



Devil in the Detail and Glamour De Riguer

Cecilia Neal has a rare edge among interior designers: an academic background in the fine and decorative arts and architecture. She certainly knows her stuff after studying theatre design and teaching history of art. Armed with The Knowledge, she will scour markets, auction rooms and fairs to seek out clever pieces of furniture and objets d'art for an international clientele. Her recent projects include a Mayfair duplex, plantation house in the Deep South, grand Edinburgh terrace, villa in Provence, and countless apartments in Central London, often for expats looking for luxury at manageable cost.

Cecilia Neal's own dining room



Mayfair, pied a terre



She began transforming properties some twenty years ago, and operates with a small supporting team from a mews house in the heart of Mayfair, flanked by glitzy restaurants, upscale shoe shops and bespoke tailors.

The walls in her offices are lined from floor to ceiling with hundreds of box files containing archives of residential and commercial projects, and an infinity of pattern books.

Front of house is a charming retail shop crammed with small antiques, decorative accessories, quirky one-off pieces to embellish the home, or give as presents.

These could be hand painted porcelain tisane cups, Welsh blankets, rainbow glass tumblers, scented soaps, Scottish pottery cats, a bust of the Duke of Wellington, a silver heart on a teething ring or a set of caviar spoons. Most items are available to buy on line from her new shopping website www.meltons.co.uk

Cecilia chooses, designs or commissions everything herself. Many items are exclusive to Meltons and reflect her Francophilia, her pleasure in English traditional country life, appreciation of 18th century classical style, and an enjoyment in eating with friends at a beautifully laid table. She sets a mean table herself, as in her stunning silver gilt Chelsea dining room hand painted with a pattern of vine leaves, (see pictures left).

If you are looking for outright glamour, welcoming warmth, vivid colour, with the latest high tech equipment carefully concealed, Cecilia Neal would be an ideal choice of designer. Monochrome minimalism will never stir her soul, though she can do pure and cool on demand or if the architecture calls for it, as in the project for a pied a terre in Mayfair, (see pictures left).

She spends infinite time on her projects, working on some houses, such as the early 20th century house in Surrey (pictured) over several years. She considers every fine detail: fire surround, knives and forks, a bespoke dinner service. Only the most skilled craftsmen make it into her contacts book. Lighting experts install spotlights on the ceiling and floors to illuminate specific details of paintings and a wallpaper will be hand printed to complement the furniture. She often commissions hand woven rugs or arranges for copies to be made to fit the dimensions of a room.

Cecilia explains 'My first job was for a property developer who asked me to do a show home for him. He wanted someone who was interested in detail and that's very much my thing.' She is adamant, in fact, about the importance and correct use of architectural detail in both traditional and contemporary interiors. But where a house seems characterless and bland she will go against the trend for knocking walls down and put them up instead. In one Chelsea flat she divided the large downstairs space in a sitting room, separate dining room, kitchen and hall. Upstairs she created a more practical design for living by fitting in an extra bathroom, dressing room and office. Could this be a way forward? More privacy, more colour, and more flamboyance?

For further information about Cecilia Neal's unique ways of transforming your home, please contact:

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