

# Attention TO DETAIL

A lifelong love of Palladian architecture led Will Fisher – who owns the chimney-piece company Jamb with his wife Charlotte – to painstakingly create a home that's understated and elegant

FEATURE **CHARLOTTE PACKER**  
PHOTOGRAPHS **SIMON UPTON**





*Discover this month's eclectic and atmospheric homes, take our tour of Dumfries House in Scotland and learn about the fascinating history of fruit and vegetable-decorated ceramics*



## HOME OF THE MONTH

**WILL FISHER** has had a passion for antique fireplaces since he was 12 years old. Today he and his wife Charlotte own Jamb, the antique and reproduction chimney piece company. Their home in Camberwell is – reassuringly – filled with beautiful examples of these, as well as many a curio. We especially love their ‘cabinet of curiosities’, featuring antique ginger jars, taxidermy and coral. ➤ **TURN TO PAGE 60**

## 50 Nature's table

We take a look at the 200-year history of fruit and vegetable-decorated ceramics

## 70 A work of art

Murals, mosaics and original artwork fills the London home of Saskia Spender

## 78 The old curiosity shop

Shelly Elson is attracted to vintage industrial and mid-century design classics – as her home shows

## 88 The simple things

This 18th-century converted watermill is the perfect autumnal retreat

## 96 A royal restoration

We take you on a tour of the Palladian masterpiece that is Dumfries House, which is filled with early Chippendale furniture

## 104 Blaze of glory

Celebrate the arrival of autumn by visiting the UK's most enchanting arboretums



THIS PAGE Will Fisher and Charlotte Freemantle's 'cabinet of curiosities' — filled with skeletons, ginger jars, taxidermy and some more shells — is 'the kind of thing you would find in the downstairs corridor of an English country house, but here we've given it an upgrade, it's been promoted to our living room!' The ginger jars are 'particularly charming because there are obvious riveted repairs.' The antique badger was bought by Charlotte at The Decorative Antiques & Textiles Fair at Battersea Park from Josephine Ryan. FACING PAGE Will and Charlotte stand in front of their c1740 English chimney piece





A

ntiques dealer Will Fisher can't pinpoint the exact moment his passion for antique chimney

pieces began. But by the tender age of 12, he had bought, restored and resold his first fireplace. 'I must have been a bit of a pyromaniac,' he says, describing how at around the same age he also restored the fireplace in his bedroom, installing a grate and regularly lighting the fire.

And in a lovely role-reversal that any child of antiques-loving parents will appreciate, Will frequently begged his parents (both of whom were Marxist teachers), to take him to visit stately homes. Ragley Hall in Warwickshire, was a favourite and is the source of his abiding passion for all things Palladian.

Antiques-related jobs filled his teenage years, including a brief stint at Christie's, which led to the realisation, he says, 'that basically, I'm unemployable!' He started and then quit an art history degree in favour of the hands-on education that only the world of dealing and collecting could provide: working shifts driving a forklift truck while running a stall in Bermondsey. He also worked as a runner, which he loved. 'Runners are the lifeblood of the trade. They're single sole traders who "run" between antiques shops and auction houses, independently buying and selling,' he explains, recalling the buzz. 'It was addictive and I'll never forget the first £80 I made.' Although it was an object so awful he won't say what it was, 'but, God, the 80 quid was lovely.'

### Elegant aesthetic

These days, business is conducted from a smart showroom on London's Pimlico Road, rather than the back of a van. Jamb, which he runs with his wife, Charlotte Freemantle, is renowned for its antique ➤



### Profile

#### THE OWNER

Will Fisher and Charlotte Freemantle live here with their children, Eliza (eight) and Monty (five), and their Labradoodle, Cookie. Will and Charlotte are partners in Jamb, the antique and reproduction chimney piece company (020 7730 2122; jamb.co.uk).

#### THE PROPERTY

The house was built in 1780 and is located in Camberwell, south-east London. It has a sitting room, living room, dining room, kitchen and four bedrooms.



TOP Steps lead to the garden, where the spire of the local church can be seen ABOVE Will likes this Chinese vase as a decorative piece, but explains that it is badly damaged. The model of the Taj Mahal, carved from soapstone, is hard to date says Will – it could be late 19th-century or early 20th-century





The sofa in the living room is the 'Holland', a Regency style made by Jamb based on an 1810-20 original. The rug was bought at a car-boot sale and the stool is early 19th-century



## Little black book

**The Conran Shop, 81 Fulham Road, London. 0844 848 4000; conranshop.co.uk**  
 'I really love the Conran shop under Jasper's stewardship,' says Will.

**Pentreath & Hall, 17 Rugby St, Bloomsbury, London. 020 7430 2526; pentreath-hall.com**  
 'Ben Pentreath's shop in Bloomsbury was a real groundbreaker in terms of changing the area, which was stylishly rejuvenated some years ago.'

**Pimlico Road runners, London**  
 'There's nothing more fun than experiencing the banter and excitement of buying antiques from today's favoured runners outside our shop on Pimlico Road.'

**FACING PAGE** The walls of the sitting room are painted in the lightest slate shade from Paint Library. 'It's one of those colours that works in shade and also in strong light and contrasts fabulously with stone reliefs. It also looks lovely with gilt and the grubbiness of the marble,' says Will. The very plain chimney piece paired with the ornate panels (mostly taken from antique chimney pieces) above is a play on the way that early chimney pieces were designed. These were clean and simple with ornate decoration saved for the area above the mantelpiece

**ABOVE** The island unit was made to Will's design stipulations using reclaimed teak, to which he attached antique handles. The Scholar's lamp is from Jamb and made to a design taken from traditional reading lamps in libraries and museums. The oak table and stools are made to an Arts and Crafts design also by Jamb

**RIGHT** The table and the benches in the dining room are both late 19th-century/early 20th-century Heal's. The vases on the table are brush pots, which Will picked up in China, and one is heavily riveted. The 1820 mercury glass mirror came from a friend



*The concept was to completely alter the house in such a way that it felt as though nothing had been touched*

English chimney pieces and its exquisite reproductions. Their home in Camberwell, south-east London, epitomises the company's elegant aesthetic. Will describes it as 'a faded country house in miniature'. But nine years ago, when they moved in, the house was beyond faded. It was in a parlous state and 'very much the ugly duckling of the street'. Charlotte was pregnant with their daughter Eliza, so they waited a year before embarking on a six-month renovation. The concept, says Will, 'was to completely alter the house in such a way that it felt as though nothing had been touched'. To that end they opted for bare, unpainted boards and muted colours. 'It's a lazy man's way of doing things,' says Will. 'Make it look timeless and then you only have to do it once.'

Timeless it may be, but lazy it wasn't. The project took two and a half years, rather than six months. Work on the kitchen alone involved sourcing tiles that originated from the New York subway, via a New York reclamation yard, ➤









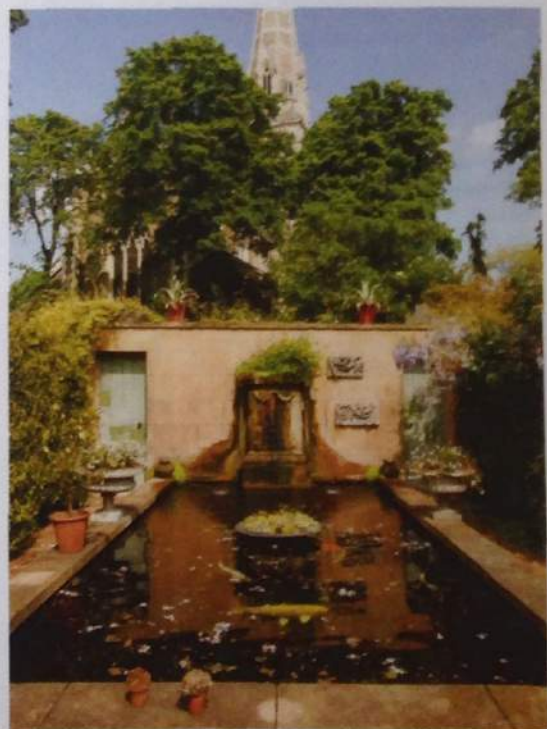


The chimney piece in the bedroom is 18th-century. The sofa is 1835 colonial and the mirror above is c1820. The painting over the fireplace came from a house sale in Scotland and is Italian 18th-century

have pulled out the kitchen sink if they'd asked for it,' he says. Once the wheels were in motion there was no going back, but it offered one big positive that any collector can empathise with: 'once it had all gone there was room for more. There is always something else to covet, to purchase.' So he was able to start again – finding new pieces that fitted his very specific look: beautiful antiques, elegant curiosities and, unsurprisingly, Georgian chimneypieces in every room.

A self-confessed despot and perfectionist when it comes to all the decisions relating to the house, Will is surprisingly sanguine about mixing young children and priceless antiques. 'I've given up entirely on trying to child-proof the house. What they don't destroy, they graffiti,' he sighs. Occasionally, however, the antiques retaliate. While mucking about with the 19th-century sawfish that resides in the corner of the sitting room, Monty dropped it on his foot and the bite marks necessitated a trip to A&E. ■

FACING PAGE, TOP The Carrara marble fireplace is English, c1720 and Will chose matching Carrara marble to create the splashback for the bath. The 1890 painting of the fish was a hunting trophy. The art deco-style dish light featuring antelope heads is by Jamb, while the bath and basins are from Water Monopoly RIGHT The pool was one of the first things that Will created when moving into the house







which were sent back because they didn't have enough crackle in the glaze. Fortunately, a second, older, batch made the grade. Will also agonised over how best to lay the 18th-century Purbeck slabs on the floor – deciding on courses after much painstaking research, which involved dragging the family round numerous stately piles. 'I fell out with my wife, fell out with my neighbours and fell in love with my builder,' laughs Will, summing up.

Despite his obsessive attention to detail in terms of materials and finishes, Will has taken a quietly anarchic approach to the way that they are deployed. 'It's an old cliché,' he says, 'but rules are there to be broken. And as long as it's not pretentious or try-hard, turning things around can read quite well.' This can be as subtle as reversing the hierarchy of materials (pine floorboards upstairs, oak in the basement), or an unexpectedly dramatic touch, such as the fireplace in the dining room, which 'shouldn't really work proportionally,' says Will, yet somehow it 'makes' the space.

Three years ago, Will auctioned 500 of his pieces at Christie's – both from his home and business. 'I found myself wanting to sell everything, by the end I'd



Will and Charlotte decided to keep the floorboards exposed throughout the house



## WILL AND CHARLOTTE'S HOME

# A VIEW ON A ROOM

Antiques expert **JUDITH MILLER** talks us through Will Fisher and Charlotte Freemantle's classically-inspired living room – from a sarcophagus to an Italian baroque painting

### About Judith



**JUDITH MILLER** is a leading antiques expert. She is one of the BBC's *Antiques Roadshow* experts and has written

more than 100 books covering antiques, collectables and interior design. Here, we ask her to choose her favourite room from the houses featured in the issue and explain what makes it so interesting.

### TURTLE SHELL AND SMALL DEER SKULL

The turtle shell at the left end of the mantelshelf and the small deer skull just to the right of it, are displayed here for their sculptural qualities. Historically, such displays have also often had symbolic significance. In classical Greco-Roman ornament the skull of a ram, ox, bull, or goat – collectively known as 'bucrania' – was an emblem of fertility.

### THE CHIMNEYPIECE

The statuary marble chimneypiece with a contrasting convent Sienna marble frieze dates from c1740. It's in the elegant, Classical-revival Palladian style fashionable in Britain during the early 18th century, which was promoted by the works and designs of the English architect William Kent. Inspiration for the style can be tracked back from Kent, via the 17th-century English architect Inigo Jones, to the 16th-century Italian architect and stonemason Andrea Palladio (hence 'Palladianism').

### THE HEARTH

In urban housing during the 18th century, wood was increasingly passed over in favour of coal as a source of heat. Initially, coals were burned in the hearth in a fire basket or 'dog grate' originally intended for logs. It was soon discovered, however, that for efficient combustion coals required a smaller hearth with canted sides and a smaller and higher grate – the latter also making it easier to clear ashes from under the fire.





### PAINTING OF A HOUND

The splendid oil painting above the mantelshelf of a hound in a wooded landscape is from the Bolognese School, and dates to the 17th century. This Classical movement was at its most influential during the late 16th and 17th century and was led by the Italian painter Lodovico Carracci and his cousins Agostino and Annibale Carracci. The school was created in reaction to the contrived artificiality of the Mannerist artists that preceded it, and was a driving force in Italian Baroque painting. Its followers always drew from the actual model, to produce direct, honest paintings.

### SARCOPHAGUS AND PANTHEON MODEL

At the centre of the mantelshelf is a carved model sarcophagus, and to its right is an alabaster model of the Pantheon in Rome. Both are 19th-century mementos of the Grand Tour, which was at the height of fashion from the late 17th to the mid 19th century. The tour afforded affluent Europeans and Americans the opportunity to see at first hand the art and architecture of Renaissance and Classical antiquity - specifically in the Italian cities of Rome, Florence, Pisa, Siena, Pompeii, and Venice. It also provided an opportunity to bring back antique artefacts.

### PUTTI HEAD

Continuing the Classical theme, the fragment of a small sculpture on the right of the mantelshelf is a putto, a small, chubby, and angelic infant derived from the attendants of Cupid or Eros - the Roman and Greek gods of Love in Classical mythology. Putti were especially prevalent in Renaissance and Baroque art and ornament. This example probably dates from the 18th century and is carved in English stone from an Italian Renaissance model.

### BUTTON-UPHOLSTERED ARMCHAIR

Although numerous variations abound - some have higher backs, some open sides, others plain seats - this is a classic example of a 19th-century Victorian 'easy' chair. Raised on turned mahogany legs with castors, its underlying beech wood frame is sumptuously upholstered - the deep buttoning on the seat, arms, and back, together with sheets of hessian and stretched webbing, necessarily containing generous layers of felt, wadding, and horsehair above coiled steel springs. Characteristically, the emphasis is very much on ease and comfort.

### UPHOLSTERED STOOL

This stool, with red velvet-upholstered seat was made in the early 19th century, during the English Regency. Its construction is in the neoclassical style and recalls, in its pair of crossed or 'X'-frame legs the 'diphros okladias' stool of ancient Greece. The originals would have had an unpadded leather seat, and their legs, often terminating in carved animal hoof or paw-style feet, would have folded (unlike these fixed Regency examples), for ease of transportation. In Greek art and literature, they are depicted as humble stools and seats for the gods and heroes.

### RUG

Will bought this rug at a car boot sale for £15, which is certainly a good price. It's Moroccan, 20th-century, and probably woven by a nomadic Berber tribe as much for utility as for its decorative purposes. The rug sits well here, in what is essentially a 17th to 18th to 19th-century period interior.

