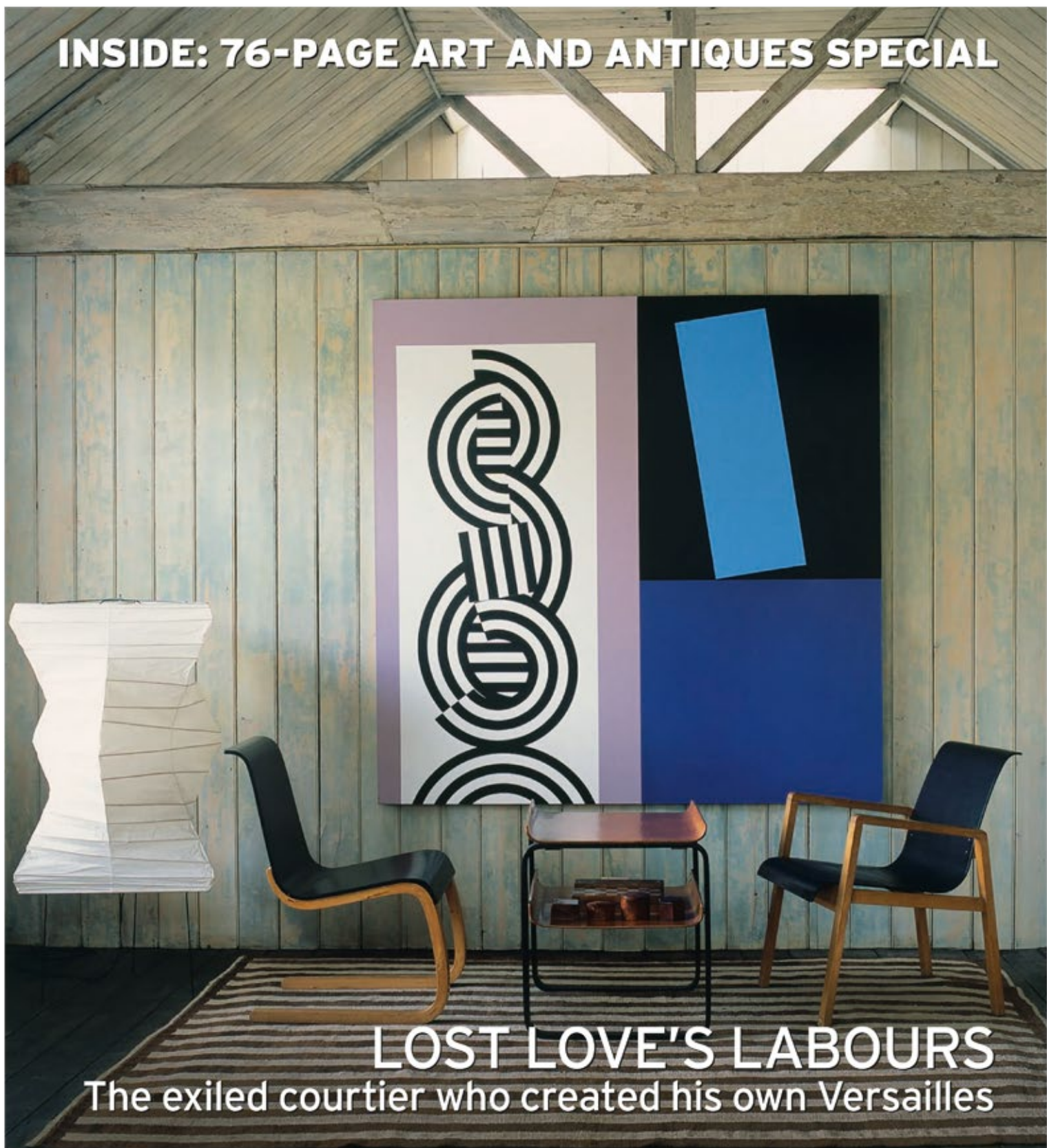


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# THE WORLD OF INTERIORS

**INSIDE: 76-PAGE ART AND ANTIQUES SPECIAL**



**LOST LOVE'S LABOURS**

The exiled courtier who created his own Versailles





# GROUND ZERO?

Jennifer Shorto is 'over and done with' the convention that pictures are best seen against a white backdrop. In her lofty London flat, the fabric and wallpaper designer has hung works by Freud, Kossoff and Pettibon on her own motif-heavy surfaces, busy with beetles or stylised mountains. Marie-France Boyer reports. Photography: Simon Upton





Previous pages: in the open-plan attic, the view from the dining table takes in two armchairs covered in Jennifer Shorto's 'Acacia' linen flanking a Victorian stool swathed in Armenian tapestry. The etchings between windows are by Alan Davie. This page, clockwise from top left: an Ettore Sottsass coffee table supports a 19th-century Imari bowl; American 1950s ceramic lamps, with marble-effect shades, sit on the kitchen worktop; a bronze of the politician Pierre Legrand shares (Chinese) table space with a *balagandan*, or Brazilian talisman; beneath a Leon Kossoff charcoal sit ceramic columns by Mendini for Memphis. Opposite: a Robert Kime lampshade made from a vintage sari faces the ladder to the roof





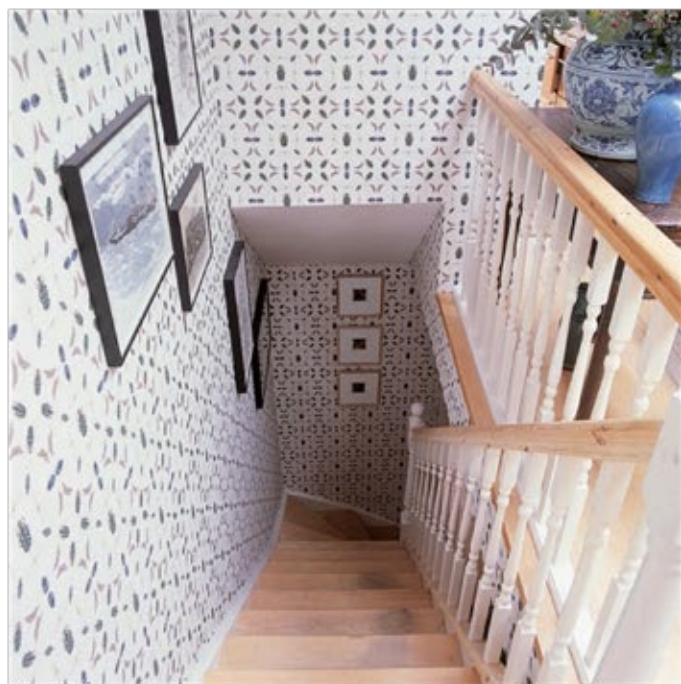
Left: Jennifer's room is dominated by an iron bed found in Egypt by Robert Kime and painted blue. She has draped it with 18th-century cotton, while the quilt comes from Provence. The large rug is Turkish and 19th-century. Top: a Lucian Freud nude hangs above a marble-topped chest of drawers that was in Jennifer's bedroom during her childhood. Above: the wallpaper is the owner's design - 'Golden Bees'





Top: a Larry Sultan photograph hangs in the corridor leading from Jennifer's bedroom to those of her daughters. Above: Allegra's room is covered in her mother's 'Cadre Noir', which employs elements taken from various 1960s paintings. Right: in Maya's room, with its prettily trimmed checked bed canopy, the stylised peaks of 'Himalayas' wallpaper, inspired by an alpine trek, visually echo the bed's four posts





**JENNIFER SHORTO** has known many lives and many countries. She has relocated often. Today she has alighted in London at the top of a building, in a turret-like apartment. From here she manages the fabric and wallpaper company that bears her name.

On the fourth floor of a traditional block of flats, the door on the landing opens directly on to a private pale-wood staircase, which leads to two other levels: one with bedrooms – hers and those of her two student daughters, Maya and Allegra, with their respective bathrooms and dressing rooms. Overhead, without a landing or door, is a huge attic that consists of a living room and kitchen/diner area laid out across the whole width of the property. A ladder even invites you to go up onto the roof, where Jennifer already pictures tomatoes, strawberries and lettuces growing in happy profusion. We're now at the height of the treetops in the square, and in these high branches a family of wild green parrots is chattering away – much to Jennifer's delight. A princess in her tower, in full bloom in her forties, elegant and expressive, Jennifer passes smoothly from one language to another. The wonderful tales she tells are transformed, just like that, into fabrics and wallpapers that supply her showrooms from Paris to Sydney, passing through Milan, Singapore or New York along the way.

Born to a Provençal father and a Belgian mother, Jennifer had a refined education shared between Brussels and London. 'I even learned about charcoal, watercolours and sculpture before finishing boarding school.' While still young, she married a Brazilian art dealer, Roberto Shorto, who introduced her to art history, encouraging her to sit for four hours without moving in front of a picture in order to understand it properly. 'I didn't dare stand up to him on this. He was 20 years older than me.' On his death in 2003, Jennifer turned to contemporary art, tried working as a dealer and produced some pieces of furniture. She also designed fabrics, adding to the Ottoman, Syrian and African textiles she'd begun collecting at the age of 18. She was living in Paris when a new love whisked her away to Mexico. There she ended up collaborating with the artist Francisco Toledo and other craftsmen for three years. 'After a while, I wanted to bring together my family and all my experiences. It was in London in 2014 that I set up my company, adding wallpapers to my collections of fabrics.' First, she created a series

of large, figurative panels, Zuber-esque but very contemporary; she quickly realised that traditional wallpapers, whose themes can be seamlessly repeated, are simpler to use.

In her travels, Jennifer discovered the work of the German naturalist Anna Maria Sibylla Merian. Living in Amsterdam in the 17th century, she left her husband and bourgeois life to study butterflies in Surinam. Tsar Peter of Russia, convinced by the scientific importance of her drawings and writings, wanted to acquire them. Jennifer's enthusiasm resulted in several wallpapers, two of which are on display in this apartment. On the three levels of the stairwell and in the living room, the walls are covered with 'Emeralds', a pale wallpaper decorated with green beetles, woodlice, moths and lacewings. 'You could say they're like Fabergé jewels,' says its designer. But organised geometrically as if seen through a kaleidoscope, they become, as soon as you move back a little, an abstract pattern, on which she's hung artworks. 'I want to prove that the conventional choice – wallpaper or white walls with paintings – is over and done with.'

In the living room, two armchairs and a sofa face each other round a table designed by Ettore Sottsass. With its books and fireplace, its faded rugs from Anatolia and Chinese porcelain, one certainly recognises the style pioneered by Robert Kime. Having decorated her apartment in Paris (*Wol* Sept 2009), he is her mentor and has passed on many rules of thumb. 'I like his timeless side. His sense of comfort. His delicacy, right down to the way he stuffs his cushions. I like his use of Oriental textiles and his floral, feminine effects in the style of the 18th century – that's when he really lets go.'

Opposite the living room, the kitchen is separated from the dining-room table by a small counter lit by two American ceramic lamps from the 1950s. You can find this mixture of old and new in Jennifer's bedroom. 'I want this to be a place for dreaming, a place of inner peace, protected from the world.' Here the walls are covered in a wallpaper that might well evoke leather from Mechelen, in Belgium, but whose moiré look reminds Jennifer of big-cat fur even if it's created from golden butterfly wings superimposed on bees. All these golds give the room the feel of a precious casket, while the Egyptian canopy bed draped with old white cotton has the air of a French convent, even if Jennifer associates it with Marie Antoinette. These two elements are contrasted by Lucian Freud and Francesco Clemente drawings, and the sexually provocative photos of Dieter Appelt.

The two girls' bedrooms are tiny sophisticated 'cells'. Allegra, who is studying film-making, wanted blue. Her bed occupies the entire length of the room, and her walls are covered with 'Cadre Noir' wallpaper, a semi-Baroque, semi-Neoclassical homage to the horse. It is broken up by a series of 20 conceptual designs covering one wall. Maya, who is studying sculpture at Central St Martins, has a canopy bed fitted into her bedroom. Here, the red and white checks of the bedding contrast with 'Himalayas' panels, whose long poles rise up towards a starry sky. The design was inspired by a trek Jennifer made to the Matterhorn.

From Joseph Hoffmann's Vienna to the Mexico of Barragán, to the Swiss Alps... Jennifer goes from discoveries to things of delight. As soon as she's captivated by something, she throws herself into research, feverishly compiling thick files of images. Later, with her long-time collaborator Julie Fusina, she searches for how to express a particular obsession – by purifying it, stylising it and sometimes even accepting a technical error in order to end up with a good design.

A keen professional, with her head in the stars, today Jennifer is retreating in her mind to a journey to Japan she's been dreaming about for ages. She's half afraid of it, in case it proves a thunderbolt, a new passion throwing everything up in the air ■

Jennifer Shorto's fabrics are sold at Lorfords Antiques, 9 Langton St, London SW10 (020 78384; [lorfordsantiques.com](http://lorfordsantiques.com)). Her website is [jennifershorto.com](http://jennifershorto.com)

Top: an 18th-century blue-and-white Chinese vase overlooks the stairs down to the sleeping area. Seen from this distance, the 'Emeralds' wallpaper functions as an abstract pattern. Close up (opposite), one can see individual insects clearly. Raymond Pettibon paintings sit on top

