

At home with...



Robin and Brigette Buchanan

The founders of soft furnishings business Odd Limited open the door to their beautiful Cotswold home and talk interiors, old-rockers and individual style

A dilapidated grey-stone shooting lodge in the middle of the Cotswold countryside was the ideal place for Robin and Brigette Buchanan to channel their creative energies.

Back in 1988 when they first moved, the house, according to Brigette was "a wreck" with only the basic Victorian structure intact. This allowed the Buchanans to start ▶

from scratch and renovate the original fireplaces, floors and windows to decorate their home with their distinctive style. A daunting task for some, but not for the then Managing Director of Fired Earth and the ex- Vogue fashion editor.

22 years later and the Buchanans have created a nostalgic haven, which instils a sense of the comfort and the wonder of childhood in all who walk through the door. The interior is a mix of faded emerald, ruby and opal colours, weathered oak tables made by hand and stunning vintage upholstery. Comfortable cream sofas are dotted with patterned velvet cushions under home made alpaca wool throws, and the walls feature their (now grown up) children's childhood drawings, in timeless battered wooden frames made by Robin.

An ocean theme also runs through the house in the form of muted coral and turquoise fabrics, with shells, ships and beach pebbles covering the shelves. Nearly all of the interior and exterior pieces are hand made by the Buchanans. If a piece of furniture or fabric has been brought in from elsewhere, it will have been faded or dyed to make

it look like it has been part of the house forever. It's these washed-out tones which evoke a feeling of permanence and protection as well as making the rooms effortlessly stylish. "If I don't like the look of something, I can't bear it," says Brigette. "Both of us are too aesthetically minded for our own good. But that's not to say we want things to match. That's the last thing we want. We're always styling and throwing things together to see what works. We'd only ever have something in the house which fitted our life."

The life Brigette refers to is one of dedicated individuality. "I don't think I've ever gone with the trends," she says. "I have always had my own style. Even at Vogue, when they were all suddenly wearing Joseph trousers with high heel shoes I was still donning my white nighties with moccasins." Another aspect of her individuality is the range of fabrics she works with. "Very few people print on velvet these days, but I think it's the most wonderful texture. After you machine-wash it, it takes on a fabulous chalky quality which suits all clothes and furnishings." She has designed and printed complex



Above: Robin and Brigette's sunny veranda.

Right: Robin and Brigette Buchanan on their hand made sofa.



Left: The Buchanans' home office.

floral patterns onto velvet curtains bought from flea markets, which she has then cut up and turned into cushions. Much of the style in the house is taken up with Brigette's unlikely combinations of fabric and prints, which work enviably well.

Robin and Brigette met on a skiing holiday while Robin worked at Tate and Lyle and Brigette at Vogue. They both have impressive CVs. "I started off as a secretary at Vogue in the 70s, but soon got thrown into the fashion department and began

editing and styling across various areas," says Brigette. "From there, I went to Laura Ashley while they were still rather quirky and edgy." At Laura Ashley, Brigette helped set up their jewellery line with Cassandra Goad and their handbags with Mulberry. "We were all very young and enjoying being creative, but I'd had my first son, too, by that time and my mind turned to bringing up children."

Robin's job as Managing Director of Fired Earth brought the Buchanans to the Cotswolds and it was ▶



Left: One of the old-rockers available from Odd Limited.
Below: Maud Buchanan and Inky the dog take a break on the original old-rocker from 1930.



a natural move to start a business together.

"Robin and I have always complemented each other with our different skills," says Brigette, sitting on the floral hand stitched pouffe in her timber-framed garden office. "We both love interiors, but Robin is tremendously practical; he knows how things work. He's got an architectural eye – and my passion is to experiment with colours and fabrics." It's evident that this double act works wonders in creating a beautiful home as well as stunningly popular products in their soft furnishings business Odd Limited.

The original 1930s 'old rocker' swinging garden chair, the signature product of Odd Limited, sits by their swimming pool. All Old Rockers created at Odd are hand crafted by Robin from the highest quality local materials, with Brigette providing a bespoke service to customers, which caters down to the last detail of the fabric, colour scheme, fringing and delivery. "Each Old Rocker we make is a labour of love for us," says Brigette. "We make what we like. I'd find it extremely hard to sell anything that I didn't already cherish and love in my own home."

This isn't hard to believe, as every stylish

nuance in their house is reflected in their office showroom. It contains the same nostalgic themes as the house, with its beautiful lama wool blankets and coverings of hopsack canvas. "We never really switch off because work is in the house as well as the office," Brigette says. "Sometimes I moan about the office in the garden, but we get so excited about discovering new ways of using fabrics, prints and designs that new furniture ends up enhancing our home and work life at the same time."

When the Buchanans want to take a break from their busy lives they wait until a delivery takes them to the coast. "The only thing missing from the staggeringly beautiful Cotswold countryside is the sea," says Brigette. "We're taking a trip to Norfolk next week to drop off two Old Rockers and we will no doubt find a hotel by the sea, eat lots of seafood and then come home. We can have the best of both worlds."

Odd Limited designs and makes a range of garden furniture and fabrics. For more details, contact 01993 830674 or visit oddlimited.com

