I know what I like

lovely mug ugly mug

This is my favourite mug

This is very old. This was bought in 1987. Six of them we bought, and this is the remaining one. It's the survivor. It's quite scratched, you can see inside it's sort of scratched from the spoon and things. One of it's 'classmates', if you like, is now a paintbrush washing mug, so it's still used.

The others, I think, hit a hard kitchen floor. Which is why I've now got cushion vinyl on the floor in my kitchen! With my arthritic hands I drop things a lot, so they tend to bounce a bit more than a stone floor. So the predecessors of this one, went on the floor.

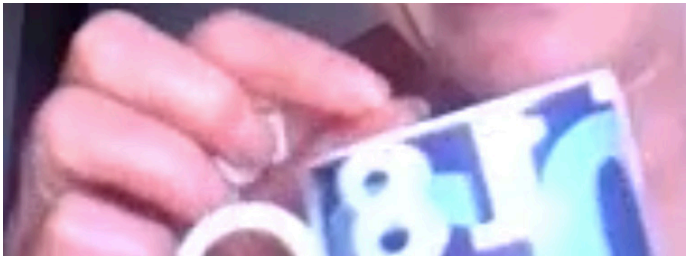
I've not always used it. Occasionally, you know, if I've had a birthday present as a mug and then you've got to use it for a while, but I always go back to it! It's really a good size. It''s not too big and it's not too small.

We bought them

We built the extension, which is what I am in at the moment. It used to be a study this end and a kitchen, the other end. There was a partition between. We built that in 1986 soon after we moved here and (it must have been the January sales in '87), we went to Cardiff and we wanted some things to fit out the house.

In one of their big department stores they'd got a dinner service – a Royal Doulton dinner service. It's their Lambeth Ware ? Which is a sort of stoneware. The name of the thing is Florinda which has long since gone out to production, the copyright for it is 1977. And it was seconds. But very hard to tell seconds. So we bought a whole dinner service so that we'd got some (thing) nice (what we'd got before was you know….cheap stuff). So we bought this dinner service, and I still use the dinner service. I've broken the odd plate but it's what I use every day, you know - they're my pots.

And later on, we found that they did mugs. It was a few weeks later. So these were perfect. These aren't seconds! These we bought soon afterwards, so it must have been sort of early '87. So that's how we came to have them.



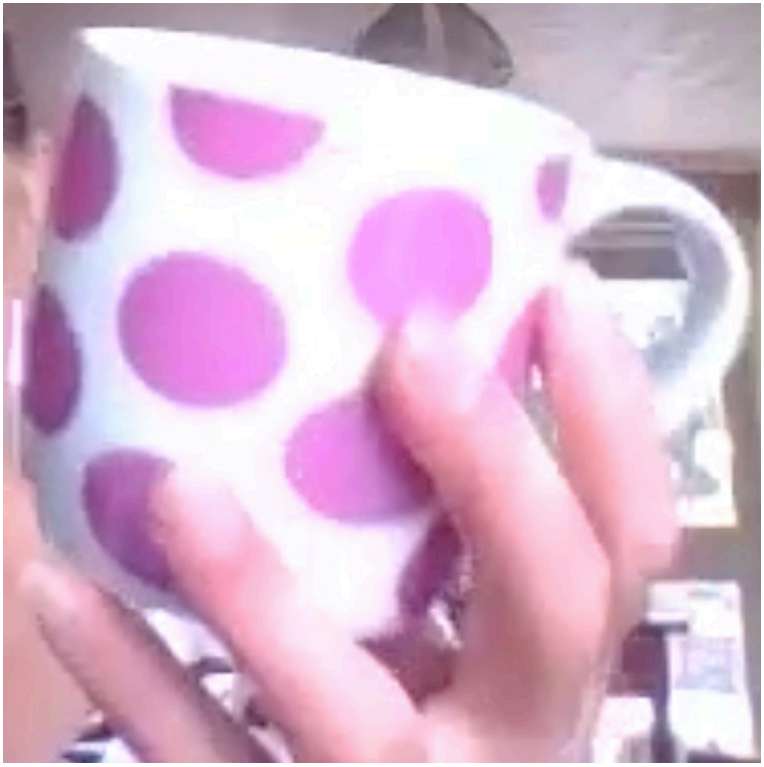
I like a china mug

I mean, this is a china mug, which is nice and then, when you drink from it. It's nice and thin.

But china mugs are often not very big. It's nice - 'dingy' (sound)- (taps mug). And this was a from a competition we were in as well, so that's got memories.

I like it, because it has memories of sailing and doing, but it's small. Too small for a proper cup of coffee.

I like a decent - I need two of these -well, one and a half, probably, you know. It just doesn't sort of do. But they're a nice mug. They didn't make the cut you know, - they didn't go out when I threw (the others) out.



This is a a mug I don't like

I've got two of these, and these are my workman's mugs. When I have people doing work.

They are big and heavy. They are too heavy. When it's full I can barely lift it. And they're thick - and yeah, they're just, you know, they really are (makes a face)

They were kept - but - when I swapped the kitchen - when I took the partition down a few years ago - my actual kitchen is smaller than it used to be. So, I had to throw quite a lot out. I did a good clear out. So any mugs I really didn't like – went. They really did go - so I've got no uglies, other than my contractor cups.

I suppose I'm a pragmatist

- and this is a fine example of pragmatism. It's inoffensive, and - I liked the pots originally when we bought the dinner service, so it's quite- attractive. It's 30 odd years old and it hasn't aged. You know what I mean? It's sort of classic. - It wasn't one of these sort of swirly patterns,- it's just a classic. It's delicate and it's quite modern. So it has stood the test of time, so yes, I do quite like it.

I've got a full dinner service as well. It's missing I think, one dinner plate, a couple of bowls but there's plenty to use, you know. I still use it. It is more robust. That was why for everyday pots, you know we didn't want the bone china. I've got a china dinner service as well, but it's gathering cobwebs at the back of the cupboard, so it never comes out. And the other thing - it's got a gold around the rim so you can't put them in the microwave - whereas the stoneware I can wang it in the microwave and it's fine. It freezes, everything, you know, it's bomb proof!

- I look out my window now, and I can see the flowers in the garden (so) it's, you know: a link. It's fairly neutral. I tend towards neutral colours. So yeah I like a lot about it.

If it was just a little bit thinner..

But because of the shape, although it's not the thinnest of sort of wall thickness - Because of the little curve on it, it comes out, so the lip it's nice - to drink from – it's a nice shape.

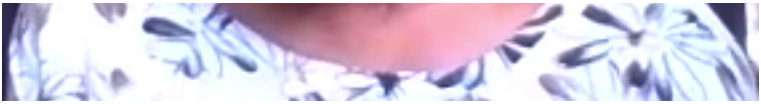
It's the function. If it doesn't work, I'm not interested

To be honest, if it was if it was a china mug in the right size. I probably wouldn't care what was on it.

It's function, rather than style, if you like, it's the functionality and that's me - straight through – sadly for someone in design!

But yes, I also like the history of things. I've got lots of things that I use that I've either inherited and (you know I mean kitchen spoons inherited - nothing silver or whatever). But I like to think that when I use something – (I think): 'Oh that was grandma's spoon', you know. I butter my bread, with one of her knives – it's the continuity. And also you know, a lot of the modern cutlery: the function isn't there?

That sort of sums me up, almost.



I like all sorts of patterns

I love fabric and I invariably buy fabric on the colour, and the pattern, and the touch.

So if it was a pattern I loved but I didn't like the feel of it, I wouldn't buy it. They've got to combine. I suppose that's the function again, it's what you're going to make and how it's going to drape. It's the functionality of it. And you know quite often they combine nicely - I like pattern, yes.

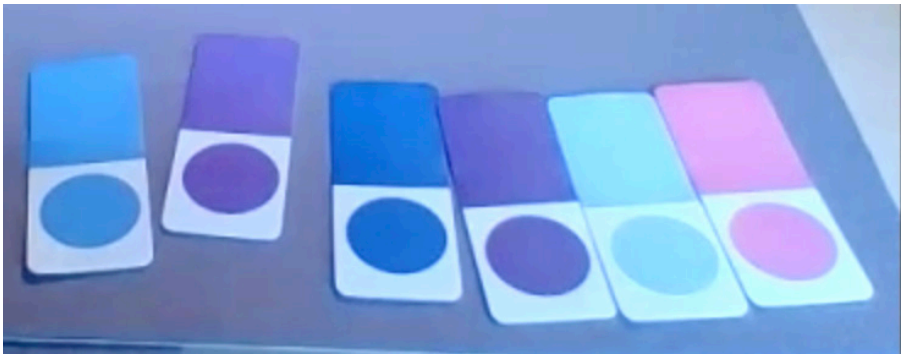
Colour

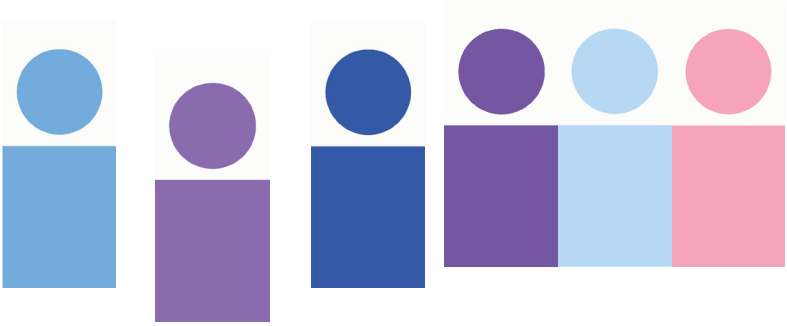
Using colour

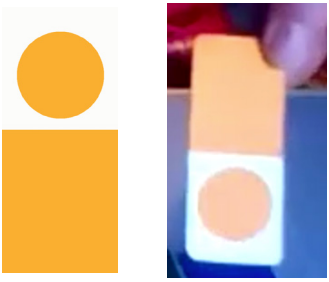
I have gone a bit more conservative. I had a new suite, a few years back and it's beige – a light beige. So what I've got is (it's not a genuine oriental carpet). I've got wood block floor in the hall and the lounge. I don't like wood floors –(well) I love a wood floor but I don't want to sit with my feet on. - I want a bit of carpet.

So when we first moved in we bought two oriental rugs. The big one for the lounge and a smaller one in front of the dining table - it's a long sitting dining room, and they matched. There are shades of green, tan, all manner of sort of colours in it. So I just pick colours out from that for the furnishings in the lounge, And that works really well. They're the original rugs that are still in there from you know, 30 odd years ago. So they weren't cheap, cheap ones, but they weren't really oriental or Persian rugs or anything stupid like that.

But they're served a function. There's so many different colours in it that it gives me, you know, a reasonable amount of scope and stops it being a monochrome room -if you like.







None of the colours (in your colour cards pack) really are my decorating colours because - they are a little bit (bright) certainly for wall decorations for a room. Yes they're all too dark - I do a sort of a bland palette - and I warm things up with other things.

But for clothes - when I was working I would generally wear black or navy blue trousers or skirt and jacket with then a blouse of some colour, or you know either a bright colour or a muted cream, white or you know pale pink

My sort of 'going out in' clothes would probably have a bit more colour. - I'm still quite a navy blue person. Not quite so much black, but I've still got the black trousers - I probably wear more dresses now - and they could be anything. I mean I've got sort of shades of blue, I've got shades of pink. the colours I like are the paler blues. And that's the pink of my spotty dress.

That's not a bad colour (yellow) - within a print or something. That's quite a nice one.

I really like blue and white

I think blue and white in all manner of (patterns) - it's good in spots it's, it's good in - it always looks clean? Some blue gingham always looks nice.

And I do like - I mean it's probably a blue between those two - in between those. But yes I do (like that combination).

It's sort of very clean looking.

Or a blue floral print on a white background.

I've got a couple of really nice dresses like that.

The conference dress

That spotty dress I wore to the conference - I saw that (fabric) across the shop. Well it's the other way around isn't it? It's a pink background, with the cream spot on it - but that just that just appealed. You know I'm - I think it's actually a slightly deeper pink than that on the dress: it's not a baby pink it's a real colour, if you know what I mean.

So that really appealed to me. Whereas the blue spot though, whatever other colours they'd got, just didn't appeal at all. It was that (pink).

I have two ways of buying fabrics

One is: I've got a pattern and I'm making something for a specific purpose. So I'm probably looking for, you know, a floral print or I'm looking for a big print or I want a very tiny print. So I'm sort of looking for certain things.

And then I go out with a little bit of - you know- what it might be - (if) I want to wear it with a particular jacket. So it's got to go with that - a dress that will go with that jacket sort of thing.

On other occasions, I'm like - you know - it's like a sweetie shop. And I just go into fabric shops and if I see something I buy it and it goes into the stash. I've got piles of fabric that I've bought almost on impulse, just because I like it. I've no idea what I'm going to make with it, but I buy enough so that I can make several things.

Some of them are quite big prints and others are small and lots of colours in, and some are just two-tone, you know it's it's really, really difficult to sort of categorize.

MARKS &
SPENCER

The other thing I do is: - I photograph (I keep them on my phone) the patterns. So I've got the picture and I've got the the fabric allowance that I need for it. So if I see something I really like and I think - I'm going to make a dress. Which dress shall I make? I can look (at the pictures on my phone) and think, well it wouldn't suit that one, but it would suit that one and I will need three metres of it.

That's the two ways I buy fabric. And very much it's on the silkiness of the firmness of it. You know, how big – if there's a big pattern match. It's a lovely fabric, but I'm going to have to buy double to get the fabric match and that just makes it too expensive sort of thing you know. So yes, there's lots of things to think about.

Certainly when you're buying – (well it's the same with dresses as well) but when you're buying fabric, you'll quite often see you know, a print, which is mainly pink based next to one that's blue, and one that might be, you know, a darker pink or a lighter pink . You know, they tend to do a print in different shades.

And one shade of it you'll think -' Naah' ! But exactly the same pattern, but in different colours you'll just say : 'I've got to buy that'. And it's, you know, there's no rhyme or reason to it really?

You can't describe it. I cannot tell you what will always make me buy a piece of fabric. Because there is no one recipe. The stash will tell you that there are links, but not across everything.

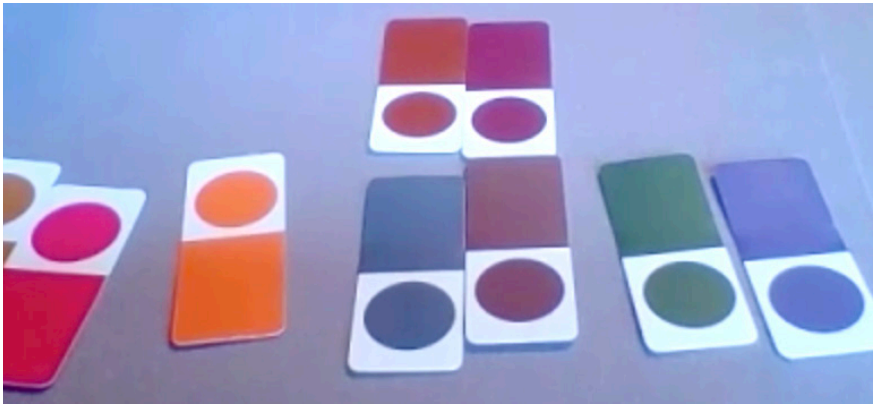
I buy quite a lot with no specific (plan) - I mean I've got some I bought (oh god, years ago) and I've only just made it up into pair of trousers.

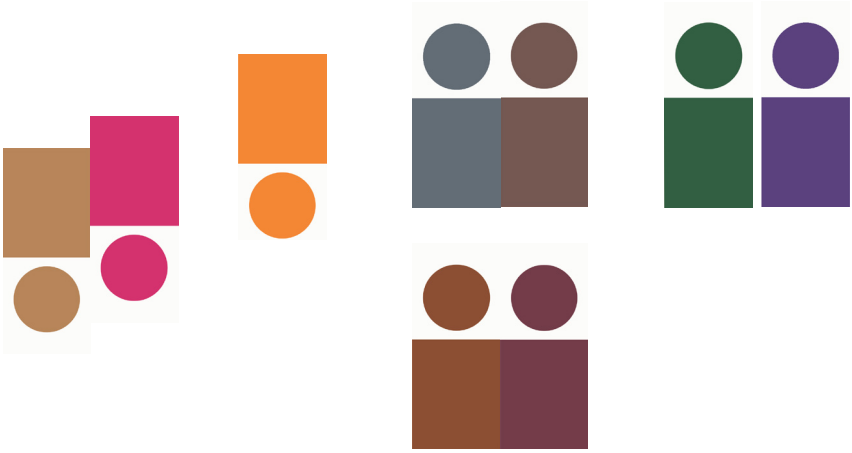
I go through the stash every now and again and I think: well what could I do with that? : (Naah - don't know – Naah - don't know – Ooh - I could do that with that!)

I must admit, if I've ever wanted to match something up, I've invariably taken you know: (if it's something I've made myself, then I'll take an offcut of fabric with me) - In fact I've got in my handbag (because I troll through the charity shops).
- several offcuts of fabric that I'm looking for. I'll have that just in my bag and then if I see something in a charity shop, I can get my bits out so that I can see. Because I have never really truly been able to carry a colour in my head, not for a good match anyway.

So you know, if I wanted a hat to go with something I would take - even if it was a bought dress or whatever I'd take the belt or something with me, because you can have some pretty hefty disasters with trying to match colours.

Twice now I've wanted particular colours to go – one was to a wedding - and each time I wanted a quite specific colour to go with something and I've found them in each case, in charity shops! I've just walked in and it's been there – amazing really.





The ones I really don't like

I don't think I'd ever really wear dark green. I wouldn't wear dark green.

I'm also probably not a great brown wearer nowadays. I don't think I'd go top to toe brown anymore.

Grey. I've never really been into grey.

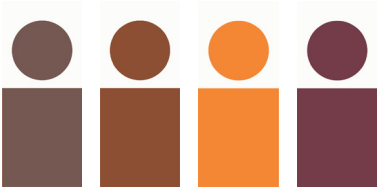
They're probably the only ones.

Well, I wouldn't wear orange on its own. Again in a sort of print, you know, if there's a little bit of orange in a print that's alright, but I wouldn't wear it.

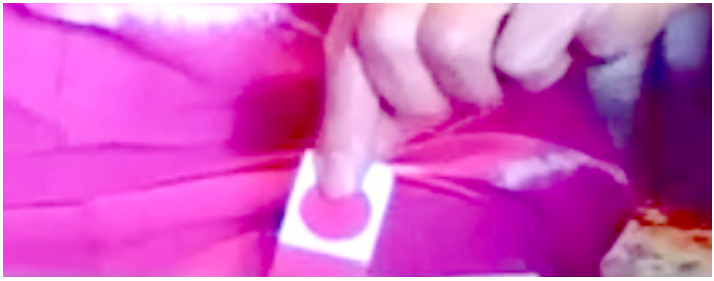
And probably purple as well. The real purple. I wouldn't.

I just don't think I've got the colouring for orange

But I think they're the only sort of - 'I definitely wouldn't'. They look a bit drab don't they? So I don't really wear them.



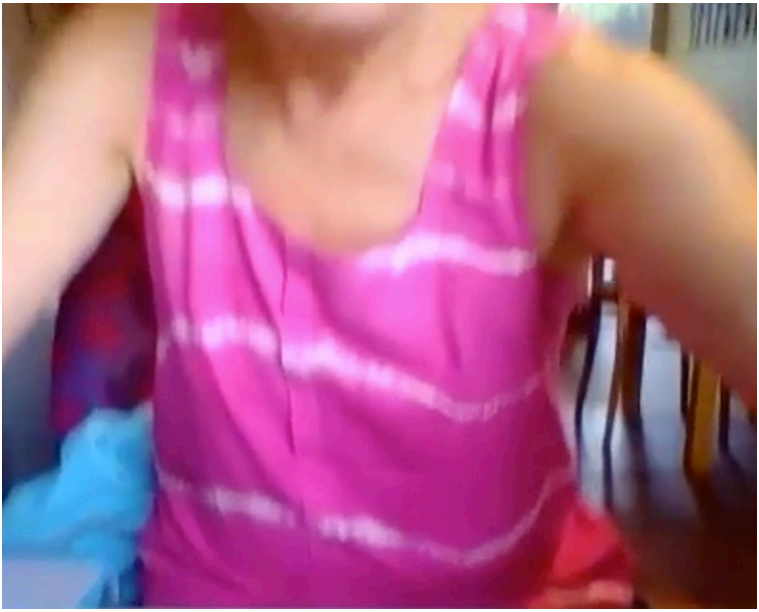
I have got a dress with brown and orange but it's an African print and it sort of works with that.



I know I'm wearing a bright pink dress. I suppose - yes - : I like this dress. But I'm not sure I would (because it's a very casual style dress), I don't think I'd want anything else in it, if you know what I mean.

I mean I wouldn't want sort of - a feature wall in that colour. I wouldn't want to be surrounded by that. I'm quite happy to have the clock and I've got some storage boxes, you know. They're sort of flashes - and the little bit on the chair. There's a flower in that colour - which is where - (the pink) came from. Just a few bits and pieces, so that it just sort of takes the boredom off it if you like.

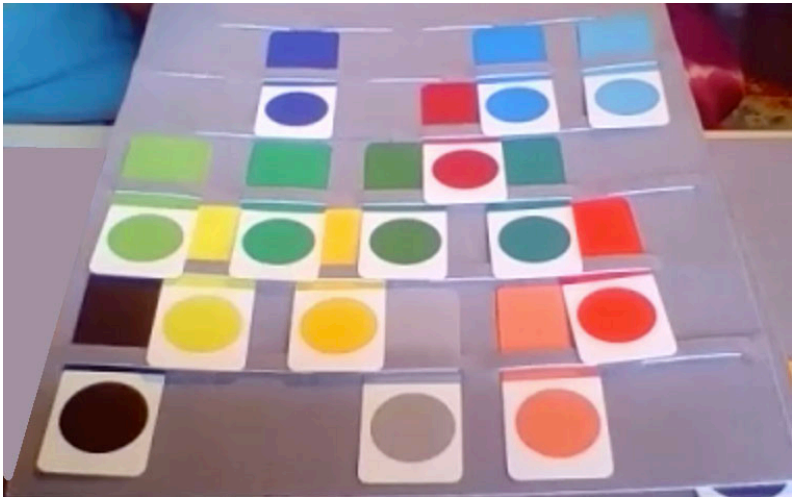
The chair (was) a red, but the sun in the morning hits it so it's all worn through. So this was a Marks and Spencers sort of 'smocky' thing which I'd stopped wearing. It was in the charity shop bag and I wanted to make a back on the chair, so I cut that up to make a chair cover.



This pink dress started off as just white cotton

Because this is the first thing I made when I started sewing again, post diagnosis, and I was so worried that I might not be able to sew. To sort of do it properly, I didn't even buy any fabric. I bought a very simple pattern, and I'd got this: it's really cheap white fabric, white cotton. I thought well I'll make it in that. They call it a toile in the dressmaking industry. - And I made it and I loved it.

So I then thought: well I can't wear it as a white dress, so I bought a dye. Then I thought : I don't want it in the one colour - I want a little – so I tie dyed it. It's in uneven stripes, if you like, so the stripes sort of start together, but they're they're all different widths, you know. So it just lifts it from being a pink dress.



Neither like or dislike

These are a bit neutral.

There's nothing wrong with them, if you know what I mean? I could wear any of them in small amounts, in a print or something.

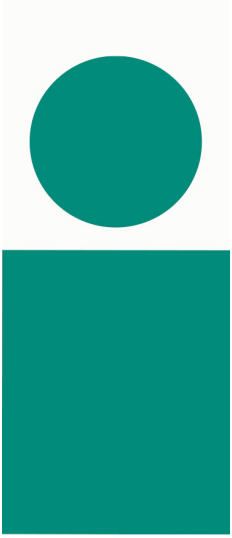
They don't shout you know: 'Love me! Love me!'

But they don't offend either.

I can't think of anything green that I've really got

I've got a jacket, which has a lot of yellow and green in it. It was an old curtain that I made into a jacket, and it's got a big floral print of big yellow flowers and white and green leaves and things.

It presents as a green and yellow jacket, if you like, but I wear that with a pair of navy trousers and a cream top because (the jacket) is a statement and you know the rest of it needs to be fairly muted.



I went across to my neighbour's and they've just decorated. Their lounge is all in - well it must almost be that green.
- I could just see it through the door, the open doors, you know, and I thought: 'Oh my God what have they done?!'

And I went in, and with the beautiful curtains, (they've got some really nice things as well) - it was absolutely perfect. It was wonderful . And as she said:" *It's our night-time room. The curtains are always drawn in here when we're in. We're very seldom in it in the daytime.*"

And although green can be cold, it wasn't. It was quite a warming sort of - you know - all the walls were done in it: dark green. One is almost all glass, which meant that they've these really nice green/navy sort of print curtains. It was fabulous.

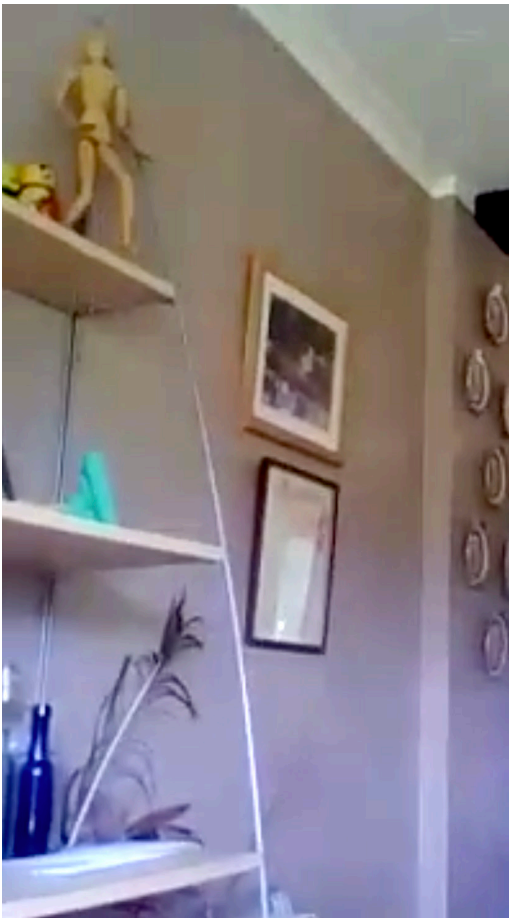
But I wouldn't be able to see that. She's quite artistic as well. But I thought the result was wonderful. But never in a million years would I have thought that it could be. But it worked. It really did, and you know, I just couldn't imagine that?

Choosing colours

When I worked in the hospital. I was in the building department. We'd go round when we decorated and I had the colour swatches : the whole British standard (it's about that thick) - with all the different colours. I'd go up to the ward sister and say, you know the corridors, we've really got to have that a certain colour, but we used to do a feature wall (they were four bedded rooms) and there'd be one wall that would be a feature wall for colour. I'd go in and say, you know, what colour do you want?

It was just overwhelming. So in the end, (and it was getting a bit expensive) because of the paint choice, I made my own colour chart of what they could have.

They were so much happier and in their comfort zone, when they've got you know, three or four - a magnolia, a cream a pale pink, a pale blue and then some darker colours for features. They found it so much easier to choose!



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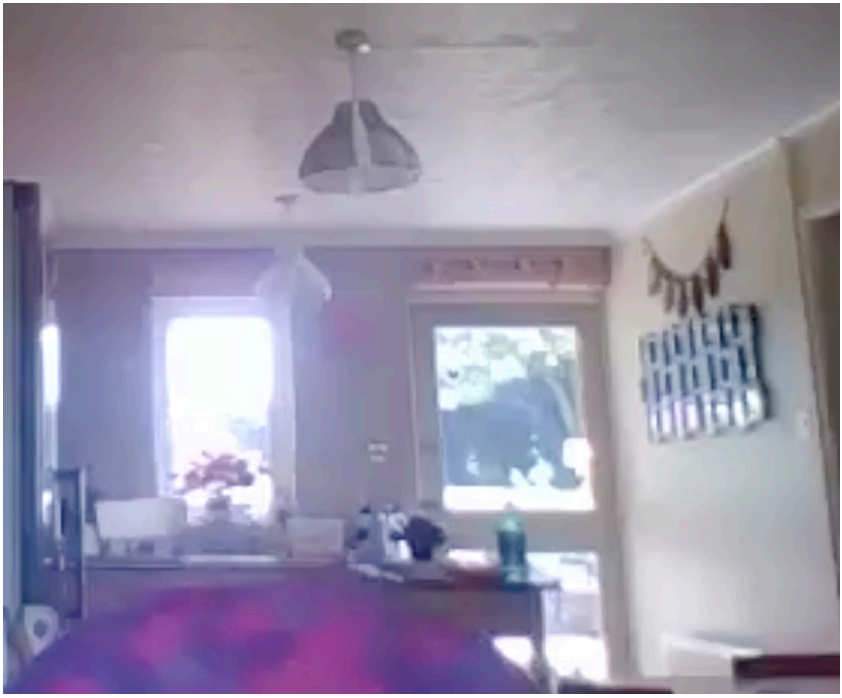
I think it's - not magnolia. I think it was called ivory. So it's a bit more yellow in it, than the magnolia. Then this wall, this is a sort of light mocha colour.

So I tend to go fairly sort of neutral and I'll do a little splash of colour. So this room has highlights of pink in it.

It's mixed with a little bits of pink. The matching clocks. – I bought the little one first when it was just in the study and then I saw that one and bought that one, and it happened to match. It wasn't a design feature!



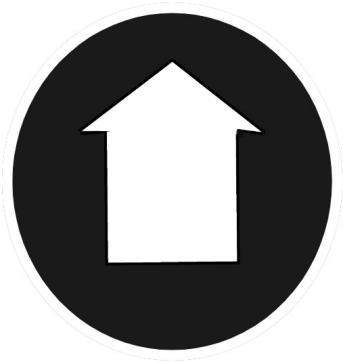
Surface

What I tend to do now is, because it's an old building, and the plaster-work isn't that good. (Plus I don't like painted plaster. I think it's cold. That's the way I feel). So where I can, I use a blown vinyl and paint it. That's blown vinyl in here -

The older part of the house -it's a cottage and the walls can be damp - not damp, damp, but there is there is moisture in them. - If you put plastic over it, which is what a blown vinyl is basically, you trap it and then it becomes a problem, So I put old fashioned anaglypta, which is paper. You know, the patterned paper from Victorian times. You can get really you know, really patterned or really quite bland sort of things and that allows the wall to breathe - That's what I do most of. I don't think I've got any - I think the only patterned wallpaper I've got now is behind my bed, the one wall in the bedroom. The rest of it is a sort of muted colour.

The surface - I like a bit of detail, I think, - because I'm from a building background. (So) unless the wall is perfectly plastered and painted I just think it can look dreadful and cold. I can see the imperfections and the paper takes a little bit of that out. And you can paint over a few times. You dont have to strip it each time.

Personal Space



Favourite spaces

I have actually got four places. One is the garden and three are indoors,

I still live this sort of work/home sort of existence. In the past I would have gone out to work, and then I'd have come home. I'd have had a meal in the kitchen (it was a separate kitchen, it wasn't all the same room) and then I'd have gone into the lounge in the evening.

So I very seldom go in to the lounge in the daytime. It's very seldom I do that because that's sort of - relaxing later on. This is work.

I suppose I'm almost reverting back to what my childhood home was like? That had a 'living room', if you like, and then the lounge and the dining room, and all that sort of thing. So it's the separate areas with their functions I suppose, which we're almost getting away from these days. So yes, you know with the more relaxed living room.

I call it a Living Room

It was just before I finished work that we knocked the partition down between the kitchen and the study, and I made it into : I call it a living room. There's a kitchen table that sort of divides it, and then - I've still got a desk, it's still study-ish but there's a couple of chairs, and there's a television. So I can sit in here if I want to, and you know it's warm, and it's quite comfortable.

The beauty about the kitchen is that I've got a big window right in front of me so I look out onto the garden, and this gets the morning sun. So I get the sun pouring in in the morning, and then - later on we get the sun comes in there. It's quite a pleasant light room and so I spend a lot of time in here. I've got the computer in which I do a bit of dabbling. Do any things I've got to do. Play on it occasionally. Facebook, you know, all those sort of things. I take time on that.

So this is one of them (my favourite spaces)

The Blue Room

What we call the 'Blue Room'. We went round a National Trust property somewhere just after we'd built the extension, and I don't think we had even decorated it up there. They had a 'Blue Room' with a big State Bed and everything in it – and we happened to put a blue carpet down in there once we'd decorated. It had blue curtains and blue carpets. So it was the 'Blue Room' : the most pretentious 'Blue Room'!

But the Blue Room is no longer a bedroom. The beds are still there, but they are now two beds piled on top of each other. I can't quite go without them, but I'm never going to get the beds down, but I can't quite put them away.

It's always sort of been where I would air the washing and the ironing board's always been up there, and it's where I would sew. But I think the sewing machine has pretty much always been out in that room.

And now it's also the glory hole where I hide everything!

It's just where I stash everything, you know it's out of sight. I really do need to go through it. It's got the most wonderful cupboard in it. There's nothing in the attic, it's all in this cupboard.

That's one of my favourite spaces because it's where I sew and potter.

Father Christmas's Bedroom

It's also Father Christmas's bedroom because at Christmas (I'm up above the road) we put a sleigh, a full-sized sleigh with a full size Santa in it, on top of the bank. As you come up the road you can see him. So Santa resides in the blue room all the year except December.

The Garden

It depends on the season. It's a big garden and various bits become more interesting at different times of the year. But I mean most days I will spend some time in the garden. Even in the winter I'll be out at some point in it. There's a seat by the pond, so that's a great time waster and a small patio that I'll sit on. They're the main places I would sit, and then sort of just mooch about really.

The seat by the pond

It's just looking at water. You end up sort of looking, and if you sit still, you know the birds will come down for a bath while you're there.

It's not a huge pond. It was designed (they're all the rage now: wildlife ponds). It was (my daughter) I think, her seventh birthday present so it's quite old now. It's twenty odd years old. I saw a design in a pond book (for a wildlife pond) We put minnows in it first of all, and they did very well, and then we had a goldfish that outgrew the tank inside – and it ate just about everything in the pond! So when the goldfish died we didn't put any more fish in but there's the frogspawn so we get the frogs, we get newts in it, and so there's always something to watch.

The Lounge

I've got the lounge as well as a favourite place, because in the evening I like the lounge. It gets the sun - all afternoon : from late morning, through to the evening. I don't often actually use it, you know. I'm seldom in it in the day, but it is a nice light room, and it's just somewhere, you know that I go to every evening. And that's where I spend my evening.

I don't often read. I used to do the complicated Sudoku. I used to do those, but I can't even do a simple one now. So I've moved on to code words. I usually work my way through a few puzzles, because I find I can't always concentrate on the television. Sometimes it's actually better if I listen to it like the radio. It's on in the background, and I sort of listen - I find it easier to listen to the program, and I seem to take it in more if I'm not actually concentrating on it. So if I'm doing a puzzle, it just sort of washes over. I probably couldn't tell you what it was about afterwards, but I follow it as it's happening. But that's what I tend to do, I'll be doing a puzzle.