

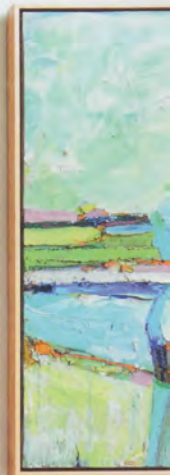
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## INSIDE STORIES

From creative decorating in a tiny flat to upsizing in the Cotswolds



# DESIGNER PROFILE

Judith Wilson talks to **Samantha Todhunter**, who describes how she redecorated a flat in London to make it a colourful, modern space

PHOTOGRAPHS **SEBASTIAN BOETTCHER**

'I was introduced to my American client by a mutual friend. She originally asked for help with "a few small things" at her Kensington home, but it became a complete redecoration project. The 5,000-square-foot apartment is on two floors; there were no structural changes, as the flat is rented, but my client wanted a fresh, modern look. The turnaround was a swift three months.

'To create a blank canvas for my client's vibrant art collection, walls throughout are painted in "Strong White" by Farrow & Ball: it's a great "go-to" colour. The drawing room is vast with a high domed ceiling, so a play with colour was an easy choice. We reused a pair of Louis-style sofas from my client's previous home, reupholstered in delicious watermelon pink velvet. This was the starting point for the scheme. The imposing Niamh Barry light sculpture was perfectly suited to the domed ceiling.

'Yellow seemed an obvious choice as a foil to the pink. It is rare to find clients willing to embrace bold colour, but my client did so – she was a joy. The rug from The Rug Company was custom-made and ties together the seating area. I focused on the proportions

of the leopards, so their tails and paws curve in and out of the furniture in a playful way.

'I worked mainly with my client's existing furniture, reinventing it with upholstery and adding a few new pieces. To add a cool twist to my client's Seventies lacquered card table, I chose Soane's traditional "Casino" chairs upholstered in matt gold leather.

'I needed to keep a cohesive thread throughout the apartment so the rooms work together. The study is graphic, with a play on geometric



## SAMANTHA TODHUNTER DESIGN

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on the floor and also the shape of the polished brass desk. To offset this effect, I chose the classic "Opera" chair from Soane. It is also the most comfortable chair ever.

'I love rooms to have glamour, so I designed the dressing room to

feel like the interior of a jewellery box. It was a dark and poky back bedroom, so I created a circuit of bespoke wardrobes with antiqued mirror glass on the doors. Precisely because this is a rented flat, I designed free-standing units, so they can move with my client.

'I was enormously lucky to have such a fabulous person to work with as a client, who not only embraced bold moves, but also positively jumped in. The whole project has been amazing from start to finish.'

Samantha studied journalism in Sydney, and then established her career on Australian *Vogue Living*, where she spent 10 years. After returning to the UK, she became decoration editor at *House & Garden*, leaving in the mid-Nineties to pursue a freelance career as an art director and interiors journalist for major design publications, both in the UK and internationally.

She launched her interior-design career in 2002, specialising in residential projects. Samantha is known for an easy, contemporary glamour, where luxury fuses seamlessly with the needs of a modern lifestyle.

From her west-London design studio, Samantha is currently working on the refurbishment and decoration of a large house in Notting Hill, the complete gutting and redecoration of a large apartment in Lancaster Gate, an Aspen town house and several smaller London residential projects. >

ABOVE Samantha's client likes to have a leopard print on her stairs - this is 'Leopard' wool carpet by Stark. The bronze light sculpture in the stairwell is 'Link' by Niamh Barry, through Themes & Variations



## ADDED INSIGHT

**Which three words sum up your style?**

Glamorous, luxe, eclectic.

**Why the mix of mid-century and classic?**

It creates pace and interest and an element of surprise: the clash is very important.

**What's next?**

I am working on a capsule furniture collection, Samantha Todhunter Bespoke: easy, go-anywhere pieces. And I always find myself designing bespoke furniture for projects.

**Why do you enjoy working with colour?**

I've lived in Australia where the light is so amazing. Colour grounds a room and whether you live on a beach or in a city, all rooms should have a pop of something fabulous.

**Why are you drawn to glamour?**

Glamour lies in the details, sumptuous silk velvet, the crispness of silk or a curtain that falls like a ball gown. Reflective surfaces, mirror and lacquer also impart a sense of luxe □

**1** With so much light flooding into the drawing room, the colours 'pop' during the day. The pink silk curtains are Bruno Triplet 'XT.010063' and the sofas are upholstered in **Métaphores 'St Germain' velvet in vermillion**, from Abbott & Boyd. The 'Climbing Leopard' rug by Diane von Furstenberg was custom-made by The Rug Company.

**2** In the dressing room, custom-made cupboards have antique mirror glass by Rupert Bevan with

polished-brass handles from Haute Déco. The Seventies light fitting was a find on 1stdibs, as was the pair of ex-shop display cabinets found in Palm Springs. The wool carpet is 'Zebra' by Stark.

**3** A polished-brass 'Zeta' desk from Birgit Israel is glamorous yet chunky, so it's perfect for the study. The strong silhouette also worked with the geometric 'Key Shadow' rug by Suzanne Sharp from The Rug Company.