



# CHARLOTTE COOTE

PORTRAIT *Marcel Aucar* PHOTOGRAPHY *Lisa Cohen*

Immersed in the beautiful world of interior design all her life, Charlotte Coote's classic and contemporary looks are recognised globally. With an affinity for richly layered furnishings in a spectrum of palettes and patterns, her interiors evoke a timeless appeal without bowing to trends. Charlotte now opens her own iconic home, Marnanie, in Victoria's Mount Macedon, for special design events.

***Did where you grew up or your family home have an impact on your work in the design industry?***

I was born in Australia but was lucky to spend my primary school years living in Ireland in a beautiful Palladian-inspired Georgian villa called Bellamont Forest. Built in 1729, it was designed by architect Sir Edward Lovett Pearce. I lived there with my interior designer father, John Coote, and my mother, Andrea Coote, who later became a member of parliament in Australia. These were formative years where I was able to experience and be influenced by different forms of architecture, design and culture. This diversity really helped shape the way I now think and create as an interior designer.

***Who have been your style mentors – whether people you worked with or admired from afar?*** Trailblazing 20th-century interior designers: Nancy Lancaster, Billy Baldwin, Syrie Maugham, Sibyl Colefax, Elsie De Wolf and David Hicks. People: Diana Vreeland had pearls of wisdom on style. Music to listen to when I work: Maria Callas, Billie Holiday or baroque. Architects: Andrea Palladio, for his villas of the Veneto, a northern Italian region filled with Palladian 16th-century architecture. Instagram: a source of creative inspiration but I value authenticity and original thinking a lot.

***What advice can you recommend for achieving grand results on a limited budget?*** Start by reusing, repurposing or reimagining what you already have. I bought two cane armchairs at auction and they sat in my glasshouse for months. When designing our recent summer Coote&Co windows in Melbourne, we ended up painting them a brilliant Dulux Rousseau Green and they became the authentic heroes of the space. Secondly, buy what you still need at auction. There are bargains to be had if you are strategic. Make a list of what you need, set a budget and stick to it.

***You embrace vintage and upcycle chic – what are some of your favourite pieces you have given new life to?*** I recently bought two 18th-century English shield-back mahogany chairs from Gibson's auction house. They had belonged to my friend and late interior designer Stuart Rattle, whose friends had given them to him as a birthday gift. It was nice to buy them back.

***What are five things you would buy right now, from high to low?*** The Graeme Geddes Antiques 1759 walnut bureau, currently in the Coote&Co window. It is extremely rare and an investment piece, but it is timeless and I imagine using it as my desk at home. Another Robert Doble artwork. I'm eyeing off a fabulous green Fermob bistro table and matching chairs for my garden. Hopewood Interiors has the best elevated premium tableware and I am coveting the bamboo dinner plate in azure, which is handmade in Italy. I want to fill my home with peonies for upcoming entertaining. I love to keep flowers long-stemmed and tend to go for one colour en masse in a generous vase. Large-scale glass vases are a dying breed I love to buy. The world has too many mean vases, I think! @cooteandco



1 Early 18th-century George I walnut bureau cabinet, POA, Graham Geddes Antiques & Antiquities. 2 Envy, 2015, artwork, POA, Robert Doble. 3 Fermob 'Bistro' folding outdoor table, \$780, and chair, \$180, Huset. 4 Azur bamboo dinner plates, \$145/each, Hopewood Interiors. 5 Murano 'Spikey' vase, \$2500, Rachel Donath.



*What are your five essentials for ensuring a room is welcoming and hits the right note? Can you put a drink down without getting up? Can you talk to someone easily who is sitting near you? Is it comfortable? Are the chairs and sofas actually comfortable and not just good looking? And are there sufficient lamps to allow for reading a book? Have you considered the senses? For example, can you light the fire and candles? Also, don't forget plants, trees, greenery and flowers. They bring life and movement to a room. Does the room ultimately represent who you are and what you love? The world doesn't need any more mainstream.*



**LIVING** The scheme for this tonal and richly textured living room was sparked by the Susan Deliss fabric on the ottoman. What followed were shades of complementary and clashing reds and blues, ensconced by paneled walls painted in Resene Cabbage Pont. Framed artworks by unknown artist.



**KITCHEN** For her verdant Marnanie kitchen, Charlotte picked handfuls of leaves from the trees, ferns and shrubs outside to inform the joinery hue, which she named Mount Macedon Green. She paired it with nickel hardware and limestone flooring. A Robert Healy print above the fireplace speaks to the home's idyllic location.

*How did your decorating style evolve – was it through your early career?* It has evolved through experience and listening to my instinct. I think trial and error really sharpens your focus. Years in the industry also helps. I'm now in year 17 of my own business and was trained by my father in his business before that. There are things that I know now about style and decorating, which I didn't back then. And in 10 years' time, I will look back and say the same again. However, I also think it's important not to lose sight of your instinct. Listen to that voice that tells you to choose the blue fret wallpaper over the green. Trusting this further strengthens and develops your style over time.

*“Painting the walls will immediately transform a space. Buy a tin of paint and save on labour.”* Charlotte Coote



**Sum up your signature style. Is there an aesthetic or approach that runs through all your work?** I'm a classicist at heart, but I like to reinvent and reinterpret an idea, to bring a fresh perspective. The saying 'if you want a new idea read an old book' really resonates with me. I produce elevated, generous, and timeless interiors for my clients, and I don't believe in fads. I'm also not afraid of using colour when I need to.



Photography by Marcel Aucar.



“I tend to run a mile if I sense any sort of *trend* or look being rolled out by multiple designers.” *Charlotte Coote*

**BEDROOM** Charlotte's bedroom at Marnanie is clothed in Colefax and Fowler Kendal fabric in Leaf Green, from the bedhead and its four-poster drapes to the lampshades and daybed. Echoing the scheme is a bespoke Coote & Co 'Marnanie' rug. The designer is a believer in creating visual impact by using a singular hero textile en masse throughout a space, or by layering multiple shades of a colour with bold strokes. These approaches have given many of her interiors their distinct stylistic signature.



*Which homewares can you save on to get a luxe look for less?* With an educated eye and a bit of research, I really think one can clean up at the auction houses. It also means we are lighter on our planet, which is a big win.

*Which timeless furniture pieces or homewares would you always invest in?* Premium bedlinen and a quality hand-sprung sofa. Handmade anything. And I don't do fake flowers. Ever.

**ENTRY** At Marnanie's entrance, a crisp Coote & Co 'Blackwater' console stands proud beside an antique Chinese chair and two framed prints of Robert Healy's 18th-century artworks.



CHARLOTTE COOTE

# SHOP THE LOOK

*Embrace heirlooms with design heritage by reviving vintage pieces.*



Photography by Sarah Pannell (main shot).

**1 LIVING** New and old upholstery happily mingles in this sun-bathed room. "There are huge bargains to be had if you are strategic, including quality Australian handmade upholstery pieces that you can buy and re-cover," says Charlotte. Armchairs upholstered in Chelsea Textiles 'Mafalda Velvet' in Alga Marina and window seat in Namay Samay 'Bhuj' in Olive Grey. Scatter cushions in Elliott Clarke 'Rocco Wool' in Light Tan, Rose Tarlow 'Glacis' in Chard, and Colefax & Fowler 'Carbery' in Aqua. 2 Ivory & Deene 'Langham' box **pendant light**, POA, Archipro. 3 Adélaïde **dessert plate**, approx. \$140, and small **soup plate**, approx. \$128, Astier de Villatte. 4 'Pineapple' small natural **lamp base**, \$750, with Irish linen **lampshade**, \$190, Coote&Co. 5 Trudon 'Reggio' **great candle**, \$879/3kg, and 'Ernesto' **intermezzo candle**, \$420/800g, Myer. 6 Vulture **vase**, POA, John Derian. 7 Red lacquer **armchair**, \$3840, Chairish. 8 'Imani' **cushion** in Red, approx. \$274, Susan Deliss. 9 Porcelain 30cm **charger plates**, \$38/each, Coote&Co.