



MEET THE HOMEMAKERS

Who are the women shaping the way we live now?
Aimee Farrell picks the names to watch



KATE BUTLER THE HIGH-STREET DOYENNE

She is arguably the most influential decorative force on the British high street. Kate Butler, the 37-year-old who was made head of product design at Habitat last year, is responsible for everything from the art direction of collections to the look of the stores and campaigns. "I'm just back from India and Vietnam, where I've been looking at and tweaking the pieces that are being made with our artisans," she says. "I never tire of that aspect of the job — it's always such an invigorating experience."

Born in Zimbabwe, Butler began her career straight off the back of an art and textile foundation at Camberwell College of Art, when she landed a job as a buying assistant at the Conran Shop in the early 2000s. From there she moved to Anthropologie, before joining Habitat as design manager in 2013. Together with her small design team, she is currently in the throes of conceiving what our homes will look like for autumn/winter 2020. As the interiors market has grown, British homes have become more eclectic, individualised spaces. We've become more expressive in our decorative tastes — a mood she sees reflected in her customers' choices of pieces featuring bright colour, pattern

and print: the Lantana orange curvy ceramic lamp, the Ellora chevron-print coffee table and the Jamie multicoloured geometric appliqué cushions are among the bestsellers. Butler is defiant when it comes to Brexit, seeing its impact on the industry simply as "a creative challenge" that will only compel the brand to become more experimental in its aesthetic — prepare for "love it or hate it reactions". This August marks the launch of the first Habitat collection under her sole direction. Expect the bright green terrazzo dining table to be on your wishlist. "We should drive ideas," she says of the bold and playful new direction. Her long-term plan is to make the discipline more inclusive for young talent. "Design is all about imagining life as it should be."



● **Above** Moda Operandi's luxury fashion salon, left, and the Chess Club in Mayfair, by Fran Hickman.
● **Below** Lantana ceramic lamp, £65, and Valerie cushion, £65. **Below left** Juno sofa, £695, and Tyler coffee table, £95. All habitat.co.uk



FRAN HICKMAN THE INTERIOR DESIGNER

With a client list that includes designer Emilia Wickstead, stylist Elizabeth Saltzman and Moda Operandi co-founder Lauren Santo Domingo, it's no wonder Fran Hickman is one of the fashion world's most in-demand interior designers. "Working on someone's home is an intimate process," says Hickman, 35, who set up her interior and architectural practice in 2014. "Those projects tend to come through word of mouth or personal relationships." A case in point is the East Hampton retreat of Saltzman, where Hickman is currently overseeing a careful renovation — it was Saltzman who suggested her for the Westbourne Grove outpost of Gwyneth Paltrow's Goop empire, which opened last September.

Originally starting out at Soho House in 2005, Hickman then worked at Colefax & Fowler (creators of the quintessentially English "country-house look") and the British architect Tom Bartlett. Her first solo project was Moda Operandi's Belgravia showroom. These days, at any one time her London studio has a dozen projects on the go, from homes in America, Hong Kong and Britain to stores and a bar in the Smithson Plaza in London.

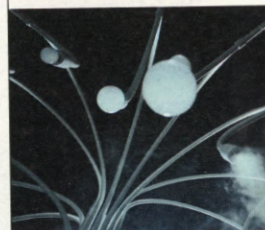
"My design language is pretty broad," says Hickman, who grew up in a noisy, busy house as one of six siblings, an experience that, she says, has made her acutely aware of personal space. It's an upbringing that has perhaps served her well in other areas, too. "If you run your own business, you have to be kick-ass. I'm quite straightforward when it comes to sitting down with a group of men to ensure they stick to a contract — I'm not intimidated by that."



AZUSA MURAKAMI THE EXPERIMENTALIST

Bubble-emitting trees, dressing tables made from human hair, kinetic fog paintings that are a techy take on Turner — these are just some of the projects that the internationally acclaimed Studio Swine has created over the years. Set up by Azusa Murakami, 34, and her artist husband, Alexander Groves, in 2011, the studio's latest project is an immersive sculptural installation that mimics the effect of a snowflake or frozen waterfall, and will be unveiled at the Venice Biennale next month.

"We call it ephemeral tech," Murakami says from her native Nagoya, in Japan, where she is taking a break between events in Hong Kong and Shenzhen. With a background in architecture, Murakami first came to England to attend boarding school aged 12 and never looked back, working at Conran and Partners before setting up the studio. She describes her collaborative work with her husband as "a joint agreement". "We think very differently. We start from different places, but the end point is always the same."



● **Above** New Spring, by Studio Swine, 2017.
● **Below** Early 20th-century Danish terracotta bowl, £88, and 1920s alabaster pendant light, £520; tat-london.co.uk

CHARLIE PORTER THE INFLUENCER

It's less than two years since Charlie Porter launched @Tat.London, the digital equivalent of your dream village jumble sale. Porter, 30, began pedalling her decorative finds on Instagram as a sideline from her day job as decoration stylist at House & Garden magazine; now, more than 25K followers later, her feed for "unloved objects" has evolved into one of interior design's most compelling Instagram accounts. Whether it's a pair of brass shell bookends or an art deco pendant light, as soon as it's up on her social, it's sold. Selling for anything from £40 for a hand-painted ceramic apothecary jar to £640 for a Persian kilim rug, the pieces are sourced from antiques fairs and online sites such as the-saleroom.com and catawiki.com, and she can't resist a car boot sale.

"It's a really fun way of selling," says Porter, whose community of largely female customers includes the creative director Alex Eagle and the Swedish interior decorator Beata Heuman. "I get

