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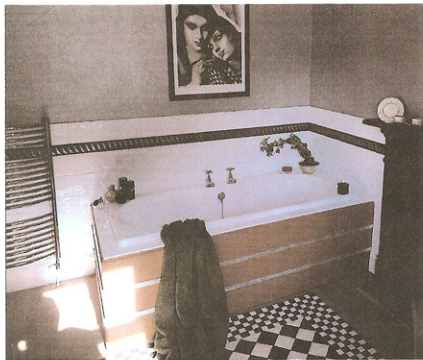
**CENTRE  
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# The China Syndrome

ART DECO FANS  
DESIGN THEIR HOUSE  
ROUND A COLLECTION

PHOTOGRAPHS  
BY MOGGY



MAKING PROVISION for a pastime when you design your house is one thing, but few homes can have been so strongly influenced by a collecting hobby as this one.

Before Robin and his wife Lee came to live in the Isle of Man they had occupied a roses-round-the-door English thatched cottage and decorated accordingly, filling it with William Morris wallpapers, chintzes and floral patterns. But when they bought this house in the Isle of Man – which they had to re-convert from the two flats into which it had been divided – they decided on a complete change of decorative style.

For some years Robin had been collecting Art Deco china, and the couple had both grown increasingly enthusiastic about the clean lines of Thirties design. What better inspiration for their new home?

They are a formidable DIY team, with Robin more than competent in the joinery, electrics and plumbing departments, and Lee a dab hand at painting, plastering, tiling and even brickwork – as well as also making all the soft furnishings.



'Everything we do is very much a team effort', they say. The three-storey house was very nearly complete when *MANX LIFE STYLE* went to photograph it.

The scene is set as you enter the front porch from the street, by the gold and yellow sunburst design – shades of Clarice Cliff – painted by Lee on the wall between the outer and inner front doors. Oakwood Joinery of Port St. Mary made a replacement inner door, with bevelled glass fitted into a graceful glazing pattern, which lets in plenty of morning sunshine.

The first room to your left is the diningroom, dominated by a heavy Chinese-Chippendale style dining table and matching chairs which the couple have had for some time; they were told in the antique shop where they bought them that the set had been brought from Singapore in the 1940s. Here can be seen the first pieces of their china collection – a segmented Susie Cooper posy ring on the table, a Carlton Ware coffee set displayed on the windowsill – smooth as ivory eggshells and decorated in matt black – and on

the glass shelves at the far end of the room, pieces by Clarice Cliff.

Two large Benito fashion-plate watercolours which they found at Cubbin & Bregazzi add 1930s style, and they found exactly the right mock tortoiseshell ceiling and wall light fittings at Lights of Mann.

Lee made curtains for this room from a design of stylised lilies on a red background, from Crowson's Mackintosh range at House & Home, hanging a light voile stencilled with lilies and tulips between them for privacy. The voile and fabric used for the chair seat pads come from the same range.

There is a study/spare bedroom, as yet unfinished, to the right of the hall, then behind the diningroom comes the kitchen, fitted out by Magnet Joinery in palest ash veneer with slender brushed steel rods for cupboard handles. Brilliant flashes of colour are provided here by a display of rich red, yellow and green Delphis ware, produced by the Poole Pottery in Dorset during the 1960s and '70s, which Robin and Lee started





Mackintosh-inspired design in cream, caramel and red which Lee found at The Curtain Gallery and made up into a bed cover and curtain panels. The large 'Flower/Square' wool rug here is conveniently between Art Deco and Arts & Crafts in its design, and the couple's large Spanish-style bed is backed by a voile panel hanging over bookshelves. There is a slightly curious arrangement here – in order to square up the room the wall behind the bed is not the exterior wall of the house, but conceals a substantial storage area reached via the

cupboard doors seen in the bedroom photograph. Dormer windows in the rooms pitched ceiling give delightful views.

This is a very personal house, in which the owners have not only done a great deal of the work themselves, but in which the decorative inspiration has come directly from their private passion for twentieth century English china. The only drawback will be if they succeed in collecting so much of it that they need a larger home...

## SOURCES

Amongst Robin and Lee's local hunting grounds for china are Michael Levine, in the Peter Luis building at 9-11 Duke Street, Douglas (tel. 629530), Antiquarium at 9 Malew Street, Castletown (tel. 824309), and Crystal's Auction Rooms in Bowring Road, Ramsey (tel. 815555). Rugs from Floor Design, Tynwald Mills, St. Johns (tel. 801342).

Curtain fabrics from the House & Home Design Studios (who also supplied most of the wallpapers), 3-5 Victoria Road, Douglas (tel. 627314), and The Curtain House, 41-43 Malew Street, Castletown (tel. 823265).

Staircase and replacement doors by

Oakwood Joinery of Eastdale, Four Roads, Port St. Mary (mob. 495040).

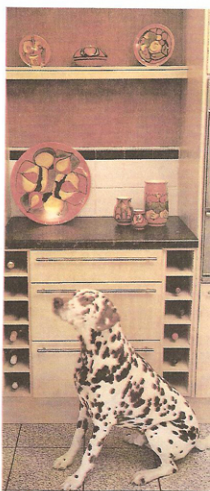
Kitchen units from Magnet Ltd., Head Road, Douglas (tel. 623881).

Nickel-plated bathroom tiles from Pacesetter Ltd., Harris Terrace, Douglas (tel. 622045/629149).

Light fittings from Lights of Man, 12 Spring Valley Industrial Estate, Braddan (tel. 629829).

Gas-fired central heating installed by E. & S. Plumbing & Heating of Port St. Mary (tel. mob. 494527).

Electrics by John Faragher of Surby (tel. mob. 495039).







In the master bedroom, a woollen rug from Floor Design at Tynwald Mills and fabric from The Curtain Gallery in Castletown are both inspired by Charles Rennie Mackintosh design. The sitting room (right) has another rug from the same source with a more Art Deco pattern to complement the tiled fireplace in the kitchen (far right) a collection of Delphis Ware by the Poole Pottery in Dorset sets the colour scheme

collecting about four years ago. They have bought a couple of pieces from Antiquarium in Castletown since coming to live in the Island. The china has inspired part of the room decoration, as the kitchen units are backed by a deep red sponged-effect wallpaper.

The next project, when the rest of the house is finished, is to build a conservatory opening off this room and into the small garden, which catches plenty of afternoon sun.

The sitting room is at the front on the first floor, running the full width of the house; it has three large south-easterly facing windows and is full of light in the mornings.

Here all the motifs are very Art Deco, from the fireplace with its angular tiling – which Lee designed herself – to the light fittings and the starkly elegant wool rug from Floor Design of Tynwald Mills. Its geometric pattern is mostly in black, white and grey, but it also incorporate a tan which picks up the colour of the buckskin sofas.

A radiator cover repeats the Clarice Cliff sunburst motif, there is a Tamara Lempicka-inspired painting on the wall, and a 1930s curved-top walnut cabinet houses more of the couple's china collection. Since coming to the Island they have found a Clarice Cliff biscuit barrel at Crystals auction rooms in Ramsey, bought pieces of Susie Cooper from Michael Levine, who specialises in twentieth century china

at Michael Levine in Douglas, and Poole Pottery items from Sally Black at Antiquarium in Castletown.

Lee made curtains for the room in Crowson's chequered 'Centauri' (no.04) fabric, which she bought from the House & Home Design Studio in Douglas, and the woven-effect wallpaper is 'Abaca' by Elitis.

The bathroom on this floor is a wonderfully strong statement, using exactly the same palette of colours – black, white, a rich tan and a silvery grey – as the rug in the lounge. Lee has black-leaded its little cast iron Victorian fireplace (a few pieces of Susie Cooper china are displayed on the top), and a large fitted cupboard and the panelling round the bath in tan. The upper walls are papered in 'Opaline', a matt silver paper from the 'Utopia' collection by Portfolio at House & Home, and the pure white tiling below is dramatised by a row of nickel-plated rope patterned border tiles from Pocesetter. Sleek chrome fittings, a black-and-white chequerboard rug on the polished floorboards, and a framed Tamara Lempicka print complete the effect.

The master bedroom is tucked up under the eaves on the top floor, with the open staircase leading into it and French windows on the half-landing, outside which they have had a balcony built facing into the garden. Perhaps the most delightful fabric in the whole house is used here, a pale but sumptuous Charles Rennie