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Not just an ordinary garden shed but in Lili's imagination it has been transformed into a magical Hobbit House

DESIGNER STYLE

A world of imagination

Where most people see derelict places and unloved objects, designer Lili Giacobino sees potential beauty. Janet Donin enters her imaginative world at home in Kingston

Tell us a little about yourself...

I was born in France and grew up in Switzerland. I started my first company making colourful, unique pieces of furniture from recycled cardboard. When I came to England in 2008 I completed a BA in product and furniture design at Kingston University. I then started to transform dated properties and trained further in plumbing, carpentry and tiling.

How did you break into interior design?

I've been a property developer for four years, which all started when fell in love with my old Victorian house. It took me a year to renovate using all the skills I'd previously learned, while discovering the joy of smashing down walls! I can imagine what a room will look like



Lili Giacobino

once transformed and so the new chapter in my life began by giving ideas to other people.

Where do you find inspiration?

Having grown up surrounded by stunning mountains, lakes and forests, nature is my main inspiration. I've also travelled extensively to Australia, New Zealand, Nepal, Thailand and Ireland and am still inspired by these trips.

How does nature translate to your designs?

Nature can be a beautiful example of aesthetic shapes and stunning designs which I find fascinating. In my home I have a banister that replicates the branches extending from a tree.

Any other natural projects?

As a child I loved building tree houses, so I built this tree from wire mesh and papier mache and at the top is a tiny house for fairies! One day I'd love to build a bigger one for a child's room.

...and the cats' house?

I have three cats, who spend most of their time climbing trees, so I wanted to bring the outside in and create a lovely nest for them. It looks rather surreal but the cats love it.

What about your Hobbit house?

As I love curves and everything natural, although just a shed, the hobbit house adds visual magic to my garden. It's made from recycled floorboards and reclaimed portholes with a curved exterior, which adds to the intrigue. It makes me smile every time I walk past.

Tell us about your recent project in Kingston Hospital...

I started to volunteer at Kingston Hospital 18 months ago, hoping to create a stress-free environment for patients. I have redecorated over 10 rooms there, the most recent being the Lego waiting room, which was very amusing to do. It's not every day that you get to play with giant Lego.

Would you describe yourself as 'hands on' creatively?

I have always enjoyed working with my hands and build everything myself. I am very sensitive with textures and I need to touch things to see if they feel right for the design I want to achieve.

What are you working on at the moment?

I am planning to convert a bus into a mobile shelter for the homeless and have been in contact with local charities which tackle this problem. I want to use my designer skills to create a structure that can help more people feel safe.

What is the best thing about your job?

I can still behave like a 10-year-old in many projects. I sometimes refer to my tools as toys and enjoy playing with them a lot.

Finally what is the best thing about living in Surrey?

I adore walking along the Thames and Richmond Park is simply stunning. Growing up in Switzerland means I need nature around me to feel good. Surrey is a gorgeous area to live in. ♦

For more on Lili Giacobino, visit lilitinteriors.com or contact 078 1472 8499/swisslili@gmail.com



Lili's cats love to climb up to their very own nest made from tree branches found in a local park



Inspired by nature this unusual banister is created to resemble the twisting branches of a tree



What little girl wouldn't want a fairy tree house like this in her bedroom?



Lego brings a fun and distracting environment to a waiting room in Kingston Hospital