



Designer profile Sally Dornie

Sally Dornie returned to her roots when she designed the interiors of a late-Victorian house for a client who is a partner in a city law firm. **By Judith Wilson**

Sally Dornie was a solicitor before realising in 2000 that she wanted to be an interior designer. She took a year out to attend the KLC School of Design, and went to work for the interior designer Jill Scholes; she set up her own company in 2003 with just one assistant, 'because I love doing the design work myself'. Her current commissions include the refurbishment of a six-bedroom house in Dulwich Village, a villa in the Caribbean, and a Grade I-listed Brighton town house. Sally herself lives in a Victorian flat in Battersea, with Flora, her miniature schnauzer.

'My brief for this late-Victorian house in Kensington was for cosmetic refurbishment. The client didn't want it to look as if an interior designer had "done" the house. We started with the first-floor drawing room, and last year reworked the ground floor, including an interconnecting formal dining room and snug. A house needs to flow, so there are similar tones, but I introduce "gatecrasher" colour to avoid blandness. The drawing room was a blank canvas, though I retained the chimneypiece and shelving. I wanted the mood of an after-hours gentleman's club; I started with cognac and whisky colours, then introduced greens and blues for zing. The walls are painted in "Sapling", a soft olive green, by Paint & Paper Library - I like colours you can't pinpoint.

'None of the furniture from my client's previous house was suitable for this room, so I sourced everything from scratch. The John Hutton club-style armchairs are from Fox Linton, covered in a linen weave by Sahco. The chaise longue is covered in a Lelièvre cut velvet. I created an elegant mood, but it isn't prissy; the drawing room is used a lot because it is comfortable. There is a mixture of ambient lighting, including a standard lamp from La Fibule, a brilliant Paris-based company. My client collects modern art, and bought the John Latham painting specifically to go over the chimneypiece. The indigo

rug, by Allegra Hicks for The Rug Company, was not an obvious choice but the unexpected often works.

'I designed the dining room and snug together; early on, I removed the double doors. I didn't want the dining room to become a corridor, so concentrated on creating visual impact: the modern chimneypiece from CVO Fire has an unusual bronze surround, and I had the dramatic pendant light made to order by Heathfield & Co, using fig-coloured silk/linen. The furniture came from my client's last home: the rosewood chairs are a Sixties, Danish design; the walnut table is by William Yeoward. To enhance the modern mood, I designed floating shelves, with spot lighting and plain drawers to house DVDs. The joinery in the snug is classic, with Shaker-style cupboards for the audio-visual system.

'To link the rooms visually, the joinery has been spray-painted in "Charleston Gray" by Farrow & Ball, and I've used contrasting, geometric rugs from The Rug Company. The floorboards were too pale, so I had them stained a burnt-oak colour. The walls in both rooms are painted in "Stone IV", by Paint & Paper Library; it is a deep neutral but the house has good proportions and the rooms can take it. The paintings are bold, so this background makes the art "pop" more, especially the Margaret Geddes oil-on-canvas, which hangs over the chimneypiece.

'I bought all the dining-room accessories; modern pieces from Willer, in Kensington, are mixed with antique soda siphons and medicine bottles. In the snug, I've incorporated my client's collection of elephants. I always have accessories on approval, because clients need to see what I've imagined. I am not dictatorial, though. If I explain why I've picked objects, clients get interested and start looking for themselves. I enjoy a collaborative relationship - that's the ultimate joy of each project' □

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Contrasting geometric rugs help to unite the dining room and the snug visually (above left). The dramatic pendant light (above right) was made using fig-coloured silk/linen. Sally Dornie sits in the first-floor drawing room (right), which is painted in 'Sapling' from Paint & Paper Library; the blown-glass lamp is from Porta Romana

