



A few FAVOURITES

Antiques dealer Jamie Allpress looks back on some of his most memorable projects over the years and the connections he has made as a result

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Since opening my store in Melbourne 25 years ago, I have had many memorable experiences. The first was in 1992 when I was asked to restore the interior of Invergowrie in Shakespeare Grove, Hawthorn. I remember saying to then-owner, Jacky Taranto, "I'll call by and if the job isn't too big, I'll happily give you some tips to do it yourself." Well, stripping and re-French polishing the entire interior of this beautiful home was my first big job. It gave me a lot of pleasure and getting to know Jacky, a very special man, was a bonus. During this job, I also met one of my best friends, Daniel Dadian, a wonderful interior painter and a man who became the

greatest friend one could wish for. Daniel is the godfather of our youngest son, Luke. In those early years in business, I restored many interiors and several staircases. One was exceptional, belonging to Greg and Katie, in Gipps Street, east Melbourne. I organised for a few friends to strip the paint from two floors of cedar. This was done after hours so the daytime tradesmen wouldn't get in the way. This was around the time my daughter Alexandra, now 21, was born. These experiences continued over the years, but retail and dressing interiors with customers or assisting interior designers was what I was increasingly drawn to. In 2010, I re-dressed The Johnston



Opposite top: Oak and fruitwood furnished dining room, wall with modern framed Johann Wilhelm Weinman 1736 (first colour botanical print)
Opposite bottom: Exceptional C18th English yew-wood triple bowed Windsor armchair on cabriole legs and a framed first edition Basil Besler 1613
Top: The Johnston Collection re-dressing 2010 - Green drawing room
Right: The Johnston Collection - Yellow room

Collection in east Melbourne, one of the highlights of my career and an absolute pleasure. Looking into the history of William Robert Johnston, and hearing of his buying and selling techniques, I felt quite a connection with him in many ways. I dressed his beautiful home with his beautiful belongings and travelled to The Stables at Government House, selecting what was to remain and what was to come into my display. Bridget Evans, one of my long-term associates in my showrooms, assisted me and gave me many ideas for my display. One was painting out all of the dark green sconces in the kitchen and only using the Staffordshire animals in the kitchen — a great idea. One of the rooms I named the serpentine room, as a majority of the chests and tables I used were serpentine shaped. I really enjoyed dressing this room and Bridget once again assisted with the smalls. She also suggested using mainly all-black ceramics and bronzes.





Top: Verso of green drawing room
Middle left: C18th English country oak wine table 1790 with Weineman 1736 above to the rear C18th English burr-elm chest of drawers 1780 and above Drakestein 1686
Middle right: Brighton home 2012 C18th English country Hepplewhite fruitwood modern upholstered occasional chair 1770
Bottom: The Johnston Collection - Sitting Room (Jamie's Serpentine room)
Opposite top: Yellow room
Opposite middle: Elwood on the canal - Dining room
Opposite bottom: Brighton home - C19th French fruitwood farmhouse table 1820, looking great with a set of white modern chairs



In 2009, some customers were selling their home in Elwood on the canal and I was asked to advise on modifying their interior and then to dress their home to make it look more appealing to the younger market. I suggested removing doors and carpets and re-painting in a lighter tone to open up and brighten the home. Then there was the chore of thinning out the contents and bringing in important decorative items from my stock, furniture and art. The sale was very successful and the owners say my adjustments and improvements gave them about \$200,000 more than expected.

Over the years in business, you meet many talented people and those you bond with tend to stay with you throughout your career. An exceptional picture framer, Vicki Hutchins, helps me choose all of my framing. I get the credit for her fantastic suggestions, but hey, someone's got to get it.

I have done many art walls and rooms and, in one case, a complete home in art, plus a few items of furniture. The Lansell Road home, from 2012, was thoroughly enjoyable and again was once a story in this magazine. It's nice when a customer says, "Jamie, take a look through our home and you decide what you would like to see on our walls and the floor." When you do so and it's a hit, these are the moments in business that are most rewarding.

Soon after that we photographed the Orrong Road home, another special project filled with my rare Johann Weinemanns.

I've worked with some fabulous interior designers over the years. Stuart Rattle was fantastic, bless his soul. Then there's Jo Archibald (of Decollo Interior Design), Barbara and Alexandra Brownlow (of Brownlow Interior Design), Adelaide



Bragg & Associates and many more. These interior designers are inspirational and do an excellent job in helping people create beautiful home interiors.

A few years ago, some good friends allowed me to dress their home for a day — a Robert Simeoni-designed home in Brighton. This was also an enjoyable experience. Placing selected pieces in a modern home that was already furnished in a contemporary style was quite daunting, to be honest. However, I persisted and it went very well. So well that I have used many of the photographs in my advertising since then and the home is now the location for all of my ad shoots as it's a good modern setting. Showing well-selected antiques in a stunning modern environment creates a unique look and style. This is where I believe antiques need to be shown — in more contemporary surroundings.

Taking part in antique fairs over the past 25 years has also been a great promotion for my business — from Caulfield back in 1993 to Malvern Town Hall through the '90s, The Royal Exhibition Buildings, Sydney's Fox Studios, Wharf 8 and now Randwick Racecourse.

Looking forward, after 25 years in retail, I have decided to change my downstairs showroom into a dual complete room display. This will mean making a movable central wall so I can do complete room settings, with sideboard, dining table, rugs and wall dressings, from the 16th century to contemporary. It's basically everything needed for a room, even down to the matching napkins. I may use contemporary furnishings at times; if selected well, they can look fantastic when matched with the best antiques. I will be inviting some of Australia's leading interior designers to join me in creating these fabulous displays.

I look forward to seeing you all in my showrooms, at antique fairs, or inside your own beautiful homes when placing that special piece.

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