



INTERVIEW



Sophie Robinson

INTERIOR STYLIST AND WRITER, SOPHIE ROBINSON, IS A GUEST JUDGE ON THE FORTHCOMING *PROJECT INTERIORS* PRESENTED BY FEARNE COTTON

PORTRAIT *Luca Sage* | PHOTOS *Tim Young* | WORDS *Susan Springate*



Known for her love of colour, Sophie shares her tips and advice on all things home related on her blog and runs workshops with her *The Great Interior Design Challenge* co-presenter, Daniel Hopwood. Her dream home is the East Sussex farmhouse set in five acres of ancient woodland, that Sophie has renovated and shares with her builder husband, Tom Pike – who runs Ark Builders – and their seven-year-old son, Arthur.

How did you get into interiors? I started by studying 3D design at Brighton University, but then became a stylist's assistant to pay my rent in London. A friend was a runner on ITV's *60 Minute Makeover* and they invited me in for an interview – and it went from there.

Did you grow up surrounded by colour? Yes, my mum was very creative. She was always painting and decorating the house, stencilling and rag rolling and I remember as a child being enthralled by this creative fervour that was going on around me. My parents were into DIY too and were always fixing up houses.

What's your favourite colour in the home? That's like asking a mother to pick her favourite child. You choose colours for different reasons.

What's the most important thing you have learned about interior design? When you take risks, it pays off. If you have an urge to do something courageous, take the plunge. There is a process of course – and that is what I try to share in my workshops and online – but then you can dive in with much more confidence.

Which area of the house is often overlooked?

Hallways. They are an introduction to your home so I think they should be statement areas. What's good is that you only ever pass through them, so you can be bold. Who wants a beige hallway? I just don't get it. It's a real opportunity to do something different. The key is to link the hallway with the connecting rooms, so choose a colour that will feature in those.

Thoughts on kitchens? My bone of contention with kitchens is that they can look as if they have been lifted out of a kitchen catalogue and lack any personality. People often feel they are spending so much money that they need to be classic and neutral but I feel if you are spending so much money, don't you want a room that gives you joy? I treat the kitchen just as I would treat any other room in the house, so I have colour and wallpaper and art hanging on the walls.

Do you have any inherited pieces? I love having old pieces in my home because I love the mix of old and new. I have some lovely items of furniture I inherited from my grandmother and then we have this upcycled bench that my husband bought at a car boot sale. We re-upholstered it in my collection of needlepoint pictures, which I had stitched together and it is so special because it is a one-off piece.

What's in the pipeline for future projects? I will be a guest judge in the new show *Project Interiors* for BBC2 out in the spring, which is presented by Fearne Cotton. It's a cross between *The Great Interior Design Challenge* and *The Apprentice*. I am also doing a second series of podcasts with Kate Watson-Smyth called *The Great Indoors*, as well as launching my online interior design workshops, which brings all the expertise I have been sharing online. EKBB.sophierobinson.co.uk

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Child's room: Mural by Christian Lacroix at Wallpaper Direct; chair by Sofa.com; lamp table by Habitat; bed by Andy Nix. Master bed: Bed by Sweetpea & Willow; bed linen by The Secret Linen Store; cushions by Kit Miles; lights by Hector Finch; tables by Graham & Green. Kitchen: cabinets by Naked Kitchens; furniture by Ercol; ceiling lights by Habitat; splashback by Vintage Interiors; painting by Jessie Ford. Nursery: Mr Bear wallpaper by Lucy Tiffney; furniture by Cuckoo Interiors; light by Cable & Cotton; 'Love' art by Alex May Hughes.