

designerati



OPINION



A Designerati series of interviews with designers, architects, and senior professionals in which they talk about a project, product, or concept they've worked on that was their defining moment. Today we speak to Owen Pacey, founder of 'Renaissance London', renowned for antiques,

What made you want to become a restorer?

My route into dealing in fireplaces started off with doors. I ended up getting a job with this old guy who was stripping pine doors. This was big in the eighties – pine was everywhere. I took a real shine to the work. We had a big water tank which was filled with caustic. These doors would be stacked up in the tank: we'd have to really push them down – one time I even fell in and had to get hosed down pretty quickly.

After that stage, we would take a jet hose and blast away all the sludge. These doors would reappear – they looked lovely after a wax. I realised we didn't just have to strip the doors, we could also restore them. It was quite a magical process and we started to do it with cast iron fireplaces too. Clients would walk in and just say 'wow.' It gave me a sense of achievement, creating something that someone would cherish and enjoy.

What aspirations or ambitions did you have at the start of your career?

I saw a niche in the market for handmade fireplaces, with immaculate carving and details, that were indistinguishable from the originals. As I started to get more clients, we started to expand our restoration offering and our craft skills. Clients asked for an aged effect, so we started developing our own techniques for doing this. Then, ten years ago, I moved into lighting after getting hold of some Baccarat crystal chandeliers that everyone was clamoring to buy.