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Designer profile Max Rollitt

At this eighteenth-century Cornish rectory, antiques dealer and decorator **Max Rollitt** has created a relaxed look for his clients, using a mix of period and modern furniture and art, and carefully selected fabrics. By **Judith Wilson**

PHOTOGRAPHS **TOM MANNION**



Max Rollitt (this picture) stands in the drawing room of the Cornish rectory he furnished. In the dining room (below right) he has teamed an English Regency table with mahogany chairs, c. 1765, covered in antique silk bourette

craftsmen, and incorporates clean and crisp upholstery to create modern and elegant lines. Max lives in a late-eighteenth-century farmhouse in Hampshire and he has his showroom in Alresford.

'This Cornish rectory dates from 1780. I have worked for the clients before, having decorated their main Hampshire home. They said they would buy this rectory in Cornwall if I could furnish it for them. There was no design work, so it was an unusual project for me, and I had six weeks to furnish it from scratch. As it was a second home, it was important for the owners that it should feel relaxed.

'I love the atmosphere in the drawing room, and it looks out over spectacular views. The walls were bright white, so we toned them down with "Bone" paint by Farrow & Ball and laid a Farahan carpet, c. 1900. The sofa is a one-off copy of an antique Howard design. This was a traditional furnishing project, so the drawing room needed a few pieces to invigorate it. I had the sofa upholstered in Sanderson's "Picotage" cotton: the fresh colours "lift" it above the carpet. The French centre table, c. 1700, is walnut and has a fantastic patina.

'My aim is to create joyful homes that are comfortable, elegant and interesting; they should look as if they have evolved over time. At one end of the room there is a new table from English Georgian, based on a George I design; we painted and patinated it to look like the antique. It is flanked by Scottish dining chairs, c. 1790, covered in a Dominique Kieffer linen.

'Modern art is one of the easiest elements to integrate ▸

'My aim is to create joyful homes that are elegant and interesting'



Max Rollitt trained in furniture design and restoration at Frearson & Hewlett. Then, after taking over his mother's antiques business in 1993, he began dealing in antiques. 'Historically, I had always sold to leading interior designers,' he says. In 2005 he started decorating himself. He has a strong eye for classical proportions and creates an informal, elegant look. He is in demand as an interior designer, and current projects include a Georgian house in Hampshire, a London apartment, and a country house in East Sussex. His new range of bespoke furniture, under the Max Rollitt label, is based on antique designs made in the traditional manner by specialist



CLOCKWISE FROM THIS PICTURE Max had the drawing room sofa upholstered in Sanderson's 'Picotage' cotton. Behind the sofa, he grouped a soapstone sculpture by the artist Christopher Riisager, nineteenth-century marble grapes and an Indian terracotta pot. In the panelled hall is a Windsor chair in ash, with an elm seat. Opposite a church pew, c. 1780, is a card table of the same period

'The joy is that I persuaded my clients to be brave'

into an old house. Behind the sofa I've grouped a soapstone sculpture by the modern artist Christopher Riisager, nineteenth-century marble grapes and an Indian terracotta pot. The lamps are a mix, too. One base is made from an eighteenth-century Dutch Delft pilgrim vase, another from an antique glass bottle. I've also combined a 1910 portrait of a boy with a modern relief, again by Christopher Riisager, and pricket sticks once made from a pair of eighteenth-century bun feet.

'The dining room is panelled in the typical, late-eighteenth-century manner. I wanted to reinforce that with appropriate furniture. I've used an English Regency table with mahogany chairs, c. 1765, with carved and pierced back splats. I've had the chair seats covered in antique silk bourette. Antique fabrics can give a better depth of colour.

'Above the mahogany cupboard, dated 1760, I've hung a nineteenth-century oil painting of north Cornwall. I've contrasted this with a pair of modern shell obelisks, commissioned from Sunflower & Poppy in north London. The French chandelier is twentieth century. I love the early-nineteenth-century brass charger because it is bold and reflective.

'The panelled hall is simple, so the furnishing is restrained. I've mixed a painted church pew, c. 1780, with a Hepplewhite-style card table. The pink cushion, in nineteenth-century antique silk, is from Katharine Pole. The Windsor chair, from the MR bespoke range, is ash with an elm seat. An original would have been painted, but I like wood unfinished, so it develops a patina. The oil painting is by Elizabeth Dunn, from 1959.

'The joy is that I persuaded my clients to be brave. My style is layered, comfortable and educated' □

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