

# HOUSE & GARDEN

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THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO STYLISH LIVING

AT  
HOME  
IN A...

*Picturesque  
manor house in  
Normandy*

**GLAMOROUS  
PENTHOUSE IN  
NEW YORK**

*Palladian villa  
in Ireland*

**TRAVEL**  
WALKING  
IN BRITAIN  
VILLAS  
IN GREECE  
ANIMAL-  
WATCHING IN  
TANZANIA

## IDEAS for SUMMER

**DECORATING WITH MODERN CHINTZ AND SUBTLE MIRROR  
GAUZY FABRICS AND PRETTY BEDLINEN  
LIGHT RECIPES USING SEASONAL INGREDIENTS**



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# *His own* INVENTION

*Tyson Bennison enlisted his family's collective creativity to build his successful lighting and furnishing business, and his elegant Regency house in Battersea – 'all new' – demonstrates the same inventive energy*

TEXT: LIZ ELLIOT | PHOTOGRAPHS: ALUN CALLENDER





OPPOSITE In the formal, Italianate-influenced part of the garden near the house, a wisteria-clad pergola supports a Tyson Bennisson chandelier; in summer, triangular 'sails' are hung from the pergola to provide shade and privacy. THIS PAGE The house is painted throughout in 'Slipper Satin' by Farrow & Ball. Here, in the sitting room, the rug is from Riviere, to a design taken from one of Tyson's aboriginal artworks; the painting is by Tyson's sister, Bianca Smith









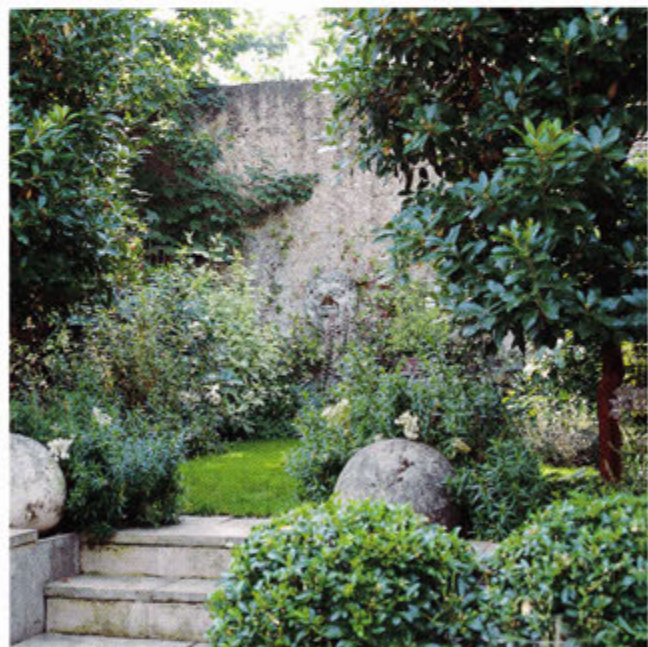
Tyson Bennison was brought up in Adelaide, Australia, an experience that he credits for encouraging his creativity and ingenuity. 'No one there had any money – and, even if you did, there was really nothing to buy so you had to be inventive. Even today I find going back there much more inspiring than visiting Paris or New York; we are all so spoilt in these big cities where we can buy whatever we want, but there they have to be really imaginative and clever.'

The son of a talented blacksmith and an 'artistic and stylish school-teacher', he decided when very young that he would come to London and become a famous antiques dealer, but felt that his name, Tyson Smith, would be no help in achieving his ambition. 'I had read every interiors magazine that I could find and decided that Geoffrey Bennison was the granddaddy of all antiques connoisseurs. So I paid my £90, changed my name and hoped that in the future someone might think we were related,' he laughs.

In order to have a qualification, he took a degree in economics at the University of Adelaide and on graduating found his first job in Britain as an economics teacher at Eton. 'It was a wonderful experience but I was not, it turned out, good teacher material.'

Windsor, however, was full of antiques shops and he became great friends with many of the owners; when a friend, Joanna, offered to loan him £1,000 to start his putative career as an antiques dealer, he leapt at the chance. The first thing he remembers buying was a Viennese bronze bulldog, and when eventually he had collected enough pieces, he took a stall at Portobello Market. 'Buyers started early in those days and by 4.45pm I had sold the lot. It occurred to me that perhaps my pieces were too cheap, but I learnt,' he laughs.

Over the next few years, as his expertise grew, it became apparent that it was increasingly difficult to replace the good pieces he had sold



OPPOSITE A Twenties painted-concrete 'column' forms the base of the dining-room table. THIS PAGE Farrow & Ball's deep grey 'Railings' has been used to create feature walls (top); here, it provides a foil for two mirror-glass sconces. Trees flank the entrance to the raised, cottage-style garden (above). A Chinese ancestor painting from The Blanchard Collective (left) hangs above a lacquer chest designed by Tyson



# COPY THAT

Hatta Byng and Jennifer Goulding suggest ways to recreate the look of houses featured in this issue



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## 1 SOURCE: FURNITURE

Much of the furniture, lighting and accessories in Tyson Bennison's house comes from his own company, **Tyson** (020-7720 9331; [www.tysonltd.com](http://www.tysonltd.com)). Many of the items are bespoke, but he has also used pieces from the standard range, including this 'Seahorse' coffee table, which measures 45 x 130 x 80cm, and costs £2,115.

## 2 IN THE KNOW: BESPOKE RUGS

**Riviere Rugs** (020-7627 0031; [www.riviererugs.com](http://www.riviererugs.com)), which specialises in hand-made Nepalese rugs, created a bespoke rug for Tyson's drawing room inspired by one of his own Aboriginal artworks. For a similar one-off look, you can supply a simple sketch, image or piece of fabric, and leave it to company director Leo Riviere to develop a design, which can then be made up in any size (up to 10 x 9 metres), shape, pile depth and silk content. Prices start at about £380 a square metre.

## 3 SOMETHING SIMILAR: MIRROR-BACKED SCONCE

Tyson has created a glamorous look with a pair of mirror-backed wall sconces. **Laura Ashley** (0871-983 5999; [www.lauraashley.com](http://www.lauraashley.com)) has an inexpensive version (pictured), which is 35cm high, and costs £30.

## 4 ADDRESS: ARCHITECTURAL ANTIQUES

Tyson has given the outdoor dining area a feeling of grandeur with a stone table from John Wiseman **Architectural Antiques** (020-7385 3519; [www.architecturalantiques-london.com](http://www.architecturalantiques-london.com)). There are many interesting pieces at the company's showroom in Lillie Road, SW6 - garden statuary is a particular speciality - but the company can also source items on request.

