

OCTOBER 2008 £4.30

THE WORLD OF

# INTERIORS

## DECORATION SPECIAL

JASPER CONRAN'S  
Thames-side Gem

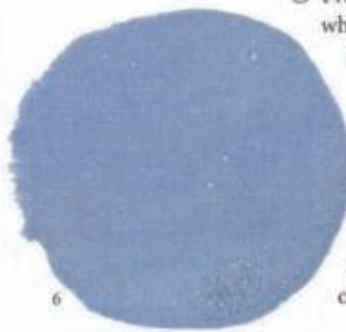
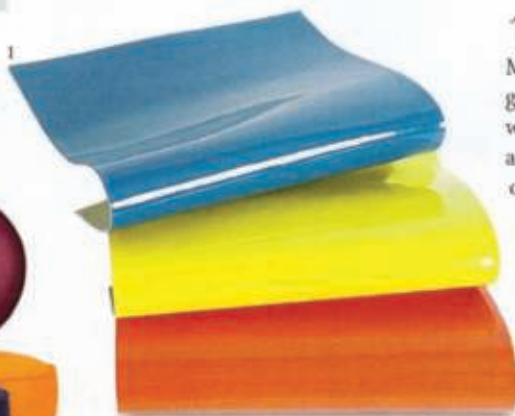
DINNER WITH MATISSE



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# inspiration

Some of the design effects in this issue, re-created by Maria Yiannikou



1 Like the bright glossy walls at Tony Baratta's Miami abode (page 296)? Then do as he did and go to Stark, which has a colourful range of vinyl wall coverings. The collection is called 'Décor', and costs \$109.50 per yd. Ring 001 212 355 7186, or visit [starkwallcovering.com](http://starkwallcovering.com).

2 If you think the George Nelson-esque 'marshmallow' headboard designed by Tony Baratta is sweet (page 300), why not treat yourself to the original source of inspiration? Launched in the 1950s, this Nelson sofa is still being produced. It costs £3,200 and is available through Vitra. Ring 020 7608 6200, or visit [vitra.com](http://vitra.com).

3 Tony Baratta's road to finding just the right white straps for his sofa (page 298) was a bumpy one, but here's a happy alternative for a smoother ride: Beltus can knock off a version of them, starting from £9.99 each. Ring 0121 333 3339, or visit [beltus.com](http://beltus.com).

4 The geometric shapes at Tony Baratta's pad are a feast for the eyes, especially the concentric design of the bathroom wallpaper (page 305). Tony had his custom-printed, but China Seas has an off-the-peg selection of 'Ziggurat Reverse', available through Tissus d'Hélène, as a fabric (shown here) or wallpaper. It costs £138 per m and £126 per 5yd roll respectively. Ring 020 7352 9977, or visit [tissusdhelene.co.uk](http://tissusdhelene.co.uk).

5 Neoclassical gesso capitals adorn the walls of Frans Ankoné's 'La Maison Bleue' (page 364). Why not re-create the effect with resin? Davuka's pilaster capitals and corbels start from £17.48 and £22.50 respectively. Ring 020 8660 2854, or visit [decorative-coving.co.uk](http://decorative-coving.co.uk).

6 Francesca of Francesca's Paints is a whizz! She provided the Bannermans with suitable tones for their country house near Bristol (page 328), and can also achieve the faded blue of Frans Ankoné's Marrakesh maison (page 362). 'Giorgio's Wisteria' limewash can be used internally as well as externally and costs £34.07 per 2.5 litres. Ring 020 7228 7694, or visit [francescaspaint.com](http://francescaspaint.com).



From Hanham Court's prospect tower, with its cupola like a Chinese peasant hat, you look out over a whole landscape of lead and slate roofs, ridge tiles, deep slides and chimneys, like a miniature Knole. The house lies in a green declivity above the Avon Valley, along with its stone church and duck-pond, the remains of its unimproved farmland now cropped by other people's ponies. In Medieval times, it belonged to Keynsham Abbey, but after the Reformation it was sold to John Lacey, a prosperous Bristol clothworker. He built the main pile of his new Elizabethan house on and round the existing building, closing up the gap between house and church with a north range – one room thick with a great arched gateway – that was later Georgianised. The bowling green that he laid out runs away from the house like a green launch pad. Bristol sprawls on the horizon, but here all is pastoral, and the elderly sheep on the scarp slope by the walnut tree face nothing worse than a slow death from old age.

In century-old photographs, we see Hanham's tithe barn and farmyard enclosed by stables and outbuildings. Large-eyed heifers mumble docks in the hedge bottom and the rubblestone walls sprout greenery. This is a picture of decline, as slow and gentle as the tide ebbing out, the stasis reached by so many once-grand houses in the early 20th century. What came next was less picturesque. Stripped of most of its farmland, the house was bought by a Bristol pawnbroker, who lowered the ceilings and pickled the dining hall's 16th-century oak panelling. His swirly-patterned close carpeting, set off by brass chargers and improbable suits of armour, is recorded in a handful of little black-and-white Kodaks, but – 'I can't bear to talk about it – it makes me feel ill!' bursts out Julian Bannerman, who is squeamish about such things.

Isabel and Julian Bannerman arrived a dozen years ago, having already cut their teeth on The Ivy, a four-square Baroque house in Chippenham. Hanham Court was not their first or favourite choice. Its gardens, buried in undergrowth and punctuated by leylandii, struck Isabel as unbearably ugly, and indoors was a sad warren of modern subdivisions and vinyl flocked wallpaper, but they took a chance on landscape and prospects and what might lie hidden beneath. Further back in the house's long history, nothing had been badly or meanly designed. They found three Tudor stone dog kennels with pitched roofs like little holy wells,

the pieces of a prancing armorial lion, and one little seated Neptune, sans arms and trident. Ironwork and a missing section from the hall screen were disinterred from barns or undergrowth, then mended, painted and regilded back into utility.

The Bannermans do all this with aplomb. In their joint professional practice as landscape designers, grotto builders and architects, Isabel is the plantswoman, photographer, designer on paper and sculptor. She plays negotiator and diplomat to Julian, Rabelais on a midget tractor, husbanding, hewing and goading on his workmen; both have hands spoiled by hard physical labour. They have a couple of Chelsea medals and New York's British Memorial Garden under their belts, but their names were made a decade ago with a stupendous tufa rock tunnel at Wormsley for the late John Paul Getty, and the Prince of Wales's Highgrove Stumpery, one of the innovations for which he gave them his royal warrant in 2002. They are acknowledged to be very expensive, and very good at what they do.

Being famously good shoppers, decorators and salvagers, they have bought the house at Hanham back to a strong, becoming beauty. On the green Morris-patterned wallpaper in their eldest son Ismay's room, where the overmantel dates from about 1600, there are fervid political posters bought by Julian in Ecuador and Cuba in the 1970s. The middle son, Rex, has a splashy red abstract over his bath by a coeval of his brother's at Bryanstone School. Bertie, the youngest, has William Nicholson prints and an outsized tester bed from Houghton Hall. People give them things: architectural prints in trompe-l'oeil bamboo frames from the architect-cum-collector David Vickery, who died in 1995, and three brass chandeliers from Christopher Gibbs to celebrate the transformation of the dining hall under its new coat of lime-wash. A madonna and child once owned by the writer Hilaire Belloc, a 1950s portrait by Craigie Aitchison and many more things come from Isabel's mother, Barbara Eustace, Belloc's granddaughter, who kept a fabled antique shop in the King's Road.

The house has rooms of all shapes and sizes: the remains of a Medieval undercroft, which became its Elizabethan kitchens; the Prospect Room and its octagonal twin at the base of the old spiral stair; a parlour-like 'posh room' with French Empire-style wallpaper; and little pantries and larder closets in the Arts and Crafts household wing out of which I&J Bannerman operates. The large library has vivid pink walls and Lee Priory Gothic-grey woodwork, its giant bookcases copied from those made for a house in Ireland by John Nash, which the couple bought and then sold again. There is a little carved 18th-century grotto table and a giant photograph of Julian's one-time employer Joseph Beuys, who introduced him to the work of Ian Hamilton Finlay. Everything is madly broad church, with artwork by Kate Boxer, Barbara Jones, Edward Bawden and Richard Long, alongside dozens of historical oils, prints and watercolours hung edge to edge all over the house.

Julian and Isabel sleep in a room with Georgian panelling painted a dirty turquoise, in a four-poster made up from lengths of carved pelmet. One wall is hung with pictures of Neapolitan volcanoes, the other features a silhouette of Julian made at Port Eliot (*Wo!* March 2008) literary festival in 2007, and Isabel as cover girl for *Brides* magazine in 1980.

Away on his tractor, Julian is zigzagging the derelict meadow beyond the garden pale, burning out brambles and flattening termite mounds, but inside, their labours are mostly accomplished. 'We might go somewhere else. But it's sad to think that we won't see all the trees we've planted grow to maturity,' says Isabel ■  
To contact I&J Bannerman, visit [bannermansdesign.com](http://bannermansdesign.com)

Opposite: the 13-year-old Bertie Bannerman has exclusive use of this bathroom, with its phalanx of prints by William Nicholson. This page: the Bannermans' grandest historical oils are hung edge to edge up the main staircase



