



the great indoors

...with **Ruth Canning**
Interview by **Judith Wilson**

For many design-conscious Londoners, there is often a significant gap between going it alone with home design, and employing a high profile interior designer. The latter can seem daunting and expensive. But Ruth Canning, of Chelsea-based Canning & Sheridan Interiors, offers all of her clients a much more flexible approach. 'At Canning & Sheridan we do whole house projects, but I am just as happy to advise a client on lighting or furniture, charged by the hour,' she says. Often, she points out, it is those early discussions that will eventually lead to complete refurbishment jobs. 'Clients may start off needing guidance on a simple issue, such as how to mix old and new: we offer a helping hand.'

Canning & Sheridan Interiors are comparatively new to the interior design scene. Canning launched the company in 2003, but this January she has upped the profile by opening a retail design showroom in Chelsea. It is tucked around the corner from Butler & Wilson on the Fulham Road: three floors of the town house showcase the furniture and accessories, and Canning's design offices are on the top floor. Together with business partner and partner in life Peter Sheridan, they share the buying for the store, and the display changes regularly. Recently, there have been two vintage kimonos hanging on the walls, but 'once they're gone, they're gone,' says Canning. The showroom is set out like a house interior, with ever-evolving merchandise.

Canning entered interior design comparatively late, having originally pursued a career in software consultancy in the city. 'But I had always been interested in design,' she says. She retrained by taking a year's diploma in interior design at Chelsea College of Art and Design. Like many designers, she doesn't want to be pigeon-holed with a set house style, but is often drawn to creating a warm, sleek and modern look. 'I also love eclecticism, and enjoy mixing antique and contemporary,' she adds. Her current



commissions include flats in Kensington and Chelsea, and a large family house in Highbury. Her service is very client-based. 'As a starting point, I may use a piece of artwork or a possession that is very precious to the client.' Mood boards and floor plans help clients visualise the final results every step of the way.

Take a look around Canning's Chelsea showroom, and her very decorative, eclectic approach is very evident. British-made sofas by Hitch Mylius are upholstered in bold shades, while lighting from Italian and French companies sit cheek-by-jowl with Chinese antique furniture,

and one-off glass pieces and decorative throws by British craftspeople. 'I like to offer merchandise that, in some cases, clients simply won't find anywhere else,' she says. There may be wallpapers by mainstream brands such as find Osborne & Little, but shoppers will also find fabrics designed in Italy and made in South America, or perhaps a selection of vintage tribal rugs from Morocco.

As for Canning's own home, she and Peter bought an apartment in an ex-seal fur factory in Bermondsey and converted it three years ago. It may feature the raw brick walls common to many city loft spaces, but the overall look incorporates very modern, simple shapes and strong colours. There are red Eros dining chairs by Philippe Starck, a giant pink Hitch Mylius modular sofa and a blue Egg chair by Arne Jacobsen for Fritz Hansen. 'I am influenced by modern artists such as Howard Hodgkin and Paul Albers and that inspiration often spills over into my work,' Canning says. She originally hails from Dublin, but has lived in London for over 20 years. 'London is home now,' she says. And with the rapid expansion of Canning Sheridan Interiors, she looks set to make many more Londoners feel perfectly at home too.

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