



Viladas, Pilar. "A Well-Composed Life," *The New York Times*, November 2013.

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A WELL-COMPOSED LIFE



PORTRAIT IN STYLE
Faye Toogood in a dress from Egg, in London. Opposite: the front sitting room of Toogood's London house contains a pair of 1950s Italian chairs, vintage Swedish lights above the fireplace and a vase by Hilda Hellstrom on the Element coffee table, designed by Toogood.

The designer Faye Toogood finds exceptional beauty in unexpected arrangements of objects, and uses them to create installations for fashion houses — and her own house.

BY PILAR VILADAS PHOTOGRAPHS BY HENRY BOURNE PRODUCED BY RITA KONIG

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WHEN FAYE TOOGOOD WAS 21, fresh out of college, she showed up for a job interview with Min Hogg, the founding editor and creative force of *The World of Interiors* magazine, with a suitcase in hand. In it was a résumé of sorts — cuttings of favorite fabrics and loose pictures of furniture and art that she admired. Hogg hired her on the spot, and Toogood spent most of the next decade at the magazine, producing witty, inventive still life stories.

The hallmark of Toogood's work was, according to her, "the combination of the unexpected and the theatrical with something tactile or handmade, even painterly." (For one shoot, she styled glamorous dressing tables with wildly overscaled mirrors, lipstick and pearls in the grand but ghostly hotel in the St. Pancras train station, before it was renovated.) She continues to explore unusual juxtapositions today with Studio Toogood, which she started when she left the magazine in 2008, and

Toogood's house is filled with carefully composed still lifes. 'When I get a new object, everything has to be rearranged.'

which designs interiors and also retail spaces, installations and visual materials for brands like *Comme des Garçons*, Alexander McQueen, Opening Ceremony and Tom Dixon. (Toogood also designs her own lines of furniture.)

Toogood's affection for contrasts is clearly at play in the cozy late-Georgian London house she shares with her husband and young daughter. Its small rooms are filled with things antique and modern, fine and flea market, pristine and mended. "I like to combine the



precious and the raw," she explains.

Toogood describes herself as an obsessive tinkerer, who can't help but "adapt, meddle or adjust" things, whether it's a look book for a fashion house, the furniture for a pop-up shop or a row of teacups and plates on a shelf at home. For an installation this month at the Hermès store in London, Toogood riffs on the company's iconic Birkins and Kellys by using the negative shapes left behind by the artisans after the leather hides are cut to make the bags. For her sitting-room mantelpiece, Toogood arrayed a deer skull, an 18th-century creamware pitcher, carved Indian alabaster vases and gleaming chunks of iron pyrite. "I find a harmony in those objects," she says. "Of course, when I get a new object, everything has to be rearranged."

Toogood's still-life obsession goes back to her childhood in the English countryside, where she would take disparate objects that she'd found outdoors — rocks, birds' eggs, a piece of broken pottery — and arrange them in her room. She inherited her father's love of nature, its textures and its contrasts of light and dark. Even now in London, Toogood said, the garden behind her house and the nearby New River, a 17th-century aqueduct, are "my escape."

Later, at the University of Bristol, Toogood studied art history, where "you scrutinize still

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OLD IS NEW In the dining room (the door handle is a Toogood design for Izé), Charlotte Perriand's Pivotal lights flank a photograph by Tobias Harvey above the fireplace; the Madea dining chairs by Vittorio Nobili are from the 1950s. Opposite, from left: a 19th-century sofa paired with a 1950s marble Italian table in the back sitting room; oversize wooden coat hooks are used as handles for the kitchen's Ikea cabinets.

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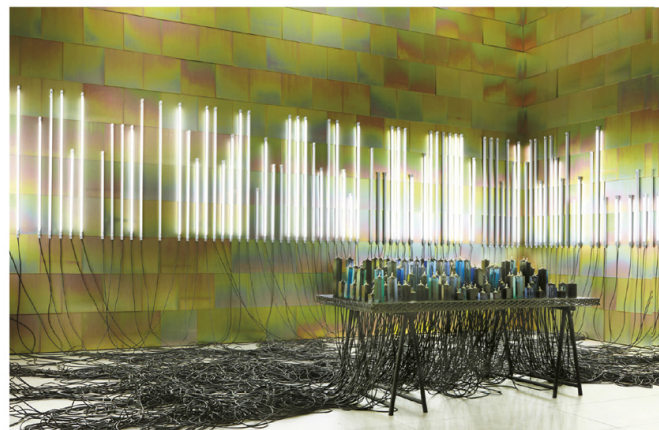
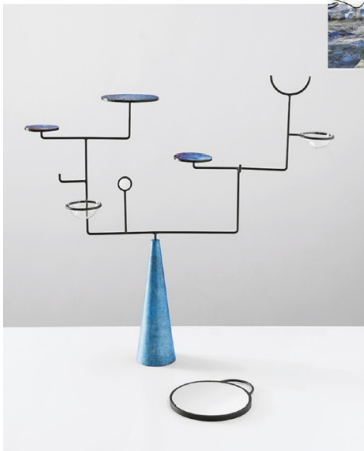
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The hallmark of Toogood's work — whether it's a chair, a coat, a retail space or a performance piece — is what she calls 'the combination of the unexpected and the theatrical with something tactile or handmade, even painterly.'



ART AND CRAFT
Clockwise from top left: Among Toogood's projects are Browns Focus in London, where she designed an all-white space accented by boucherouite rugs; her limited-edition Bronze Bowl; Toogood making workers' coats at the London Design Festival 2012; the Conductor, an interactive light installation, in which a bank of resin-encased toggle switches control a wall of fluorescent lights, for Established & Sons at the London Design Festival 2013; her Alter Piece jewelry stand of bronze, steel and glass. Toogood's furniture and objects are available at fayetogood.com.



OPPOSITE: BROWNS FOCUS; TOP: PORY VAN MELLEGEN; THIS PAGE: LA CURA; ALESSIO MERO; MARIA MACAR; COLLECTION; MARIUS W. HANSEN; TOM DIXON; TOM MANNING; COURTESY WWW.TOMDIXON.NET.

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FORM AND FUNCTION
Clockwise from top left: Toogood's ash Spade chair fuses the forms of a milking stool and spade handle; "La Cura," a performance piece in Milan last year, invited visitors to make clay forms that were then put together to create a communal sculpture; a look book

image from Collection 001 of tradesmen-inspired coats, designed by Toogood and her sister Erica; giant multicolored letters for the 2011 Kenzo fashion show in Paris; Toogood styled Tom Dixon's Mirror Ball Lights with silvery ductwork for his catalog.





lives and compositions,” and fine arts, honing visual skills that would be nurtured under Hogg’s tutelage at *The World of Interiors*. Hogg believed, Toogood explains, “that the interior of a 13th-century chapel in Italy, a mud hut in Africa and a squat in East London are all of equal beauty and value. She also taught me things like how important it is to be independent in spirit.”

It was at the magazine that Toogood met her husband, Matt Gibberd, who wrote about architecture and was Toogood’s editor; the two married in 2008. Gibberd went on to co-found the Modern House, a real-estate agency that specializes in Modernist and contemporary houses and apartments in Britain. “Matt grew up in a minimalist environment,” Toogood says. (His father and grandfather were architects.) When she told him she wanted to paint parts of

their house a glossy deep blue, he assented, but with reservations. “So we agreed that some rooms should be light,” she says.

When the pair bought their house in Islington about five years ago, it was, she says, “a typical London house: little rooms stacked one on top of the other.” After stripping the wood floors of layers of yellowed varnish and painting the rooms in a moody palette of grays, blues and whites — colors that “remind me of the English landscape,” she said — Toogood filled the house with her idiosyncratic collections of furniture, art and objects. As in all her work, Toogood’s taste in these elements runs toward the clean-lined and minimally adorned, like the 18th-century blue and white slipware dish on the mantelpiece in the back sitting room. “It looks 1950s to me,” she says. “I love things that are really old but look modern.” ■

Whether the project at hand is a pop-up shop or the rooms of her house, Toogood sees herself as an obsessive tinkerer whose taste in objects runs toward the clean-lined and minimally adorned. ‘I love things that are really old but look modern.’



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MOODY BLUES The bathroom's handmade Moroccan tiles were set one by one; a junk-store stoneware pumpkin next to a Victorian tub. Opposite, counterclockwise from top: a Ben Nicholson print hangs in the master bedroom; the room also contains an antique French bistro mirror; the garden, which was designed with Paul Gazerwitz of del Buono Gazerwitz, frames Toogood's Spade chairs in cast aluminum and Concrete Bowl.

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