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Movers, shakers and innovations. Edited by LIZ ELLIOT

Using a palette of cool neutrals, Antonia Lazenby decorated this penthouse flat in Chelsea Harbour

DESIGNER Q&A

Antonia Lazenby

launched her own interior design company 18 months ago, having spent seven years working as a designer for Philippa Thorp at Thorp Design. Today, she takes on residential work for clients nationally and internationally, and describes her style as 'modern classic'. Antonia, who studied history and history of art at Oxford Brookes University, shares a flat in south London with her brother. Her office is at the Old Gasworks in Chelsea

Which period of design do you admire? I love the symmetry and light of the Georgian period. But I am open to new influences: I visited New Delhi, and loved the classicism of Lutyens's buildings overlaid with Eastern influences.

How do you like to entertain? I enjoy dinner parties. I cook fresh and simple food like chicken or fish, and have perfected the art of desk to dinner party - including shopping and cooking - in one-and-a-half-hours flat.

How do you relax? Sailing and waterskiing with a group of friends in Rock, Cornwall.

If buying a painting for yourself, which school of art do you favour? I like to invest in the work of contemporary artists. I am particularly keen to buy a landscape by painter Josephine Trotter: I love the bold colours and loose brushwork of her paintings.

If you weren't a designer, what would you be? An architect. I envy the freedom architects have to alter the structure of a building and play with the spaces within.

Do you like symmetry? Symmetry appeals to me as I am very meticulous. But if a room is not symmetrical, I offer the client two schemes: one that makes sense of the lack of symmetry, and another that takes a freer approach.

How do you deal with the TV? In more formal rooms, my preference is always to hide the

television in a specially designed cabinet or armoire. Alternatively, I urge clients to have a media room in which the plasma TV is the main focus.

How do you hang pictures? I recently framed black-and-white classical prints for a client by sandwiching them between two sheets of glass that were bigger than the prints, to give a clear glass mount: the effect was very dramatic.

What car do you drive? A blue Vespa scooter. It is nippy and easy to park, and my clients are getting used to my arriving at meetings with blinds and lampshades hanging off the back.

Where is it essential to spend money, and where do you save it? The maxim 'buy cheap, buy twice' was drilled into me at Thorp Design. I urge clients to spend money on getting the bones of the space right, especially lighting. It's always possible to save money by choosing inexpensive fabrics.

What was your first interiors-related purchase? When I was a student, I bought a painting of the Dolomites by architect John Pickles.

What could you live without at home? A dining room: they are increasingly redundant as our lifestyles turn towards open-plan living.

JUDITH WILSON

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