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A — Fine — Balance

After a hard but triumphant year, British designer Jo Sampson is doing things her way.



Jo Sampson began the summer of 2017 in good spirits. Her debut collection for Drexel Heritage Furniture launched two months earlier; a line of bespoke photography and prints created in collaboration with Wendover Art Group had just been released; and she was awaiting a shipment of pieces for a scheduled photo shoot at her Victorian home in London. But as June drew to a close, the unthinkable happened: At just 44 years old, the British designer and mother of two daughters was diagnosed with what would eventually be classified as a highly aggressive form of breast cancer.

"It was quite surreal," Sampson says, looking back on it. "Because the products had left the port, I had to go through with

receiving a 40-foot shipping container, clearing customs, and then organizing the delivery to my house. Things happen, and you can sit back and wallow in it or move on," she adds.

In fact, she approaches every aspect of her life with such determined positivity. Though six months of chemotherapy and radiation slowed her down, they didn't sideline her. "As a creative person, you still want to create—you need that mental stimulation," she says. "My clients were great because they let me do what I could when I could. Some days I couldn't move and just stayed in bed, but my mind was always going."

Another source of reassurance was her home itself. "The treatment was brutal and

debilitating," recalls Sampson. "The irony was that my house was in the best shape it had ever been in, and it became my cocoon." In the heart of London's Dulwich Village—a leafy enclave with historic residences, rolling green spaces, and a world-class portrait gallery whose walls drip with Rembrandts—the stately Victorian maintains many of its original details, from fireplaces with

"The garden is a bit jungly, I suppose," says Sampson of her backyard oasis, where she entertains guests as well as her daughters.

Previous spread: Beetle Dining Chair \$332 shop.gubi.com; Custom Dining Table cakeindustries.co.uk; Couture Collection Vase by Jo Sampson for Waterford waterford.com; Row Pendant Lamp atelierareti.com; Georgian Mono Kitchen Sink Tap Mixer by Deva \$499 jtspas.co.uk.



A brass stove hood and lightning bolt-shaped drawer pulls impart age and patina in a contemporary kitchen.

Custom Cabinetry, Drawer Handles, Extractor Hood, Backsplash cakeindustries.co.uk; Linea Cooktop smegusa.com; Penta Thermos \$79 rosendahl.com; Collar Sugar Bowl \$45 and Coffee Grinder \$103 stelton.com; Riviera Pitcher \$62 classieartisan.com; Guatavita Salad Bowl \$84 and Cereal Bowl \$25 uniqueandunity.co.uk; Muse Display Cabinet by Jo Sampson for Drexel drexel-furniture.com.



Sampson keeps the palette neutral to allow for quick changes and pops of muted color and graphic shapes, like the hand-painted flag-like brushstrokes on the wall in her living room.

Ella by Jo Sampson wendoverart.com; Hand-Painted Mural by Jo Sampson; Charming Cocktail Table and Big Buddy Office Storage by Jo Sampson for Drexel drexel-furniture.com; Lucrezia Sofa by Antonio Citterio beitalia.com; Custom Pillow in Boho Velvet by Sanderson stylelibrary.com; Circum Mirror by AYTM \$229 finnishdesignshop.com; Couture Collection Vase by Jo Sampson for Waterford waterford.com; Pure Gold Bowl wedgwood.com; Toobe Table Lamp by Kartell \$370 perigold.com; Tree Trunk Vase by Hay \$109 store.moma.org.



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glazed-tile surrounds to plaster cornices and ceiling roses. The vibe, however, is clean lined and contemporary, in keeping with Sampson’s personal aesthetic. “It had real character,” she says of the property, which she purchased six years ago. “We moved in when it was quite a wreck, but I wanted to retain and respect its history while making it more comfortable.”

For Sampson, that meant customizing the house into an atelier-like retreat that is conducive to both work and play. She established a much larger family room by extending the back of the structure—which included the kitchen and the living room—nearly 20 feet, and she built a freestanding studio for meetings and brainstorming

sessions in the backyard. “I drop the girls off at school every morning and pick them up every afternoon, and don’t have to waste time getting to and from an office in downtown London,” Sampson explains. “A big realization I had after being ill was that you have to make work *work* for you.”

Of course, having her work life and home life collide on a daily basis presents its own challenges. “I’m exposed to so much inspiration all the time—it can be very dangerous,” she jokes of the difficulty she has keeping her design impulses at bay. But she overcomes it by sticking to a simple black-and-white palette, then blending in more nuanced shades of each, as well as muted accent

colors, for an eclectic balance that can easily be changed with small tweaks and updates. In the living room, a plum velvet sofa plays off brass details, a richly veined marble fireplace, and Sampson’s graphic black hand-painted brushstrokes against a crisp white wall. “As Sampson’s home features many of her collaborations with Waterford and Drexel Heritage Furniture, including cut-crystal decanters and a brass-accented bar cabinet.

From left: IC Lights F by Michael Anastassiades \$1,095 flos.com; Custom Lacquered Wood Tray; Vintage Painted Cameos by Wedgwood; Alcor Sideboard by Antonio Citterio beitalia.com; Artwork by Jo Sampson wendoverart.com; Flaunt Bar by Jo Sampson for Drexel drexel-furniture.com; Monochrome Globe wildandwolf.com; Rug linedesign.com; Elysian Bar Tray by Jo Sampson for Waterford johnlewis.com.



The bedroom adheres to Sampson's preference for a neutral base with subdued infusions of color, from the blush duvet and contrasting pillows to the marbled curtains.

Smoke Bed \$1,278 loaf.com; Belgian Flax Fiber Dyed Duvet Cover from \$166 westelm.com; Custom Pillow in Boho Velvet by Sanderson stylelibrary.com; JWDA Concrete Lamp by Menu \$219 ylighting.com; Buddy Baby Office Storage by Jo Sampson for Drexel drexel-furniture.com; Custom Curtains in Mamori by Romo blackedition.com; Photo by Jo Sampson wendoverart.com.



BLACK IS THE NEW BLACK

AS A NEUTRAL

When applied in bold swathes in a main room, black acts as a unifying backdrop that grounds items of disparate shapes, colors, and sizes.

The darkness can make a space feel warmer and more intimate, or it can add drama when offset with equally daring hues.

AS AN ACCENT

In an all-white room, black helps break up the monochrome palette and encourages the eye to bounce around the room, giving white pieces more definition and depth. Small doses lend a more artistic and luxurious aesthetic—think: instant gallery or showroom vibes.

AS A HIGHLIGHT

The flatness of a deep black shade allows textural materials—from metallics like brass and gold to organic elements such as wood and stone—to appear in silhouette, imparting a striking, photographic quality.

A utility cabinet under the stairs is elevated with custom brass doors (left), while hard-wearing-meets-luxe materials carry through in other spaces (right). "I feel that bathrooms should be classic, so I chose things that didn't date," Sampson says of the subway and marble hex tiling.

From left: Vintage Knobs; Custom Doors cakeindustries.co.uk; Vintage Light Fixture, Mirror, and Medicine Cabinet; Trentino Hex Tiles fireearth.com; Toilet and Sink burlingtonbathrooms.com.



“Your home has to be your sanctuary.”

a designer, I'm very classically minded,” says Sampson. “I don't like a lot of saturation; I prefer much more tone-on-tone color.”

That's also true of the eat-in kitchen, where blush-hued chairs and herringbone wood floors add warmth to white cabinetry, a custom brass stove hood, and drawer pulls that resemble lightning bolts. “I wanted the units to look like furniture and create an unexpected focal point,” she says, noting that the patina of the metal will only add interest over time.

That kind of delicate ornamentation is a theme throughout Sampson's home and work. Much of the artwork on display is comprised of her own sketches, and many of the pieces are prototypes from her line for

Drexel Heritage Furniture, which showcase her less predictable approach to design. The bar cart in the living room, for example, is less than typical. While most are crafted to highlight bottles of liquor, Sampson's is intended to hide those bulky, often unattractive vessels in concealed side compartments and instead showcase her cache of cut-crystal goblets and decanters, many of which are from her collection for Waterford.

“Your home has to be your sanctuary,” she says of both the creative solace and personal comfort she finds in a house that shows her hand at every turn. In her daughter Grace's room, a jungle-themed wallpaper by Cole & Son provides endless hours of entertainment.

“We lie in bed counting how many monkeys we can find camouflaged among the greenery,” Sampson notes, relishing the quiet moments with her children but also those spent cultivating curiosity and wonder. “I want them to be inspired every day.”

Sampson's color palette isn't quite so restrained when it comes to studio inspiration. Opposite: The designer embellished standard Ikea storage with patterned fabric to stylishly contain clutter in daughter Grace's room.

Opposite page: Custom Curtains in Forenza Meadow Cotton Velvet romo.com; Singita Wallpaper cole-and-son.com; Kallax Shelving Unit \$26, Socker Greenhouse \$15, Vattenkrasse Watering Can \$12 ikea.com; Floating Shelf string.se; Sitting Bunny Rabbit Table Lamp \$48 hurnandhurn.com.

