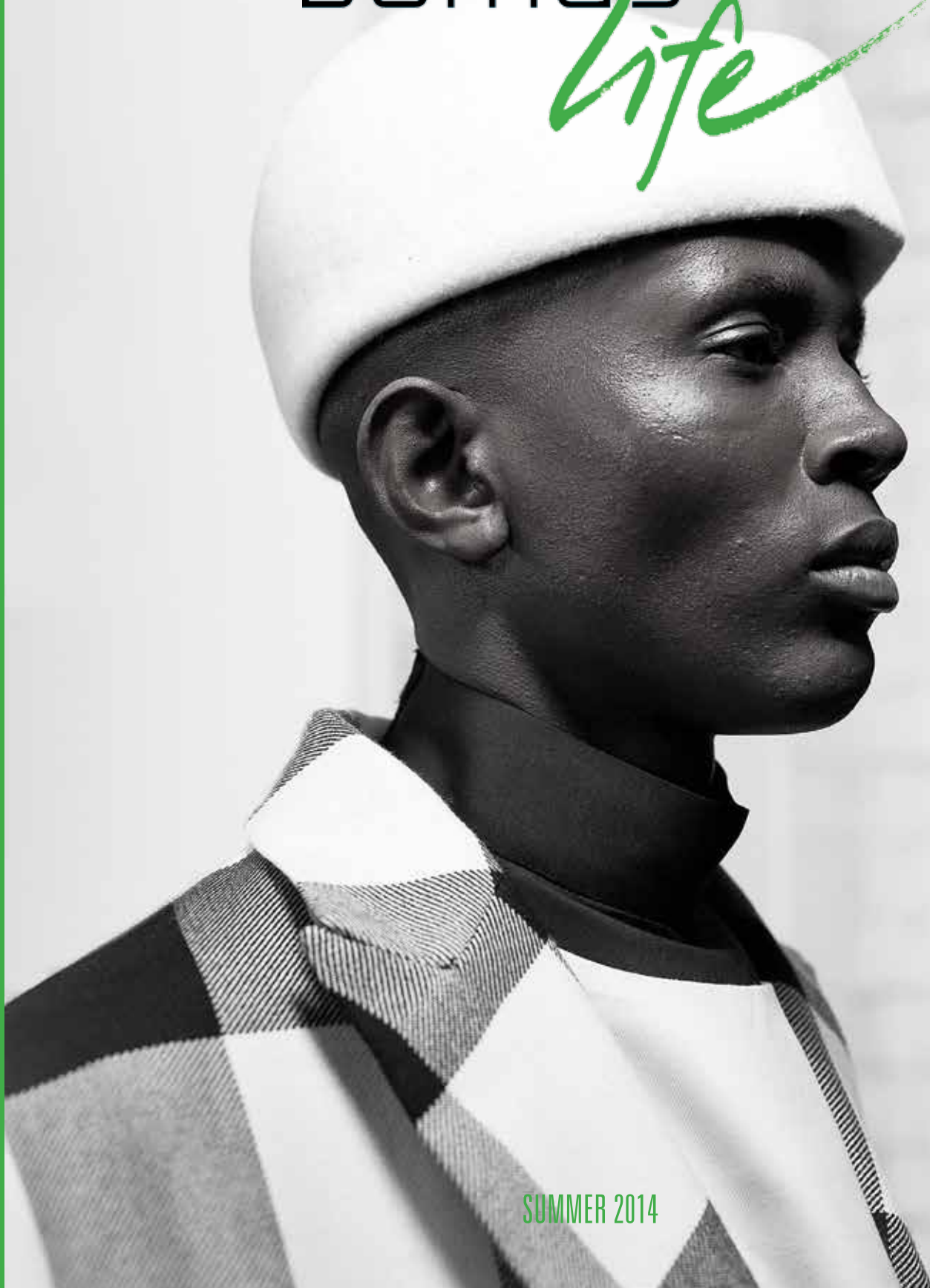


DOMUS

Life



SUMMER 2014

AGI & SAM: REDEFINING STYLE



WONDER WOMAN

The British tastemaker creating cool comfort zones, mixing modern with retro and adding splashes of colour. Meet the unstoppable Suzy Hoodless...

Luxury is a word you may hear mentioned in connection with Notting Hill-based British interior designer Suzy Hoodless. However, you may be surprised to hear that her perception of luxury is the little things we take for granted, such as dimmable light switches. Her home-grown, down-to-earth attitude is what makes her so sought after with her wonderful, colourful, tactile designs gracing the interiors of private members clubs, boutique office spaces and select private homes – select, she says, because not every client is a good fit and she does occasionally turn down projects if she feels the relationship won't endure. "Designing someone's home is a very personal and intimate thing," she says. "On bigger projects you can be in contact with the client for up to two years. It's a long time if your relationship doesn't work."

This refreshing attitude comes from a lengthy career as a stylist and taste maker. Part of the editorial team who founded *Wallpaper** magazine, in 2000 she set up her own design consultancy and most recently created designs for The Rug Company and Osborne & Little. Meet a woman with the world of interiors at her fingertips...

***Wallpaper** is an iconic style bible. Why did you leave and set up your own design studio?**

I loved working in the interiors media but it's all so transient: very here-and-now and then it's gone. As a team we would spend three days emptying a house and furnishing it for a shoot, only to break it all down again. I wanted to establish more permanence in my work and to be able to translate great design into comfortable interiors that people would want to use.



Kensington townhouse

Your designs have been referred to as playful, innovative and exciting. What drives your love of colour and texture?

I look to consider everything around me and the way people and places are put together. I have more than 25,000 images on my computer and I use them constantly as a reference tool. I particularly love combinations of styles from different ages. When you put two pieces together or combine ideas, it's exciting when it creates a complementary relationship and a rhythm. I have a pretty fierce focus on practicality as well as on aesthetics. I design for myself but I'm not a designer who says to clients, 'this is what you have to have'. I do have to like what I'm creating, though, and if it works, then I think the client will also like it.

How important is good design in the home and workplace?

Really important – I'm pretty sure it's conducive to good health. In work, at home and in our social life we want to be inspired, and our surroundings need to play a big part in that. If good design makes you happy, then it's done its job.

Your own workplace has changed recently as you moved from Clarendon Cross to Portobello Dock. How different is the vibe there?

Very different. Clarendon Cross is a village centre against a backdrop of beautiful old houses. Portobello Dock is industrial. It's vibrant, though, and you get a real sense that things are happening here. Tom Dixon has been instrumental in driving things forward and it's great that we have our own new design hub in west London. The East End has been stealing our limelight for too long! ➔



Suzy Hoodless' home



Kensington townhouse



Private members club



Private members club

In the past you've cited Neasden Temple in north-west London as an inspiration. How does Notting Hill, your local area, inspire your work?

Notting Hill is hugely inspirational. The international community brings its own design ideas to the party which, combined with cultural values, are generating an aesthetic that is being copied elsewhere in the capital. Notting Hill is dissected by train lines, major roads and bus routes, yet wherever you look there is beauty and inspiration. There is incredible architecture here and surprises around every corner.

How do you seek inspiration when you're involved in a project?

I travel a lot. I love going to new places and look at every nook and cranny, wherever I am. That's generally when I come across some of my most exciting finds. My mum and sister once escorted me to Paris on a buying trip, thinking they were in for an enjoyable few days of shopping. They hated it! I fly in and out of shops at lightning speed, scanning as I go, and unless I see something I like, I'm out of there. When you have a big job to pull together there is no time for leisurely browsing. You generally know what you're looking for; you just need to find it.

What are you currently working on?

We are working on a wonderful house in Notting Hill where we have completely removed the back of the property and are reinstating the detail and decorative elements that would have been there when it was first completed. The clients have a great art collection, which will be housed in the basement area, and we've designed a series of moving panels so that the owner can create his own ever-changing installations.

Art is just one element of design enjoying an investment renaissance. Have you seen a shift towards clients requesting legacy pieces?

Absolutely. I was at PAD recently and the talk was of a Charlotte Perriand table that cost more than £1 million. That's a serious investment yet lots of

the dealers were reporting that they had sold some of their highest-priced pieces on the first night. As pieces get older they become rarer and their longevity more celebrated. I love to mix up the old and new, to look at the relationship between design and the materials that were being used in the last century and today's pieces which have benefited from new technologies.

New design and designers come to light all the time. How important is it to support our graduates?

The UK generates some of the most exciting design in the world. We have some of the best art colleges and universities and we host amazing international design fairs. Interior designers and architects come here to buy our designs and we should be proud that we can continue to turn out such talent. It would be great to see more financial support, though, as it can be hard to get going.

Are there any new design names you have your eye on at the moment?

I've recently been buying pieces from Benjamin Hubert. He is a great experimenter and makes lights from cork and concrete. His work is interesting but very usable. There are some great, yet-to-be-seen designers out there. In my magazine days we were bombarded with design and attended every graduate show. Now I have to be more selective, although there is so much more you can see online.

You have created amazing work through your collaborations. Did working with The Rug Company and Osborne & Little in your magazine days give you an insight into how to successfully design for them?

Yes. My previous relationship with both companies was invaluable when it came to creating my own designs for them. I know the provenance of their products which is so important to me.



Suzy Hoodless' home

Is there more to come?

Designing rugs and wallpaper has given me the chance to indulge my love of colour and the more fantastical side of nature. There will be more collections and I'm also looking for other outlets for my work. Ultimately I would like to create my own-name products and I'm further down the line with this than I've ever been. It's indulgent to focus on that, though, and for the time being my interiors clients still come first. But there is much more to come from me, so watch this space!

Suzy Hoodless Ltd, Courtyard Studio 4, 326 Kensal Road W10; suzyhoodless.com

To read more about Suzy Hoodless, visit domusnova.com/suzyhoodless



Main image: 'Curves' rug by Suzy Hoodless for The Rug Company, as seen in Suzy's home. Left: Hoxton Grill