

JO SAMPSON

PUBLICATION
BROWN THOMAS LIVING

COUNTRY
IRELAND

DATE
09.2012

PROJECT
WATERFORD -
THE LONDON COLLECTION

BROWN THOMAS LIVING



LIGHT AND SHADE

Achieve a perfect balance with pale ceramics and colourful glass

EASY GLAMOUR

How to dress your home: New ideas for bedroom, bathroom and living room

DESIGN GURU

Jonathan Adler adds fun to your home

EXPERT ENTERTAINING

• Jo Sampson creates glittering crystal • Domini Kemp improves your cooking • Gourmet food special

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LAST WORD Iconic potter and interior maestro Jonathan Adler is famous for his quirky but luxurious designs.

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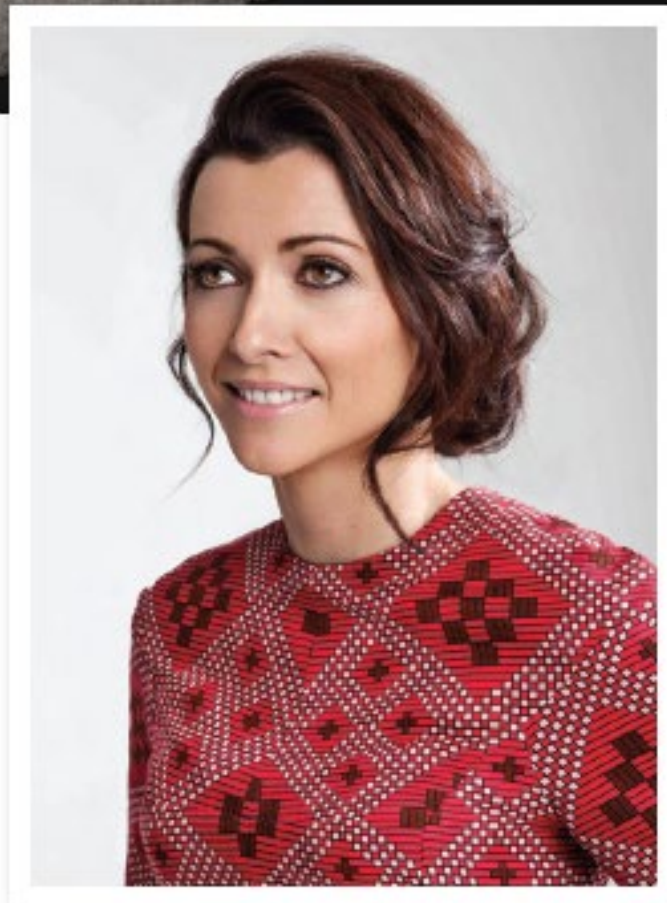
CRYSTAL CLEAR

JO SAMPSON, THE DESIGNER BEHIND WATERFORD'S BRILLIANT LONDON COLLECTION OF FURNITURE, HAS HELPED TO REVAMP THE BRAND AND GIVE IT A GLITTERING FUTURE.

The Crystal Queen sits in her crystal corner, surrounded by gleaming examples of this lustrous and rich material. She is weaving magic with its ability to refract light and glitter as she designs new luxury pieces for Waterford.

ABOVE Jo Sampson's new collection for Waterford has been a hit with the international furniture market. London side table, €11,500; London console table, €31,000; London table light, €2,500; London wall mirror, €15,000, all by Jo Sampson for Waterford at Brown Thomas Dublin. John Rocha Black tumblers, €115 for a pair; John Rocha Black bowl, €275; John Rocha Black decanter, €250, at Brown Thomas Dublin, Cork and Limerick.

RIGHT In addition to her recent creations for Waterford, Jo Sampson has designed for luxury hotels and high-end brands such as Hermès.



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Etoile floor light, €4,850, London vanity table, €13,500, London free-standing mirror, €20,000, all by Jo Sampson for Waterford at Brown Thomas Dublin. John Rocha Black decanter, €250, at Brown Thomas Dublin, Cork and Limerick.

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But it wasn't always like this. The Crystal Queen is Jo Sampson, the dynamic but down-to-earth designer who is helping to transform the Waterford brand. She is a late convert to crystal, and her colleagues call her names to describe her new obsession. "They make fun of me," Sampson jokes. "I wasn't a huge fan of crystal, but once I learned more about it, and saw the Waterford craftsmen at work, I realised how special it is. Drinking from a crystal glass that is heavy in the hand is a totally different experience to glass."

Crystal is once again cutting a dash in the world of interiors. It is no secret that Waterford hit the doldrums. Crystal had acquired a fuddy-duddyish image, a material only good for half-empty port decanters left to gather dust at the back of mahogany drinks cabinets. In 1986, Waterford Crystal merged with Wedgwood, but after a romantic bid to keep the company alive - Irish billionaire Tony O'Reilly spent a fortune - it flopped, with debts of €396m. In 2009, the receivers sifted through what was left, which was not much, apart from a name and a damaged brand with a long tradition.

Luckily, the white knights at KPS Capital Partners, a New York private equity company with a penchant for traditional luxury brands, decided to take a punt. They chose to turn the declining crystal maker into a global premium brand.



"IT'S BEEN A GREAT YEAR FOR WATERFORD," SAMPSON SAYS. "THE BRAND IS ABOUT LIVING A 'CRYSTAL LIFE' AND ELEVATING EVERYDAY PRODUCTS. THE LONDON COLLECTION HAS BEEN PIVOTAL IN THE REPOSITIONING OF THE BRAND."

Today, Waterford, which is now part of Waterford Wedgwood Royal Doulton (WWRD), has a future. The CEO, Pierre de Villamejane, a dapper lover of modern art and boar hunting, calls it a "luxury lifestyle brand". Forget the port decanter; think Louis Vuitton or Burberry with (crystal) knobs on.

Designers like John Rocha and Jasper Conran have already sprinkled their stardust on the products, but the most radical move was to launch a collection of furniture - the London Collection. Step forward Jo Sampson, the interior designer behind the Blacksheep agency, who made a name creating high-end hotels and shops for the likes of Hermès.

"It's been a great year for Waterford," Sampson says. "The brand is about living a 'crystal life' and elevating everyday products. The London Collection has been pivotal in the repositioning of the brand."

When designing the furniture, Sampson, a fan of B&B Italia and Poliform, examined the shapes of the best modern furniture, which is mostly simple and unfussy, and then drew the lines for each piece. The crystal then had to be integrated and turned into the star. "I love the challenge of balancing the brand's ethos, its DNA, and making it more contemporary," Sampson says. "When I'm designing, I have to stop and ask questions. Is this Waterford? Why is this Waterford? If it is not resonating with the brand, then I would be doing it a disservice."

The launch was in New York just before Christmas, a mere eight months after the project began. The hard work paid off. Hollywood stars like Julianne Moore and Uma Thurman gazed admiringly over the luminescent designs - the concealed LED lighting illuminated the cut-crystal facets that also shimmered in the candlelight. Designed to look good turned off or on, the collection includes a coffee table, side and console tables, and lighting that would add elegance to any luxurious space. At the event, Sampson was delighted. "I'm a little overconfident," she said. "It looks more beautiful than I had hoped."

The collection has been a huge hit. At the Frankfurt Furniture Show, an interiors shindig that attracts the most influential people in the industry, especially the all-important buyers, Waterford was a standout performer. "It was amazing," Sampson recalls. "People from all over the world - every market - came back to look at the pieces again and again."

For Sampson, the Waterford project has been a delight and she has set up a separate company, Jo Sampson Studio, to focus on its product design. It should be the start of a long-term relationship with the brand. "I can't believe how much trust they had in me," she says. "They did not want to influence the 'big idea' for the London Collection at all."

And there's more to come from the Waterford-Sampson partnership, including some pieces to complement the London Collection, but with real excitement in her voice, the new Queen of Crystal declares: "I can't say too much!"

For the growing number of London Collection fans, from luxury hotel designers to the wall-off collector, only one thing will do ... a crystal ball!

Available exclusively at the new Waterford Wedgwood boutique, at Brown Thomas Dublin.



London console table, €3,000, London table light, €2,500, both by Jo Sampson for Waterford at Brown Thomas Dublin.