

STYLE

16 OCTOBER 2011

THE SUNDAY TIMES

**YOU'RE GETTING
WARMER**
FASHION'S
HOTTEST COATS

SILENT SISTERHOOD
WHO'S SPEAKING
UP FOR THE FULL
TIME MUM?

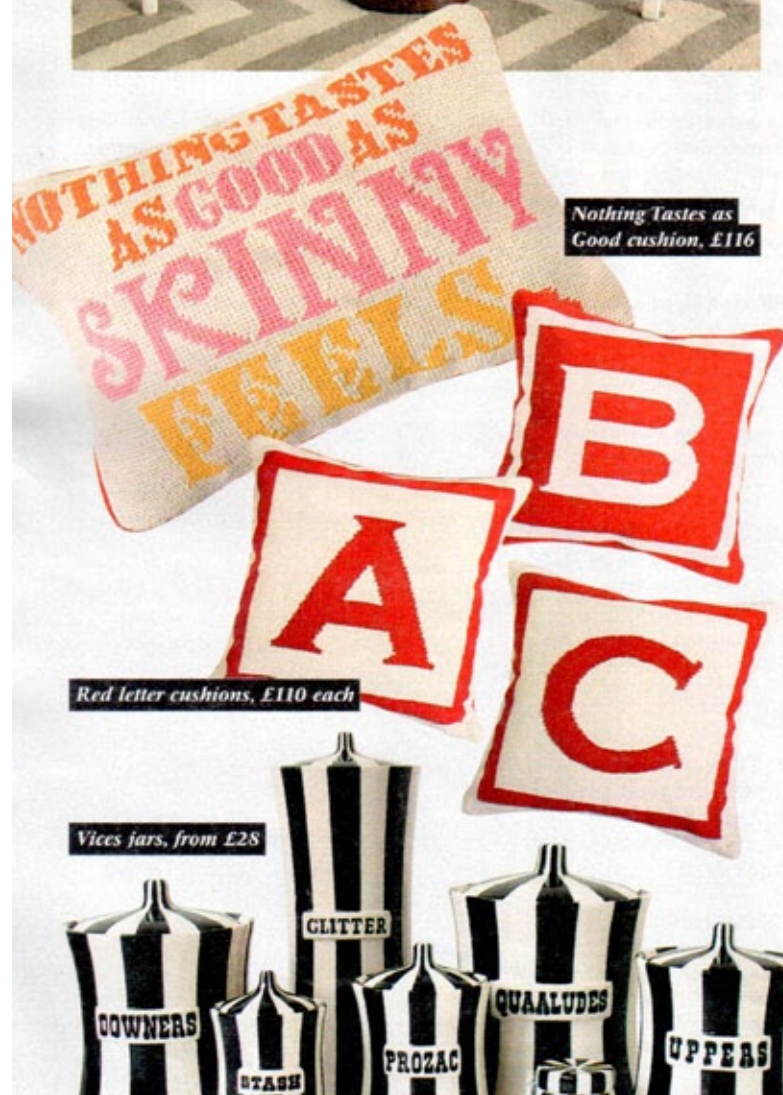
*SPIRITUAL
AWAKENING*
HOW NEW AGE
CAME OF AGE

SHOE *Fetish*

CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN EXPLAINS

THE PAIN AND THE PLEASURE

Adler's interiors mix slick New York style with bright retro touches



Nothing Tastes as Good as Skinny Feels cushion, £116

Red letter cushions, £110 each

Vices jars, from £28

Chelsea has long been synonymous with interior design. The boutiques lining the streets of SW3 and SW10 read like a roll call of the great and good of well-to-do decoration, from Kelly Hoppen's wall-to-wall taupe to Christian Liaigre's monochrome minimalism. This is the stomping ground of toffish decorators and their *grande dame* clients, who eat swags and tails for breakfast. With its swathes of chintz and the distinct rustle of taffeta, this world could hardly be called subversive. Yet this is all about to change with the opening, this week, of the maverick American designer Jonathan Adler's first British outpost.

Adler's aesthetic is about as far as you can get from the pomp and circumstance of Chelsea. It's all bright Club Tropicana colours, blingy metallic finishes and irreverent mottos on needlepoint cushions, an enclave of louche Palm Springs style in London's stiffest neighbourhood. "I've been an Anglophile my whole life," he says, lounging on a silvery linen velvet sofa in the new store on Sloane Avenue. "London is the most exciting international city, and British design has always meant a lot to me."

Fortunately, he knows the territory well and has an insider's view, thanks to his British partner of 16 years, Simon Doonan, the writer and creative director of Barneys New York. Adler can gossip easily about everything from David Cameron — "I like my politicians frumpy, not stylish. I want dandruff, yellowed shirts and crumbs. He's a bit too young and fine-looking, it makes me nervous" — to the British love of soft furnishings. "It's like everybody is just curtain-crazed over here," he chuckles. "However, I've learnt that posh people only say 'curtains' — you must never say 'drapery' or 'window treatment'."

On the other side of the Atlantic, Adler is a household name. He's the humble potter who transformed his hobby into a nationwide multimillion-dollar enterprise, and now produces everything from fabulous furniture to coffee-table books full of his glamorous interiors. In 1994, after a short-lived attempt to break into the movie business, he fell back on his love of ceramics and tried to turn it into a career. "I was working in a shared studio, teaching classes at night to pay for the space and the clay," he says of his modest beginnings. "I had no business sense. I just invested what I made and hoped it would grow organically."

His high-camp, high-energy look, mixing retro influences and heaps of humour, has taken the stuffy American interiors market by storm. It's no surprise that the man behind ceramic jars with labels such as "disco biscuits" and "downers" is bursting with exuberant wit, and thousands follow his Adlerisms on Twitter. Pithy sayings such as "Replace Prozac with perky pop patterns" and "Use decorating to cure psychological wounds" have turned him into a deco version of Oscar Wilde.

How the chichi clientele of Chelsea will take to Adler's cocky approach and the eye-wateringly expensive price tags on much of the collection, not to mention his phallic golden bananas, has yet to be seen, but he feels that if anyone will get his sense of humour, it will be the British. "I have an irreverent sensibility, and I think that you guys understand — better than Americans do, perhaps — how things can exist on different levels, how you can be cheeky but serious at the same time." ●

Jonathan Adler, 60 Sloane Avenue, SW3; uk.jonathanadler.com

LIFE
STYLE
INTERIORS

Utopia teapot, £95,
brass banana, £595,
and lacquer cubes,
from £150

JONATHAN ADLER, NEW
YORK'S QUIRKIEST
DESIGNER, IS FINALLY
BRINGING HIS WITTY
HOMEWARES TO BRITAIN

HOT TO POT

WORDS BEN SPRIGGS
PHOTOGRAPH MARK C O'FLAHERTY

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