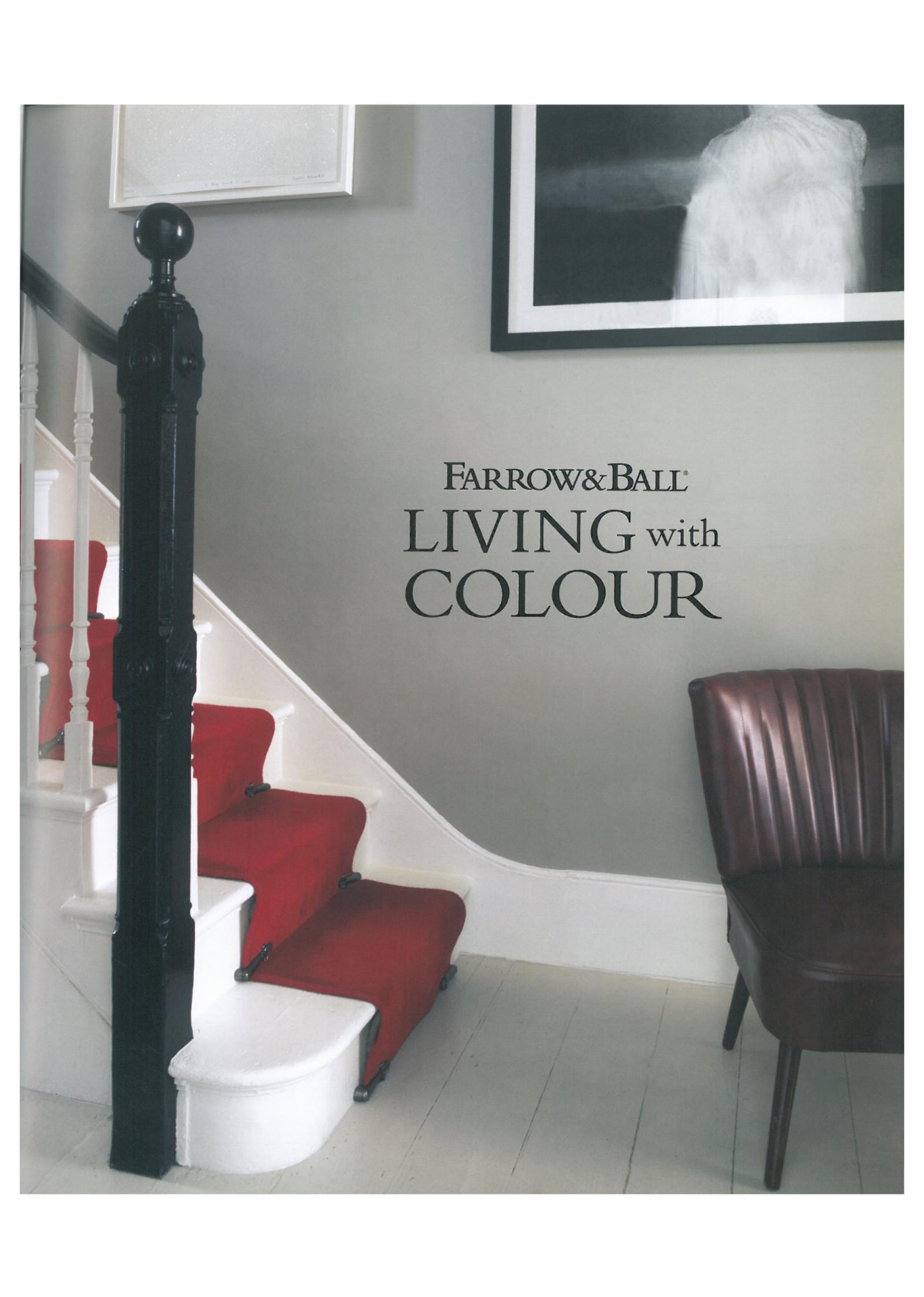


Ros Byam Shaw

FARROW & BALL®  
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COLOUR

photography by  
Jan Baldwin



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# INTRODUCTION

This is a book about a particular kind of paint. It is about the company that makes this paint and about the people who choose it. It is also an exploration of what makes it unique and why it has such a loyal following. It shows how people have used it and the wallpapers that are made with it, in all manner of inventive and creative ways; in every style from poised minimalism to comfortable country house. Farrow & Ball is the company and its products are the common denominator in every story and photograph on the following pages.

Farrow & Ball paint is easy to spot even without the help of a label. First there are the colours: inimitable tones of off-white, stone and taupe, misty greys and blues, elusive greens, dusty pinks and so on for 132 shades of every stripe in the rainbow. Not one is harsh, obvious or bland. All are what you might call 'off-colours', knocked back and subtle – the sort you could stare at for a long time, colours you could happily set up home with. The same paint in the same choice of colours is used for the wallpapers, making them just as distinctive and instantly recognizable.

Much of Farrow & Ball's range is based on precedent – recreations of paint colours discovered during the restoration and conservation of historic buildings. Until the 18th century, when a wider choice of affordable pigments started to become available, colours came largely in the form of earth pigments such as ochre and umber. These formed the basis of the 'drab' palette typical of 16th- and 17th-century interiors, translated for modern use by Farrow & Ball into chic, fashionable neutrals such as 'String' or 'Olive'. By the 18th and 19th centuries

brighter blues, yellows, greens and reds were available and these too are reflected in the modern paints; 'India Yellow' for example, originally made by reducing the urine of cows fed on mango leaves, and 'Stone Blue', which was made using indigo.

Reviving period colours is a romantic notion that appeals to our fondness for the past and reverence for its aesthetics. But there is much more to Farrow & Ball than nostalgia. Their paints are equally appreciated by cutting-edge architects and





**THIS PAGE** *The hall of Jo Berryman's terraced house is in graphic monochrome, throwing into sharp relief the hot red stripe of stair carpet. Throughout the house she has painted the Victorian floorboards 'Cornforth White' and used 'Pointing' for doors, skirting boards and here for the stairs. Walls are 'Hardwick White' and it is interesting to see how the different shades of off-white work together, making 'Pointing' look brighter and 'Hardwick White' darker than they would in another context.*



**LEFT** The wall behind the kitchen units is 'Dauphin', a colour based on an 18th-century earth pigment, here looking as chic and contemporary as a Stella McCartney suit. Highlights of red – in this room the lacquered kitchen chairs, the gingham tablecloth and the numbered storage jars – continue a theme that begins in the entrance hall. This is a clever combination of a rich colour that advances towards the eye, against backgrounds of receding neutrals.

**BELOW** The kitchen is incredibly light, thanks to the double-height glass extension at the back of the house, and opens into the more enclosed, intimate space of the family room with its traditional arrangement of a sofa and chairs around a fireplace. Walls and ceiling are in 'Pointing' and more warm reds are introduced in the rug and the vase of roses. Dolly makes herself comfortable on an armchair.

## PRETTY CHIC

Fans of Farrow & Ball come in all shapes and sizes – Jo Berryman is a particularly glamorous version. Young, extremely pretty and formerly married to the bassist of a super group, she has worked her way through fashion styling on magazines, followed by running a fashion boutique in Marylebone, to a career in interior design. She is currently working on the interior of a hip London teaspace in collaboration with designer Danielle Proud and on the decoration of a folly in Gloucestershire.

'It's been an organic progression,' she muses. 'I still love fashion, although I did become a bit disaffected. Interior design is so much more durable and seems to tap into something instinctual. I see it in my three-year-old daughter Nico who is always making little pockets of space for herself. I guess what I am doing is the grown-up equivalent of creating a den under the table.'

Jo's North London den is both playful and sophisticated; a Victorian terraced house with fancy cornices, panelled doors and marble fireplaces, brought up to date with the addition of a two-storey glass extension and the subtraction of internal walls, giving the ground and lower ground floors an open-plan airiness and informality. Popping with colour and bathed in light, furnishings are a mix of retro and classic, traditional and unexpected. Linking all the spaces are floorboards painted in 'Cornforth White' and woodwork in 'Pointing'.



'I have always used Farrow & Ball paints,' says Jo. 'I am drawn to the absurd names and the colours have a muted quality that really seems to flatter the architecture of a house. I am quite visionary when it comes to choosing colour. I knew for example that the pillar-box red stair carpet would look amazing with the 'Hardwick White' walls. And I don't mind experimenting – let's try a bit of 'Dead Salmon' – it's such fun and you can always paint over it.'

Jo has recently discovered Farrow & Ball wallpapers. 'As soon as I saw "Bamboo" I thought, "this is going to be one of those iconic designs that will last forever". It reminds me of my childhood in Hong Kong, but also fits antiques and that eclectic, slightly eccentric British style of interior design I love.' She has used it in two different rooms to strikingly different effect. At the far end of the hall with its graphic monochrome paintwork, it lines a 'womb-like' study area where it matches the shelving painted in glossy 'Rectory Red' and echoes the red stair carpet, pulling the eye down the hall as soon as you step over the threshold.



**ABOVE** The monochrome colour scheme of the entrance hall continues up two flights of stairs, feminized on the way up by a pretty 18th-century French-style chair and a needlepoint cushion embroidered with flowers. The scarlet stair carpet is confined to the stairs themselves, leaving landings in plain 'Cornforth White', giving emphasis to the red and white stripe of carpet and floorboards.

**LEFT** Opening off the hall is a more formal double sitting room, originally two reception rooms each with its own marble fireplace, now knocked into one. A desk sits against what was once the back wall of the house, overlooking the kitchen, which is accommodated in a double-height glass extension. 'Cornforth White' floorboards and walls in 'Pointing' provide a quiet backdrop to a vibrant colour scheme of blue and yellow.

**RIGHT** At the top of the house, this spare bedroom is a glamorous boudoir. Its sophisticated furnishings include a modern four-poster bed, an antique bergere upholstered in a muted damask, an Edwardian mirror and a zebra-skin rug, set off by walls in elegant 'French Gray'.



'Bamboo' appears again on the first floor, in a completely different guise. This floor, once three separate rooms, has been opened into a single space to make Jo's open-plan bedroom, bathroom and walk-in dressing room, with an elegant boat-shaped metal bathtub placed centre stage in the window of what was the front room, the bed next to the window

overlooking the garden at the back and the dressing room round the corner again at the front. Walls are 'Card Room Green', a restrained, refined shade. 'You can see wonderful sunrises from this room and I love the way the colour of the walls changes with the light and with the seasons,' Jo enthuses. 'It has real warmth and almost seems to pulsate. A little while



**RIGHT** The first floor is Jo's private domain, opened into a single space from front to back of the house to make a large bedroom with a bath at one end and a bed at the other. Walls are 'Card Room Green' and recently Jo gave the room 'a lift' by papering one wall in 'Bamboo'.



ago, I decided that the room needed a bit of a lift, so I wallpapered the wall above the bed with more of my favourite "Bamboo", this time in neutral shades of honey. The bedhead is upholstered in a jacquard leopard print from Savoir Beds and the combination is a little bit suburban bordello!' she giggles. 'But it adds to that sense of luxury and to the comfort and coziness that is very important to me.'

Probably the coziest room of all is the ground floor family room that leads off the kitchen. Here, a buttoned Chesterfield sofa upholstered in grey velvet and two buttoned armchairs, one frequently occupied by Dolly, family dog and expert burglar deterrent, are gathered on a rug around the fireplace. Jo likes to describe her home as 'a museum of the self' and says that every week she 'curates a display' on this particular mantelpiece. 'Depending on the mood I'm in it might be positively brimming with objects, while at other times I might choose a single object for impact, perhaps a doll's head or a crystallized skull. But everything has a meaning for me. It's not just done for effect, it's eclectic with a purpose.'

**LEFT** A freestanding bath sits in the bay window at the front of the house, privacy provided by shutters at night and an antique screen by day. A walk-in dressing room leads off the

bathroom end of this girly retreat and the open fire adds to the feel of elegant luxury. As in other parts of the house, the floorboards are 'Cornforth White' and the woodwork 'Pointing'.

