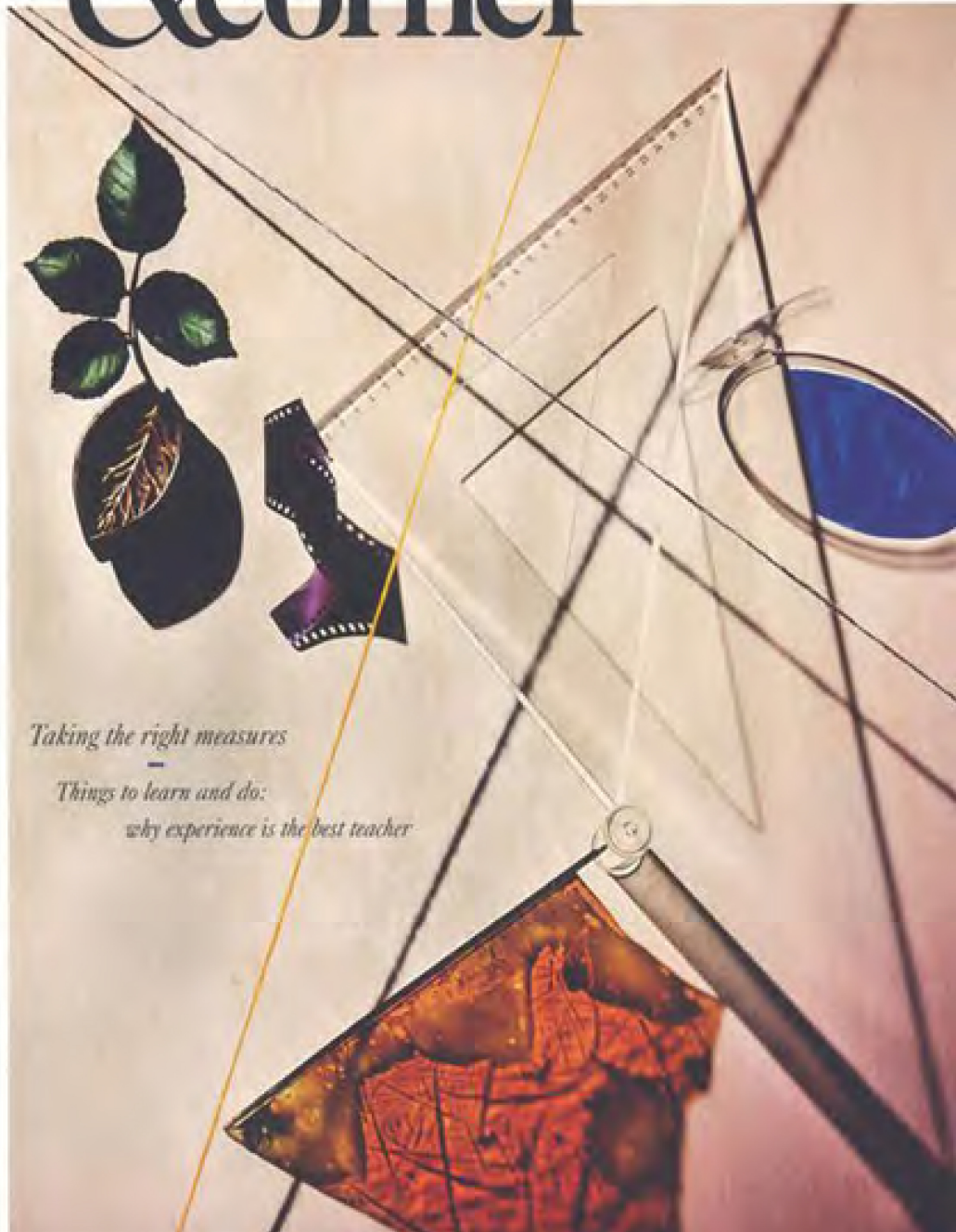


hole & corner

celebrating craft, beauty, passion and skill

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FAVE THOUGHT I DOVECOE STUDIOS I TONY CONIGLIARD I HANDMADE PETALS
CHARLESTON FARMHOUSE I KEVIN ROWLAND I BUILD YOUR OWN SHED



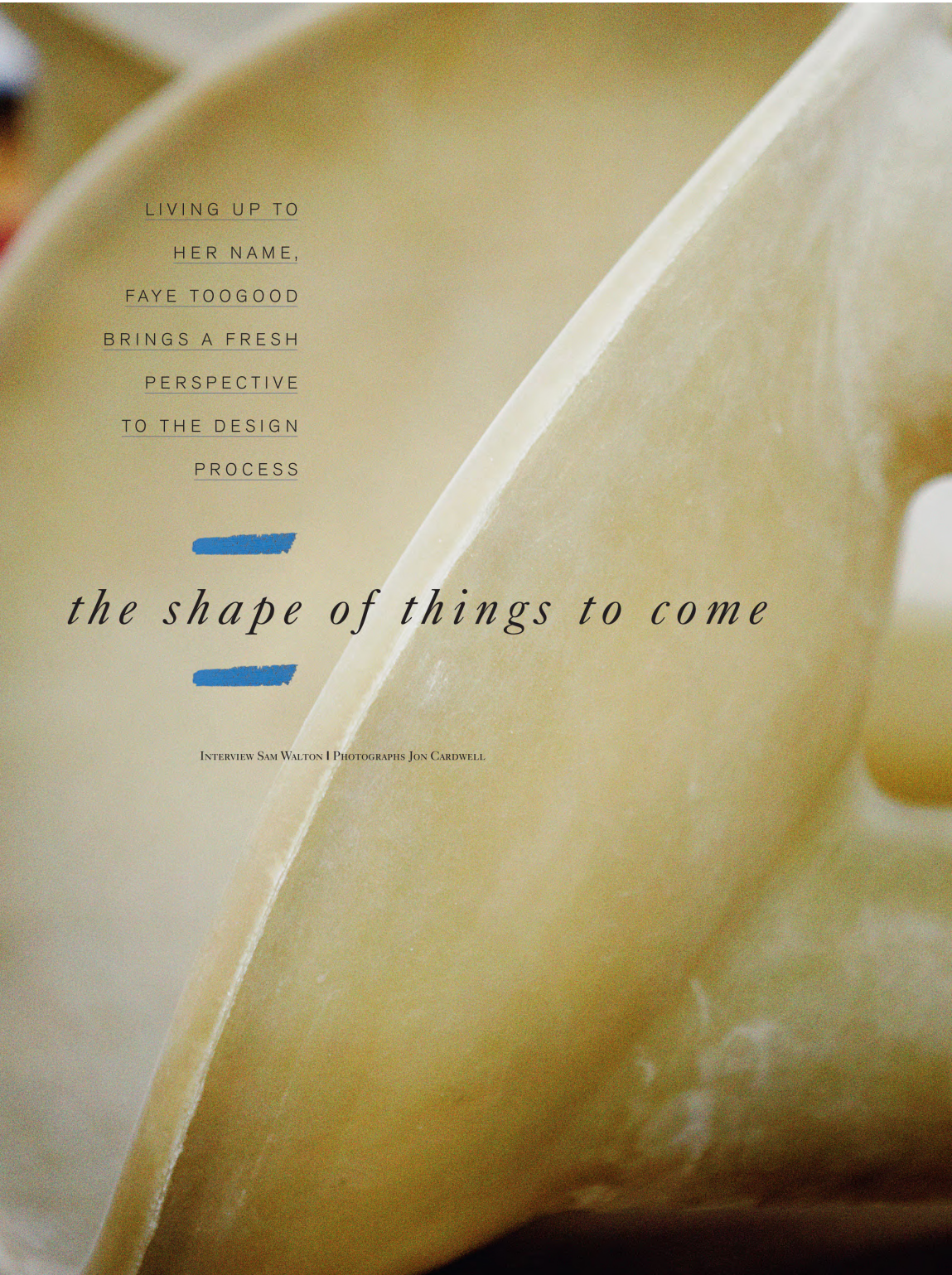
Taking the right measures

*Things to learn and do:
why experience is the best teacher*

Walton, Sam. "The shape of things to come," *Hole & Corner*, May 2014.

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LIVING UP TO
HER NAME,
FAYE TOOGOOD
BRINGS A FRESH
PERSPECTIVE
TO THE DESIGN
PROCESS

the shape of things to come

INTERVIEW SAM WALTON | PHOTOGRAPHS JON CARDWELL

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Faye Toogood's distinctive aesthetic touch crosses disciplines from interiors to furniture and clothing. Ever curious, her Studio Toogood imprint seeks to 'industrialise craftsmanship', applying a thoughtful design approach to British industry, producing intuitive work for consumers who care about provenance and quality. As she put the finishing touches to her new collection, we asked her about her inspirations, her approach and the lessons she's learned...

What is the ethos behind your work?
I'd have to extend it to everything we do, I don't really see any difference between a coat, a chair or an interior. The approach and the ethos is the same. The most important thing to me is that everything I do – and the studio does – is relevant. Essentially it has a place and it is desired and it's not just for me. That's why I'm a designer not an artist.

Everything that we have done, the manufacturing and making for clothes and furniture, is made in Britain – and that's because I really believe in manufacturing and industry in this country. I'm also very interested in craft, but even

more so, in how I can industrialise craftsmanship. I'm not a self-producer, I'm not a craftsman. I'm a designer that needs industry and manufacturing to do what I do, so I'm interested in how as an individual you can bring man and machine together. The ethos behind the studio is essentially something that is made in Britain with integrity.

Can you talk us through this collection and some of the processes involved in making it?

This collection is *Assemblage 4*. There have been three previous *Assemblages*. I approach each collection of furniture in a different way, getting into a new material or manufacturing process that I'm interested in at that time. They each have a title and a story to tell. *Assemblage 3* was 'Delicate Interference' – that was about very strong, solid industrial materials. A lot of steel, a lot of patination on metal, very precious, raw and strong on the masculine and the feminine side. Everything was sharp, angular and quite aggressive. I used quite a lot of security mesh in those works. It's been two years since I did that last collection. I've been concentrating on the clothes and a lot of things other things have happened in my life since.

The aesthetic of this fourth collection is completely different and named 'Roly Poly'. I hadn't realised until I drew everything, but I think it's a reaction to the fact that I've just had a child. The daybed, for example, is almost like a pregnant lady lying down, with a bump on it. For this collection, everything's got fatter, plumper and fuller. I just wasn't responding to the sharp, angular aesthetic that I had produced in the previous collection.

There are three finishes; cream, milk and then a natural raw to show the fibreglass material. We've had to make all the patterns and the moulds and it's been quite a laborious process to get to this point. The fibreglass is used to make boats; it's a very strong material and I haven't

seen it used in furniture in its raw state. Normally with fibreglass, when you get the colouration it's highly glossed. We've sanded back all the gloss so there's a very powdery, clay-like quality to it. Actually the shapes started as drawings but also as clay models, so there's some interesting correlations between the clay models and the final pieces. The texture and feeling of those pieces are quite similar.

Then there's the 'Element' table, which is a piece that I've made for all four collections. It's a table with the four geometric shapes. It started off with a glass top and it slowly evolved through the collections in different materials. We did a steel one, a cage one, one out of solid resin and this one is like a fat version. It looks almost like melted lard or butter. I'm hoping it's a definite move on from what I've been doing.

How important is it to you that your work is produced in the UK?

There are two things: I genuinely believe that this country is capable of producing and manufacturing and that it makes it more sustainable. Most fashion houses make their things in Asia, but we can make it here. Whether people are prepared to pay the price for it is something that's being tested at the moment.

I think people have got it when it comes to food. They are clear that they want to buy local and they want to buy from the farmer. They want to know where things come from; the difference between a £2 chicken and a £15 chicken; people can get their head around that. But can they get their head around a wooden chair for example, being made in China for £100 or for £500 here in the UK? I don't know. I think that it's still a struggle for a furniture designer to get people to understand why there is such a cost difference.

Working on a collection, do you prefer the process or the end result?

I am a bit of a storyteller. I like the concepts, projects and research going through the whole process – and I do

FAYE TOOGOOD



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Housed in a boatbuilders' yard in Newhaven, East Sussex, Studio Toogood's new *Assemblage 4* collection takes shape. 'Everything's got fatter, plumper and fuller,' says Toogood of the designs, which she's named 'Roly Poly': a development which she attributes partly to her own pregnancy. Raw fibreglass – often used to make boats – features prominently in the furniture (right)

have a tendency, once I've got to the end of it, to let go. But I'm trying not to do that because I have to sell the furniture and I have to sell the coats. It's not good enough to get to the end result. If it's going to be relevant and it's going to be available, the studio has to get out there and sell it. That's something I'm realising I have to do.

Is there any particular period or person that you've found has influenced your work?

There are definite moments; places and people that have had an effect on who I am and the way I work. Firstly; my parents and my upbringing. I grew up in Rutland: it was a very rural upbringing in a small village with not a lot to do. We had no television until I was ten, but there was lots of walking and being outside. I feel very close to English landscapes; the colours, the materials. I love that kind of rawness, it's very much within me.

At first I wanted to be a sculptor. I had just been to Barbara Hepworth's studio and decided that this is what I wanted to do, but all the careers advisors suggested that I study something more academic. So I didn't study sculpture, I studied the History of Art. And for a long time I was quite angry about that. But I now realise that studying the History of Art was probably the best thing I could have done, because as a designer I don't have a fear of looking back; of using historical references to tell my story or communicate what I'm doing. I think if I trained in design that would have been hammered out of me, because I know that the designers who come to me aren't used to looking at anything pre-1920. Whereas I feel I have a quite good sense of composition, colours and history from my education in History of Art.

Working at *World of Interiors* was also very influential for me. Min Hogg, who was the founding editor, gave me my first job and I stayed there for eight years. I learned so much about art and architecture, and

she taught me that it's not about fashion or fad. It was about finding the best – whether that was a 13th-century church or an African hut, they all have their place.

Those were really the founding of my knowledge: Barbara Hepworth the sculptor, Art History and *World of Interiors* made me who I am and the way I look at things by eye.

What are the lessons you've learned since you started off?

There are many lessons I've learned, I'm still learning and will continue to learn. Not necessarily about creativity or the design process, but more about how to actually make something happen. I didn't start off thinking I've got to be a businesswoman, but I realised that there were certain things I had to undertake in order to make things happen. So I admire people who manage to produce collections. People are very quick to judge and criticise other people's work, but since I've been doing this I'm a lot less judgmental of other people, because I understand what it takes to do something for yourself. The learning curve, I would say, has been how to deal with production, how to deal with a roomful of staff, how to set up a business, how to deal with accounts... All these things that I didn't even consider would be part of my job role are now fundamental.

What's the secret of a good collaboration?

The secret of a good collaboration is to leave your own ego at the door! To embrace the fact that you're going to have an end result that you could never have thought about or dreamt about. I think that for a good collaboration you need to have respect for other people and you have to be quite open and laid-back. So often when I collaborate – with manufacturers, individuals or other designers – I'll get a different result to what I would if it was just me. And that's really interesting. ●

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'BARBARA HEPWORTH
THE SCULPTOR, ART
HISTORY AND THE
WORLD OF INTERIORS
MADE ME WHO I AM'



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