



Named after one of their mums, Joy wallpaper, £50 a roll, is part of the couple's Perry Rise collection at Graham & Brown



Interior designers Jordan Cluroe (left) and Russell Whitehead of 2LG

Dramatically different

Russell and Jordan's partnership in and out of the studio is the inspiration behind their interiors company, which celebrates fun, drama and being brave

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When Russell Whitehead and Jordan Cluroe first set up their interior design company together, the humour that's so fundamental to their work came immediately to the fore.

'The postcode of our home ended with 2LG, so we became known as the Two Lovely Gays,' says Jordan, 35. 'It stuck and became the name of our company!'

Russell, who's from Hemel Hempstead, and Jordan, from Cornwall, were both actors working in London when they met and later married in a civil partnership. It

was their passion for colour that inspired them to try interior design and they've created a much sought-after signature style. The secret to their success, according to Russell, is telling a story – and caring about their clients. 'We love people and really get to know and understand their taste,' he says. 'Only then can we create the perfect setting for them. It's about capturing an element of a personality, the sense of a couple, the essence of a family.'

In all of their designs, their theatrical past is never far from the surface. 'As a boy, I spent a lot of time on building sites with my

dad, who was a quantity surveyor,' says Russell, 37. 'Then, when I became an actor, I'd wait in the wings and study the light falling on the scenery. That sense of creating drama still creeps into our interiors.' The couple even held their civil partnership ceremony at the Wilton's Music Hall in London – the oldest such theatre in Europe.

It was while they were living in Forest Hill, south London, in between lucrative acting jobs and Russell's long-standing role in the West End musical *Chicago*, that they started screen-printing and designing their own fabrics, which they sold at Greenwich ▶



The carpet's design is based on a traditional pattern from Brintons



Jordan and Russell's love of pink is reflected in their home



Geometrics combine with florals in their Perry Rise collection at Graham & Brown



The fluoro light, designed by a friend, is a fun contrast to the room's retro furniture

market. Then Russell's father and his business partner bought a hotel in Kent and asked the boys if they would design the interior.

'We started with the bridal and master suites, and loved the process so much that we took on the whole hotel,' says Jordan. 'Russell was performing in eight shows a week in *Chicago* and would rush from the hotel to the theatre in London. Meanwhile, we were up at five in the morning each Saturday for our market stall. We realised that we had to make a choice, and when the show came to an end, it seemed a natural

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time to move into interior design full time.' Soon after, Jordan was invited to appear on the first series of BBC Two's *Great Interior Design Challenge* – he was runner up in the 2014 finals. In the weeks before the show was aired, the couple prepared their website and interiors blog, ready for their business to take off – which it did.

The Two Lovely Gays quickly became famous for their fun and quirky designs. For a large family home in Blackheath, south-east London, Russell and Jordan created a train carriage-like entrance with a rich orange colour, low curved ceiling and recessed strip ▶

lighting that leads to an open-plan living room. They also commissioned colourful murals from artist friends of the owners to add a personal touch to the home.

That same sense of fun is apparent on the glass panels of the front door at their own four-bed Victorian home. Local signwriter, artist and friend Archie Proudfoot, has painted the house number in gold lettering, and a golden outline of the couple's beloved dachshund Buckley sits on the window above the doorway. Key geometric shapes from the hallway wallpaper within the house are picked out in gilding on the door. The biggest surprise inside is the wallpapered ceiling. 'The ceiling is always a neglected space,' says Russell. 'It should be used as a fifth wall!'

Jordan adds, 'When we bought the house we looked at maps online and saw this row of houses appear in about 1870. We went to the Brintons carpet design archive and found a pattern from that time in red, gold and blue. We enlarged the print, made it a contemporary blue and used it on the

'In interiors, there isn't a wrong choice. Walls can be painted again – so use colour and enjoy life'

stairs for an eye-catching nod to the past. 'This attention to the smallest of period details led the couple to designing their own wallpaper collection with Graham & Brown and a rug collection with Floor Story. Two of their wallpaper designs, Joy and Rebecca, are named after the duo's mothers, who remain a huge influence in their lives.

'Russell's mum buys beautiful, expensive items, whereas my mum redecorates every year,' says Jordan. 'When we first got together, we went for Christmas dinner at my house and halfway through the meal, Mum decided she wanted to move the dining room furniture into the conservatory – in between courses! Russell was stunned, but he's used to it now!'

As a couple, they are a perfect jigsaw fit, with an understanding so deep that they complete each other's sentences. 'We both believe you should always overachieve to get what you want. We over prepare, and over deliver,' says Jordan. Russell adds: 'I try to think of every possible eventuality, but Jordan makes me more brave and I make him more detailed.'

How do the boys live together and fight the urge to discuss work all the time?



RUSSELL AND JORDAN'S RULES OF COLOUR

- ★ **Be bold** when it comes to colour. You can paint a room in a day and it's an inexpensive thing to change.
- ★ **If you can't decide** on a colour scheme, throw open your wardrobe and see what shades you enjoy wearing.
- ★ **The ceiling** is a really effective place to add colour and pattern for a big impact. Don't forget your fifth wall!
- ★ **Being brave with colour** doesn't mean going for a statement shade. Softer colours can be just as daring.
- ★ **Buy cheap lining paper** and paint sheets of it in the sample paints. Pin them on the wall, and see what colour combinations work well together.

Practising what they preach: the couple's bedroom makes a statement with colour

'Netflix!' they answer together. 'We put on a movie or watch an entire TV series to try and balance the fine line between life and work,' adds Russell.

What design trends do they see for our homes in the future? 'There are so many images coming at us all through social media, that many people are living in blank spaces because they're too afraid to make the wrong choice,' says Russell. 'When it comes to interiors, there isn't a wrong choice. Walls can be painted again – so use colour and enjoy life.' He also believes we're going to move away from open-plan living. 'There was a time when any wall would be

knocked down, but now homeowners want the shape, security and solitude that walls bring,' says Russell. 'As modern-day life becomes more intense, people need a Batcave to retreat to. They're clinging to their homes more than ever. They've gone from being a financial investment to a place that makes them feel better and feeds the soul.'

It's perhaps unsurprising that two young men who fought so hard to be themselves are now encouraging a whole new generation to have the confidence to be themselves in their own homes. 'Your home should be a true reflection of yourself and we want to help people achieve that,' says Russell. [EJ](#)