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THE WORLD OF INTERIORS

DECORATION SPECIAL



LA LA LAND OF PLENTY
Johnson Hartig's riotously ravishing LA home



WHEN a new piece of bespoke furniture emerges from the Edward Barnsley Workshop, it continues a 98-year tradition, but this doesn't mean that their designs stand still. To coincide with London Craft Week, they are launching an oak easy chair that brings together past and present in one elegant package. For the first time, the workshop is collaborating with a textile specialist – De Le Cuona – for the upholstery; the chair will be on show at the company's Pimlico Rd showroom.

James Ryan, manager and designer, took a 1950s design by Edward Barnsley as his inspiration. 'I believe this chair is a natural extension of the principles Edward worked to,' he says. With the benefit of modern lamination techniques, he has refined the silhouette, combining the arm and back leg into one flowing line. 'Edward believed that your eye should travel over the silhouette easily,' he explains. True to the company's Arts and Crafts roots, he also used more rustic touches, adding textural chip-carved stippling to the ends of the arms. 'It's a very free and expressive technique, working with the grain to achieve a dimpled effect. Nothing is marked out in advance, which is very different to the precision of our usual work. When I first start cutting, there's a

degree of trepidation – a bit like taking the stabilisers off a bike – but I soon get into a rhythm and it feels wonderfully natural.'

This approach is mirrored in the bouclé that Bernie de Le Cuona selected for the chair. De Le Cuona's emphasis on quality, craft and ethical sourcing marked them out as a good match, but James says he knew he and Bernie were kindred spirits when she began explaining the origin of every fabric. 'She could tell me about the Belgian farm that grows the linen and how one version was more "nobbly" because the flax had been harvested earlier. It reminded me of when I take a client around our timber sheds and talk them through each native tree and where it was grown.'

'There is a synergy between what we do,' agrees Bernie de Le Cuona. 'I have always valued provenance and preserving crafts passed down through families.' She particularly loves how her teal bouclé – 'woven with the warp in black, so it has an almost three-dimensional effect' – works with the shape and textures of the chair. 'It's the perfect partner.'

De Le Cuona, 44 Pimlico Rd, SW1. Presentation by Bernie de Le Cuona and James Ryan 7 Oct. 6-7. Details: 01753 830301; delecuona.com. The Edward Barnsley Workshop: 01730 827233; barnsley-furniture.co.uk >

Clockwise from top left: the 'Easy Chair' at the Edward Barnsley Workshop in Hampshire; Barnsley's original 'Easy Chair' designs for a Gold Coast university. 'Edward's drawings are dotted with notes about what he'd do differently next time, so I think he'd approve of how I've moved things forward,' says James Ryan; native timbers are stored until fully seasoned, which may take five years for thicker samples



WHEN Will Fisher collaborates with a fellow designer, it tends to be across a divide of several centuries, as he refines, 'tweaks' and adapts a historic design to create a more perfect version for 21st-century life. The latest addition to Jamb's lighting collection is based on the early electric lights that hung above the indoor swimming pool of Skibo Castle, designed by Alexander Ross at the turn of the 20th century for Andrew Carnegie, industrialist, philanthropist and the richest man of his time. 'When Will first saw the original lantern, it was nestled inside a rattan basket and wrapped in cloth, so for a while we called it the "Baby Jesus" light,' says co-founder Charlotte Freemantle. 'But ultimately it had to be called the "Skibo".'

As its history was revealed, this lantern felt particularly significant for Jamb, who are taking part in London Craft Week. 'We spend a lot of our time adapting lamps that were intended for candles or gas, so it was extraordinary to find this design, which has hints of an Adamesque shape but ran on electricity from Carnegie's private generator,' says Will. 'It felt like a forebear of everything we do now.' For Will, the process of reconsidering a design can take several years and he worked with skilled metal-

workers and glass blowers to refine the 'Skibo' until its shape, materials and details felt completely right.

The roof is made in spun metal, 'a process that took considerably more time to perfect than we imagined', while Will's subtle changes to the silhouette incorporated turned brass orbs around the rim and a ball that conceals the hanging mechanism. This and other details are picked out in distressed gilt in Jamb's London workshop, where the light is assembled. The hand-blown glass, Will says, 'took us on another journey', as he wanted to create a version in opaline as well as clear. 'In Carnegie's day, they would have wanted to show off the technology of the bulb inside but, for me, the opaline has more of a sense of mystery.'

When Charlotte and Will got in touch with Carnegie's descendants to tell them the lamp was getting a second lease of life, 'they gave us their blessing and sent some lovely old photographs of the pool,' says Will. 'They give a sense of how it must have felt seeing those early electric lights, with their glow reflected in the water. Our aim is for this lamp to capture the romance of that moment for a new era' ■
Jamb, 95-97 Pimlico Rd, SW1. Details: 020 7730 2122; jamb.co.uk

Clockwise from top left: parts are carefully finished and assembled in Jamb's south London workshop; in the larger photograph, Andrew Carnegie (far right) and friends take to Skibo's heated waters, c1902, in bathing costumes; Jamb's refinement of the 'Skibo' lantern in white opaline glass highlights its flowing silhouette. 'The opaline gives an ambient light and lends a sense of mystique,' says Will Fisher