

A Life In Design

STAFFAN TOLLGÅRD

The husband-and-wife design duo on investment pieces and designing homes to be genuinely lived in



Words / Fiona McCarthy

Staffan and Monique Tollgård first met while working on a film set – Staffan as first assistant director, Monique as an actress, before both decided to retrain in interior design. Establishing Staffan Tollgård in 2005, they now operate out of a stunning design store-meets-studio space in London's Pimlico, working on large-scale domestic renovations in the city as well as further afield in Switzerland and California. Alongside Staffan's own designs, the company represents brands such as Finn Juhl, Bocci, Porro and Mood. Here, Swedish-born Staffan shares his style secrets...

How did you get started in interior design?

After completing a post-grad degree in interior design at London's InChbald School of Design, I worked for a year at architect/designer Rabih Hage's studio before setting up on my own in 2005 with a house renovation in Chelsea. Monique then left her job in TV production to do a shorter course at the InChbald, joining me as a junior interior designer ten years ago.

Describe your signature style.

It's bold without being brash, clean but not minimal, rich in texture or colour, but often not both. I don't like design that

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Staffan is a fan of the vintage-style lights by New York-based Apparatus Studio, such as these Lariat etched-glass teardrop sconces, £1,980 each; a family home in Knightsbridge gets the Staffan Tollgård treatment and is richly layered with an eclectic art collection; Staffan is inspired by timeless mid-century designs, including this T-back chair, £2,700, by Milo Baughman for Thayer Coggin, available at the Staffan Tollgård Design Store



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Staffan's style - 'bold without being brash' - is epitomised by this Oscar sideboard, from £11,250, Giorgetti, and *No Title 2* (portfolio with four lithographs) by Mark Francis, £4,500 unframed, all available at the Staffan Tollgård Design Store; Staffan Tollgård's vivid redesign for a home in Bayswater with standout sculpture; Finn Juhl, one of Staffan's heroes, designed the Poet sofa, £6,675, available at the Staffan Tollgård Design Store

[P.S]

Who's on your dream dinner-party guest list?
 Staffan: My grandfather - I never met him and my father has always spoken highly of him - plus Robin Williams, Andy Warhol, John Lennon, Amelia Earhart, Audrey Hepburn, Nina Simone and Coco Chanel.

What was the first thing you bought for your home?
 For our first joint home, Monique and I bought a three-metre tall, Fifties Swedish ad poster.

What would you save if your house was on fire?
 A few paintings and the kids' drawings - most other things can be replaced.

What is your favourite hotel or design destination?
 Hotel - Amanpuri, Thailand. Design destination - Milan for the Design Fair. Also Japan because it's just so different that I can't help thinking about everything I see and how it could influence a new piece of design.

What was the last book you read?
 Staffan: *Bream Gives Me Hiccups* by Jesse Eisenberg. Monique: *The Luminaries* by Eleanor Catton.



FROM THIS PICTURE The light-filled Staffan Tollgård showroom at Grosvenor Waterside in Chelsea, London; and the shimmering iron and copper Yoroi console table, £13,964, De Castelli, available at the Staffan Tollgård Design Store



steel chairs (he's a former sculptor and they're the perfect marriage of function and form). I'm as drawn to the material as I am to how many man-hours it takes to make them.

What's inspiring you right now?

The timeless lines and quality materials of mid-century design - I like how a Finn Juhl Chieftains armchair still tells a unique story in a modern setting. The sophisticated coolness of Milo Baughman's designs are being brought back into production by Thayer Coggin and still made exactly the same way they were 50 years ago. Angelo Mangiarotti's stone tables are like functional sculptures, while Apparatus uses vintage lighting components in beautiful materials, including metal, leather, glass and marble. We are big fans.

What are your current projects?

We're working on some family homes in Jordan and the Algarve, mixing old with new, and a bold project in Riyadh with very few internal doors and views through the house, which is quite counter-cultural there. I'm also involved in a capsule furniture collection, combining solid wood with a very 21st-century aesthetic for an Italian manufacturer, and lighting for Contardi.

Is there a space you dream of designing?

Monique and I are both crazy keen skiers, so a chalet somewhere very remote would be a dream project for us. It would be a true escape to the wilderness with a real connection to the environment - I'd use local, rustic materials with leather and metal (the opposite to the ski chalets made from the wall-to-wall-to-floor pine that I grew up with), but worked in a very contemporary, minimal way, with tall glass doors opening out to the elements.

When do you throw out the rule book?

Why does the second best room in the house have to be the spare bedroom? How often do people use it? It's such a waste - work out the 'heat map' of where you really spend time in your home, wire rooms for resale and then be selfish. Turn that spare bedroom into a walk-in wardrobe, don't put the study in the worst room so you end up on the sofa with your laptop instead. Enjoy your home as you want to live now - you're allowed to dream a little.

For more information, check out tollgard.co.uk

story are you telling with the colours, objects and furniture you use, how do you like to entertain, are you a little chaotic or organised? We can become a bit blind to things we see every day, so friends will see things you'll not know about yourself.

How do you devise a colour palette?

We choose one or two patterned fabrics (maybe for cushions), or look to a rug or piece of art and then draw out a colour link from that - upholstering an armchair or stool in a bold block of colour makes a great contrast to natural materials, such as wood, stone and leather.

What's worth investing in?

Look at the big picture to work out what's most important and spend accordingly - if you spend too much on one thing, you have to compromise on everything else. For example, work with a reasonably priced, pared-back kitchen and spend money on what's at eye level, such as a really beautiful stone splashback. Going to a stone yard to pick your own slab is like choosing a painting. It will make the kitchen personal, but it's practical too.

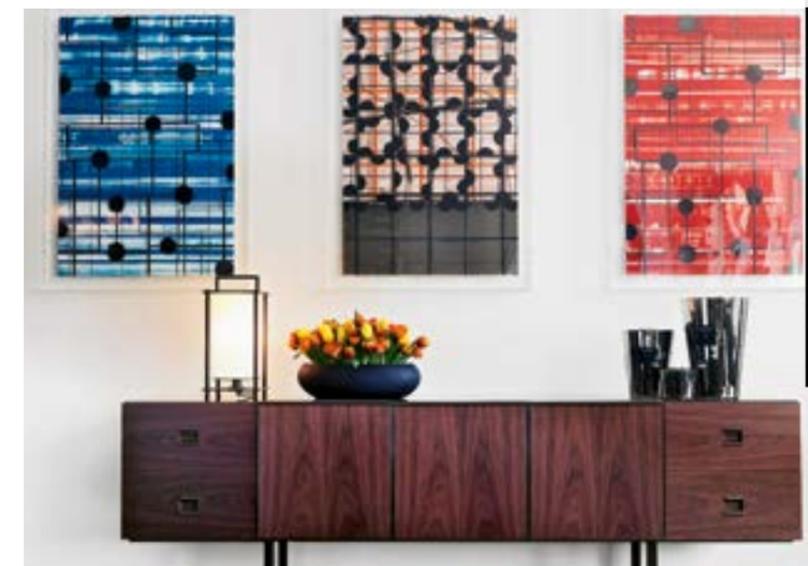
Any favourite design tricks?

I like wall cladding - it's both sound-absorbent and lends texture without needing to use lots of colour. It works on the front doors of furniture too. I like Élitis wallpapers and De Castelli produces great metal for walls. I've recently been playing with leather tiles from Alphenberg Leather - the company brushes, colours and then backs real hides to make the tiles all the same thickness before laser-cutting them into perfect tiles.

What's your idea of luxury?

Pieces made with great craftsmanship - like Mark Albrecht's

PHOTOGRAPHY (HOUSE AND SHOWROOM) RICHARD GOODING; (SIDEBOARD, SOFA, METAL FINISH, TABLE AND CONSOLE TABLE) COURTESY OF GIORGETTI, FINN JUHL, DE CASTELLI AND AGAPECASA FOR CONTACTS, SEE LIFESTYLEETC.CO.UK/STOCKISTS



CLOCKWISE FROM THIS PICTURE One of Staffan's top tricks is to use wall cladding, such as these exquisite metal finishes by De Castelli, to add texture; his scheme for a kitchen in Belgravia included a sleek granite breakfast bar from Eggersmann; and the gravity-defying marble Eccentrico table, £3,132, by Angelo Mangiarotti for AgapeCasa, available at the Staffan Tollgård Design Store - a Staffan favourite

shouts at you - it's okay for a restaurant or hotel to turn up the volume, but at home, it gets tired quickly. I like the homes we design to feel calm and tidy, but genuinely lived in.

Tell us about your design process...

I start with what I call a 'red thread' - like laying a trail of breadcrumbs through a design, it provides a framework for each new project so I stay on track. I look for something important to the client - maybe an heirloom, a piece of art they can't live without, a collection of objects amassed over time, or even the location of the house (maybe it's the view or the history of the building) - and use this as the start of the story. It really helps because there are so many great ideas and suppliers to choose from, it can become confusing, so I hold up each new idea against the 'red thread' to see if it adds to the story. If it does, I draw it in; if it doesn't, I let it go.

How could readers find their 'red thread'?

Ask friends how they feel when they visit your home - what