

Katie Cardew's seasonal review: spring

This is the second in a series of seasonal reviews by multi-talented, super-busy local illustrator, boutique owner and interior designer Katie Cardew, with some fabulous ideas on how to make the most of your interiors this season

HELLO and a great big welcome to my little corner, all about my favourite topic in the whole wide world... interiors! I will get onto what we've been up to in our own home renovation in a minute, but, first, a few things I have been up to so far this year...

First, a disclaimer, if you're hoping for riotous stories of safaris and waterparks, I will certainly disappoint. With young children and two businesses to tend to, I generally find my free time is 9-10pm on a weekday and about 5 hours at the weekend, squeezed in between taxi-ing kids, cleaning the lint out of the tumble dryer and trips to Lidl. The weekday hour is generally spent re-watching episodes of Friday Night Dinner (I told you I was wild), but even with limited weekend time, I've managed to embark on a few little local adventures...

One of our best adventures last month was getting some chickens! We went and saw Andy at Rutland Poultry, and the kids had a great time choosing our four new additions. Agnes and I decided to name them after egg-related food items, but my son Ru was adamant his was to be called after himself. After much debate, we have Pie, Muffin, Omelette and... Ruby.

We found the remnants of an old chicken run in the garden, linked up by a little hole in a wall to the coal shed. My good old dad Julian managed

to clean the coal shed up really nicely, patch up the holes and re-wire the run. He even made four really cute chicken boxes out of scrap wood. The chickens have proved a great success and cope remarkably well with some pretty intense attention from my kids. They have yet to lay an egg, so my return on investment is pretty low... but Andy assures me they will start soon!

In between chickening we have done a bit of local food-ing. A great dinner at Sarpech in Oakham with friends is always a winner - I love Indian food anyway, but Adi and his team really take it a notch above, and the service is SO good. And the whiskey sours... We also had a great meal at The Kings Arms in Wing - my venison risotto was so lovely and the red wine was also really good (perhaps a bit too good...).



How our house is shaping up this spring

This time of the year can seem a little unpredictable. The days are slowly getting longer, but it can feel like as soon as spring rears her pretty head, we get hit with a cold snap and we're right back into our Claudia Winkleman cable knits. However, I always find these flighty days of early spring to be the perfect time to get stuck into those little home improvement projects I've been putting off. We are currently working on our family bathroom and entrance hall, but, after a really mad year last year, we are taking our time with them, so to scratch my constant itch to renovate our house, I have been instead looking at smaller ways to make it more homely...

I often hit the antiques fairs, and a recent trip to the Newark fair did not disappoint. Sure, it may have been wetter than a washing machine, but I found some lovely little things to add to my walls. First, the most gorgeous and colourful antique painting of a Spanish bullring. It caught my eye straight away, sitting half in mud under a trestle table, and I got it at a really good price. It looks great in our dining room against the tobacco yellow walls and finishes the area off perfectly. Another thing I find has maximum impact without costing the earth is a collection of Spanish plates. There are always some on eBay or at antiques stores, and if you can get the ones with holes in the back, even better, as they are ready to hang. If not, hardware stores should sell wire hangers for walls. Group the plates in threes or fives for maximum impact.

Another thing I have been doing is locating any dark areas of my home and finding lamps for them. Dark corners on dark evenings are depressing and make that area unusable. By adding a lamp, it can totally transform a space and make it so much more inviting. If you don't have a plug socket nearby, companies like Pooky do some great re-chargeable options. In the summer, re-chargeable lamps can also be placed outside for alfresco eating! My go-to for lamps are always a pleated shade; they look so sumptuous and add a lovely bit of texture. Stamford-based online company That Rebel House (www.thatrebelhouse.co.uk) sells some lovely ones.

Follow our renovation and my interior design projects on Instagram: @homes_by_katiecardew



Alexandra Wallace



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Interiors tips

As the days get longer, prep your house for summer by adding colour and interest to bare walls. Here are a few of my tips on how to make low-stress, high-impact purchases:

- Art does not have to be a huge investment - the only rule when it comes to art is that you have to love it! Have a favourite painting your child did at pre-school? Elevate it with

a brightly coloured frame and double mount and, voilà, you have something that looks so much better than it did stuck on the fridge. Online retailer eFrame do bespoke coloured frames or try your local framing shop.

- Plates and bowls can look fantastic grouped together, and I've seen them work equally well in a kitchen as I have in a bathroom.

- Plants can also cover up bare walls - a large potted plant or tree near a wall can be just as

beautiful as a painting, plus you really can't go wrong with adding foliage to a room.

- Think outside the box when it comes to your walls. Suzani throws look beautiful hung on brass tapestry poles and usually come at around 1m wide, so you can cover large walls with ease.

- Other mad things I've seen on walls that work really well include: Indian silk shoes, a feather headdress, a collection of straw hats and even a large model boat.

Things I love this season



Left: I can't talk about things for your wall without mentioning our Katie Cardew range of fine art prints. We have the most lovely new print out for spring called 'Tulips', painted by yours truly. Fine art giclée prints from £25.



Above: I mentioned Suzanis above. They are so useful over a bed or hung on a wall. Lincolnshire-based Chloe Jonason stocks a lovely range: www.chloejonasoninteriors.com

Above right: I met a lovely kid years ago when I was an extra in 'Pride and Prejudice'. Fast forward 20 years and that kid is now an adult and a very talented artist. Calypso Rubinstein-Keightley graduated from the Edinburgh Atelier of Fine Art and is now painting from her studio in Uppingham. I recently snapped up one of her studies in pencil and I also have my eye on her beautiful oil paintings. Take a look at her on Instagram under @calypsorubinstein or visit www.calypsorubinsteinkeightley.co.uk

- View Katie Cardew's interior design services at www.homesbykatiecardew.com or contact at homes@katiecardew.com
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