were always beautifully done, without being precious."

Her own home is a splendid 19th-century house in London spanning 1,300 sq m, that she shares with David Heyman, producer of the Harry Potter films, and their children. Built in 1861, by the time Uniacke and Heyman bought it in 2007, it was in a bad state of disrepair, its

vast proportions dauntingly bleak and unfriendly. Not that this phased Uniacke: one of her great skills is to turn enormous spaces into comfortable rooms with a minimal aesthetic. "One has to consider how a space flows, now to address the imbalances: what does it lend itself to? Does it need more complexity? Where is its heart? My house has high ceilings and lots of space, and those considerations, and many more, got fed into the finished look."

Pushed to choose someone as her inspiration, she cites Eugenia Errazuriz (1860-1951). An influential tastemaker who favoured clean and spare but elegant interiors, she was also a muse for artists including Picasso and John Singer Sargent. For her, elegance was the elimination of the superfluous: "Throw out and keep throwing out," she said. It's a credo that has served Rose Uniacke well.

www.roseuniacke.com

ABOVE: The lushly planted courtyard conservatory in Uniacke's Pimlico home, a 19th-century house of stately proportions