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Eclectic tastes: exposed joists and Turkish fur throw in the extended kitchen



Silver and Mercury: skull and Freddie

Stylist to the stars Mary Fellowes created a character-packed home from a gloomy Victorian terrace, says **Caroline Phillips**

YOU get a good idea about freelance stylist Mary Fellowes just by looking at her walls. There's a framed obituary of her uncle – Hugh van Cutsem, erstwhile confidant of the Prince of Wales – and, nearby, there is another about her grandmother, Lady Margaret Fortescue, who inherited one of Britain's largest landholdings.

There is also a Polaroid selfie of Fellowes with Paris Hilton – signed by the hotels heiress.

Fellowes, 35, lives in Kensal Rise, and in New York. In London, her Victorian terrace house is painted outside in a hip, New York grey. When I meet her she is just off the red-eye, but her lips are painted chilli red and she's in black Alaïa leggings and Yohji jumper. "They're just aeroplane clothes," she says, puffing on an e-cigarette. She dresses even more glamorously for the photographer.

Fellowes has worked for Vogue magazine around the world and has also dressed actresses Liv Tyler, Claire Danes and Amy Adams. Her childhood and adult lives meet cheerfully in her idiosyncratically characterful home with its rustic Manhattan kitchen and



Every picture

country house sitting room containing "pieces rummaged from the attic of Castle Hill", the family's ancestral seat in North Devon.

The Kensal Rise house was a rather less cheery place when Fellowes bought it in 2009. It hadn't been touched for 50 years by its previous owner, she says, and was "like a gloomy Victorian parlour". Fellowes set about gutting the place with her friend Kirstie Allsopp's builder. "Only the staircase remained."

She spent £200,000 doing it up. She converted the loft and extended the

kitchen over the side and back returns, cleverly copying the existing joists and leaving them visible. She exposed the kitchen wall, "and made them re-point it four times to get the right grey". A powered concrete floor at £6,000 was out of the question. "So I did a car park floor with a self-levelling compound that won't crack even if cars roll over it." It cost her £600 and looks fabulous.

Her work life is evident everywhere. There's a rail of vintage coats in the sitting room from a fashion shoot. "All my photos come from shoots I've styled or photographer colleagues," she says.



Theatrical touches: the putty-pink bedroom – curtains by a Pinewood upholsterer

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Aristocratic attic raider: Mary Fellowes "rummaged pieces from the attic of Castle Hill", her family's ancestral home in North Devon, for her terrace house in Kensal Rise

tells a colourful story

Even the bathroom looks like a Chanel shoebox in buttermilk and ebony, with black grouting between the New York subway-style tiles. When Fellowes was Turkish Vogue's fashion director, she went "fur-mad in Istanbul". One fur throw – stylishly backed with silver fabric – is draped over her kitchen sofa. "My latest discovery is irresistible

cushions from Geraldine Larkin who designs couture fabrics for Prada and all the top fashion houses."

Fellowes adds: "Everything is reclaimed and recycled – apart from the paints." Think antique taps to Victorian loos and beds. There's a Brazilian chair covered in shredded, tatty fibres. "I love that it looks like a

yeti." Her desk is a shower screen atop an old door. The kitchen cabinets are particularly charming – pine planks from a demolished cheese factory. "See those circles on the front of them?" she asks. "They're marks from ageing cheese."

Everywhere, she has made silk purses from sows' ears. Take her Thirties-style



Kitchen sync: cabinets made with pine planks from a demolished cheese factory, the rings from the cheeses still visible, are teamed with Ronnie Wood's old table

bedroom. "I wanted a holistic hotel suite, like Claridge's." It has sage carpet and putty-pink walls. "I couldn't afford silk, so a friend did cross-drag paint on it, which looks like silk."

The room's theatrical curtains – "Colefax fabric alongside £8-a-metre Shepherd's Bush market material" – were made reasonably by the in-house upholsterer at Pinewood Studios. "He'd ring and say, 'Sorry, just doing them when I've finished something for Keira Knightley and Anna Karenina.'"

Fellowes's uncle, Sir Robert Fellowes, was private secretary to the Queen and brother-in-law of Princess Diana – but his niece is more bohemian. "I live in a community of four creatives," she declares of her four-bedroom house. And the other three? "There's a hotel designer, Louis, the polymath, and Martin the Argentinian chef. Martin is opening Una, a one-table restaurant in the St Pancras clock tower."

When they are not brainstorming around Rolling Stone Ronnie Wood's salvaged oak refectory table or "having group therapy", she says, laughing, they are throwing riotous, impromptu parties. It must be a hoot – Fellowes is game, fantastical and wickedly funny.

As I leave, I glance again at her sitting room with its resin lamps that look like giant walnuts, the salvaged Deco mirrored chests and lifesize silver skulls that she "picked up in Bali". There's a

Get the look

■ **Walnut-style resin lights:**

vaughandesigns.com

■ **For silver skulls:** Seminyak interiors shops in Bali, Indonesia

■ **Interior textiles:** sequined wall panels, cushions and bedcovers by geraldinelarkin.com – supplier of fabric to the top fashion houses

■ **Leominster Reclamation & Architectural Salvage:** for timbers, radiators, lighting and fireplaces (leorec.co.uk)

■ **Lots Road Auctions in Chelsea:** for items ranging from Fifties fittings to garden décor (lotsroad.com)

■ **Kilims and fur throws:** from the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul

■ **Slate in fireplaces and worktops:** from Slate Ardosia (slate.co.uk)

■ **Specialist carpet, rug and curtain cleaner:** johnfrederick.co.uk

menu from a dinner with the Duke of York at Royal Lodge, plus a photo of her as a baby with her nanny, Jean Smith. "I was her last charge," Fellowes reveals. "She went on to present Nanny Knows Best." Everything in the house tells a story. And a good one at that.

Photographs: **David Butler**