

KATHARINE POOLEY

MY STYLE IS QUINTESSENTIALLY BRITISH: UNDERSTATED LUXURY WITHOUT SACRIFICING COMFORT OR COHERENCE.

An innate sense of adventure, a love of history, and multicultural influences form the foundation of Katharine Pooley's design aesthetics and philosophy. The London-based interior designer has visited more than 250 countries, driven a team of sled dogs to the North Pole, crossed the Sahara on horseback, and restored a 450-year-old Scottish castle. The castle that she shares with her family and siblings was originally built in 1560 by the Ogilvys of Airlie. Eighty years after construction, Forter Castle, as it is now known, was destroyed by the Campbells of Argyll as a result of feuding between the clans. The castle lay in ruins for more than three hundred years before Robert Pooley and his daughter Katharine resurrected the pile of rubble. "My father had driven past the crumbling castle for thirty years, always dreaming of restoring a small piece of Scottish history," she recalls.

From the beginning, the father-daughter duo worked closely with Scottish Heritage. An oak tree growing in the center of the derelict house first had to be removed, and the missing roof restored. During early stages of restoration, the underlying flagstone floor was discovered amid the wreckage, offering clues to the original structure. After two years of meticulous renovations, Katharine took over the interiors, carefully restoring each room. "It was important for me to understand and marry cultural influences and local history." Swords, their coat of arms, wool rugs, and the family tartan now grace the thick stone-walled rooms. The Great Hall, spanning the width of the first floor, boasts a vast stone fireplace, mahogany bookcases, and a dining table that seats sixteen. Oil paintings, oversized tapestries, and intricate murals evoke the past and trace the castle's visual history. An elaborate painted ceiling mural depicts the traditional Scottish song "The Bonnie House of Airlie." Katharine commissioned artist Jenny Merredew to create the mural in the tradition of many local historic buildings. The ballad recalls the destruction of Forter Castle. For amusement Katherine's brother, Sebastian, often sings the ballad at family gatherings.

DECORATIVE DETAILS Family heirlooms not only tell a great story but also bring a home to life. I particularly adore the exquisite hand-painted ceiling in the Great Hall depicting the castle's fascinating history. Personal relics are fundamental, as are photographs, books, and artwork. Most everything around me has been collected over time. For beauty and comfort, I will never forgo cashmere throws.





A narrow spiral staircase leads to five bedrooms named after Katharine's siblings and the spectacular Laird's Room with dramatic views of the Highlands—a retreat unto itself. Originally two rooms, it is now one large space with the same dimensions as the Great Hall, dominated by a four-poster bed and a freestanding roll-top bath hidden behind folding screens. The castle's tight twisting staircase, while charming, proved less than ideal when re-locating furnishings. A few things "got stuck," prompting a call to a nearby antiques dealer. A couple of pieces had to be cut in half

and clamped together again. "One thing I have learned," says Katharine, "if you have the will you will find a way to make things work."

When not dividing time between London and Oxfordshire, Katharine and her family are quick to return to Scotland. Time away includes no Internet access, and cooking, playing games, reading, walking, and enjoying the simple things in life. It's a dwelling where she feels instantly happy and relaxed.

MAKING AN ENTRANCE A welcoming focal point that draws people into a home is something we all desire, but I also think that a magnificent front door is hugely important. An entrance offers visitors a first impression of your home. I love a door with strong character that comes as a result of great craftsmanship. When you enter Forter, warm colors and wool tartan rugs create a cozy ambiance, an especially important quality in cold climates.

FLOWERS AND FRAGRANCES Nothing can replace the refreshing vibrancy of flowers. I gravitate toward classic white flowers with a fresh, sophisticated feel. White peonies are a favorite for both scent and sight; I also fill my home with the smell and warmth of candles. When I created Katharine Pooley candles for my boutique in London, we infused each with some of my most treasured scents—jasmine, water lilies, and green orchid.

A BEAUTIFUL BED The bedroom must be a comfortable, calm, and welcoming retreat at the end of the day. The ultimate bedroom accessory is wonderful linens with beautiful detailing. Bespoke details give the bed a truly unique look and are worth the investment—not to mention that quality linen ages beautifully and can be handed down through generations. Crisp white linen layered with wonderfully textured pillows and a plush beautiful blanket is perfect for chilly nights.

ENTERTAINING THOUGHTS I am a big fan of entertaining at home and I love classic aperitifs and nibbles. Nothing compares to relaxing with loved ones of all ages, eating delicious food, and drinking wonderful wines. Soft lighting, great music, and glowing candles always make guests feel relaxed and at ease. My idea of true luxury is hiring a chef to come to my home and cook up a fantastic feast for very special occasions.

