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## Crafted in COLOUR

Kaffe Fassett's career as a textile designer is stitched into his Victorian house in Hastings, which – as you'd expect – is filled with riotous colour and pattern.

FEATURE **KATIE HALLETT** PHOTOGRAPHS **JAN BALDWIN**

### Profile

**THE OWNER** Artist, textile designer and author Kaffe Fassett lives here with his partner Brandon, and Brandon's mother and sister. *Kaffe Fassett's Bold Blooms* (Abrams Books), will be published on 13th September.

**THE PROPERTY** The house is early Victorian. Downstairs there is a living room, kitchen, breakfast room, dining room and sun room. Upstairs there are five bedrooms.

It's impossible to talk about the work of Kaffe Fassett, a luminary in the world of stitching, without referring to the designer's love of colour. The same is true when it comes to his home in Hastings, an early Victorian property shared with his partner Brandon, Brandon's sister Belinda and mother Yvonne. Few would be brave enough to paint their breakfast room with lime green stripes (an idea thought up by Belinda who shares Kaffe's love of the hue) or to team pink walls with a blue door frame, but here it works. Throughout the house, in fact, hues are bold and vary in each room. 'Colour is a mood changer,' says Kaffe, explaining his approach to decorating. 'Many people live in white boxes and that's fine because it does maximize

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT 'Nothing breaks the spell in this room,' says Kaffe of the living room. The chairs in the window are antique bergères, which have been covered in a Designers Guild fabric, designed by Kaffe. Find similar at The Old Cinema. Kaffe painted the Indonesian mirror to give it a distressed appearance; the handsome double-fronted house is located in Hastings; Kaffe stands in front of a mural he painted on the living room wall







The Murano chandelier in the dining room was bought in Venice – Kaffe hand-picked the colours of the flowers to ensure that they toned with the soft pastel colour scheme of the house. The ceramics – including the Dutch tulip vase – were bought from various places such as Camden and Portobello markets, while the Venetian-style mirror was bought from a shop in Hastings' Old Town



'When we moved in, there were murals featuring Greek ladies and romantic landscapes on the [living room] walls,' says Kaffe. 'I painted over this one with my own scene. I kept some elements but those ladies had to go!' The needlepoint cushions are Kaffe's designs. BELOW Kaffe designed and painted the kitchen tiles at Highland Stoneware in Scotland. The cushion was inspired by Kaffe's favourite antique, a Carlton Ware pot (just seen)



*You shouldn't be afraid of introducing lovely, soft colours. Even richer colours – they lift the soul*

the light, but you shouldn't be afraid of introducing lovely, soft colours, too. Even richer colours – they lift the soul. I went to an exhibition recently where the paintings were displayed against gun-metal grey. The paintings became windows to another world.' This idea of colour transporting you is encapsulated here, where rooms evoke other countries and cultures, from Ancient Greece in the case of the mural on the living room wall, to China.

Contemporary, mass-produced furniture wouldn't sit well in this creative hub, where Kaffe has hand-painted each individual kitchen tile and created a chinoiserie-style pattern on the walls of the dining room (a more affordable alternative to the Chinese paper he initially had his heart set on). 'I was raised around romantic Americans who always had antique furniture in their homes,' he says. 'I love that connection with the old world. Furniture makers had this beautiful sense of proportion and colour. How fortunate that today we can pay to live with these treasures from the past.' ➤





### Little black book

Hastings Antiques Centre, 59-61 Norman Rd, St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex, TN38 0EG

'We are so lucky to live near this centre and went here most weekends when we were furnishing this place. It was lovely to seek out pieces for particular spots.'

Marché aux Puces de St-Ouen, Paris

'I love the detritus of people's lives that washes up at flea markets, and those in Paris are my favourite.'

Portobello Market

'We used to live near Portobello and would stagger to the flea market every weekend. For years we bought lots of carpets and china here. It kept me going in terms of furnishings!'



The Chinese cabinet was bought at Camden Market, while the ship is actually a kite, brought back from Bali. The quilt above the bed is made from men's suiting: 'It's very sombre, quiet and nice to live with,' says Kaffe. Over the door hangs a faded Tibetan patchwork. FACING PAGE The mohair wall hanging was designed by Kaffe and made in South Africa





RIGHT Kaffe's challenge for the bathroom was finding tiles in soft pastels. Displayed on the shelf are some of the toiletries he designed for Heathcote & Ivory BELOW The indigo patchwork textile on the bedroom wall is a Japanese antique, made from old work clothes: 'These textiles are just wonderful and so sought after,' says Kaffe. The chair was a lucky match, found locally, while the rug is from Tibet



*Colour always gets me. I'm attracted to the wonderful hues of textiles, and my own designs are a way of expressing my love of colour*

And then, of course, there are the textiles. Originally from San Francisco, Kaffe has been an artist his whole life, turning to textiles after visiting a Scottish wool mill and falling for the extraordinary variations of yarn colours. 'Colour always gets me,' he says. 'I'm attracted to the wonderful hues of textiles, and my own designs are a way of expressing my love of colour.'

While the rugs in the house were mostly found at markets, the majority of throws, wall hangings and cushions are his own designs and display the breadth of his talents. Fortunately, and quite unusually, Brandon, Yvonne and Belinda share Kaffe's vibrant tastes and creativity. The needlepoint chair in the living room, for instance, was a collaborative project, which took around six months to stitch, while Belinda created the needlepoint cushions for each of the dining chairs.

He and Brandon bought the property in 2001 and furnished it almost completely from scratch. 'We live near a wonderful antiques emporium where we bought beds, cabinets and tables – anything that caught our eye. I've been to a couple of auctions and find the experience hair-raising. If I want something, I want it so badly that I'm jumping up and down and end up bidding against myself!'

When Kaffe and Brandon first stepped inside the house it was the light in the living room that clinched the deal. Fifteen years later and they are still as captivated. 'Even during a grey day the light here is beautiful, especially in the living room, which is always drenched with light. I do a lot of needlework, knitting and sewing when I'm here. I sit by the window and lose track of time.'

\* Turn to page 162 to learn more about Kaffe's favourite antique armchair in his living room



ABOVE Add a touch of Italian glamour with this gilded Venetian-style 'Sabine' mirror, £389, Sweetpea & Willow RIGHT 19th-century Qing Dynasty porcelain tulip vase, £1,500, Timothy Langston Fine Art & Antiques

ABOVE 20th-century Murano glass chandelier, £6,500, Matthew Upham Antiques LEFT 'Angle' Absolute Matt Emulsion, £38 for 2.5l, Little Greene

ABOVE This 18th-century French fruitwood armoire costs £3,500 from Debenham Antiques LEFT The ship in Kaffe's bedroom is actually a kite. This design costs £30.47 from Haptic Lab and is in the colour 'Flame'

## Global treasures Style spy

*There's a well-travelled feel to Kaffe's colourful home*



BELOW Indigo patchwork, according to Kaffe, is enjoying somewhat of a moment. 'Blue Belle' wingback chair, £1,950, Kelly Swallow

ABOVE This Victorian-style 'Dover' marble fire surround would create an elegant focal point and costs £1,650.67 from Marmuro BELOW Kaffe Fosssett 'Pink Chinese Peonies' cushion, £52, Ehrman

ABOVE Traditional Kilim wool rug, from £130. Next BEHIND 'Porcelain Garden' wallpaper in 'Rose/Fennel', £52 per roll, Sanderson

For complete stockist information see page 161