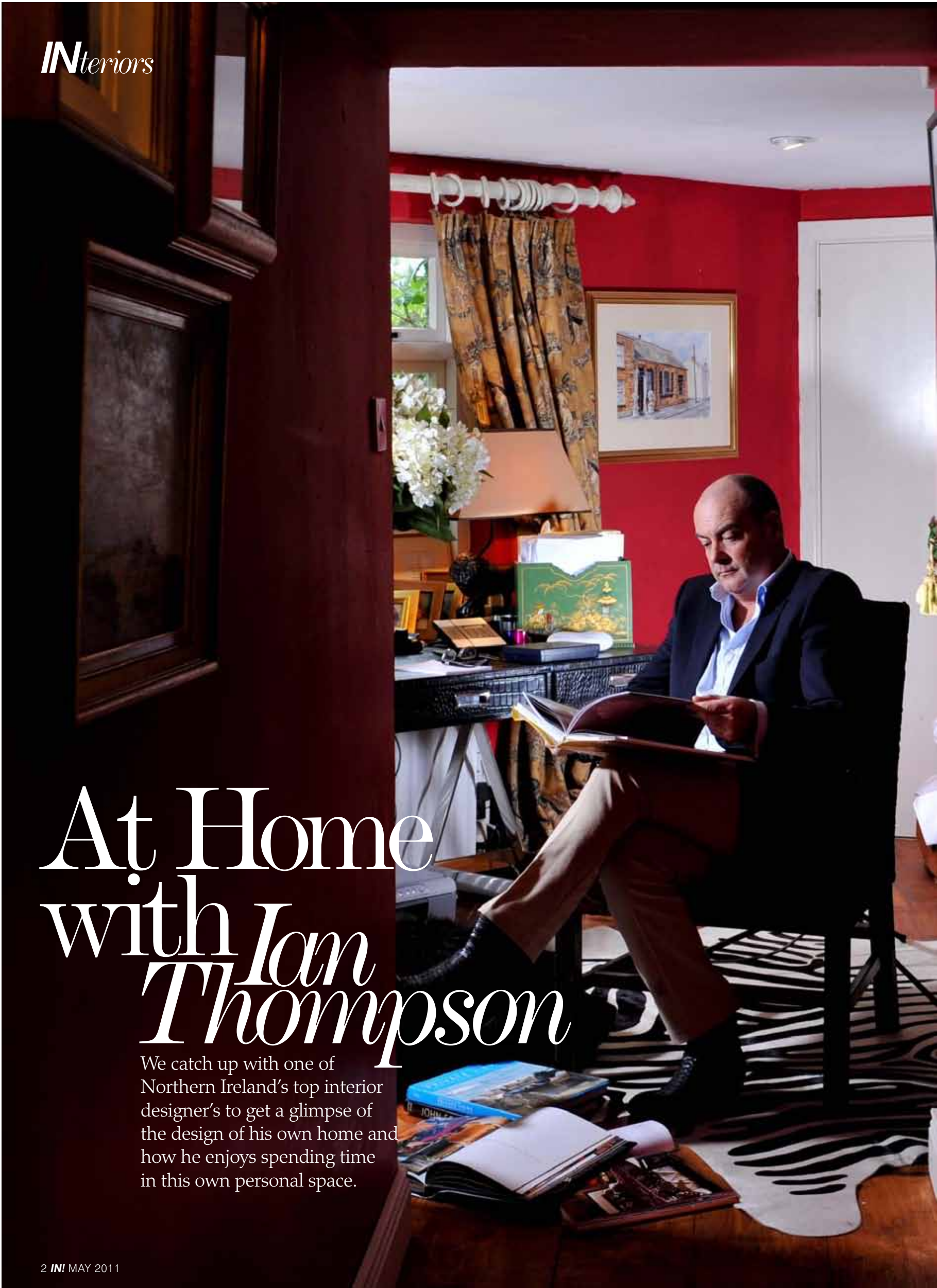


At Home with *Ian Thompson*

We catch up with one of Northern Ireland's top interior designer's to get a glimpse of the design of his own home and how he enjoys spending time in this own personal space.





HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN INTERIOR DESIGN?

My family life as a child, visiting auction houses and antique fairs and at my dad's textile factory; it all constantly trained my eye for beautiful things subconsciously. I lived for sometime in Los Angeles in the early eighties working as a design assistant with clients' luxurious houses on Malibu Beach, on my return to Belfast I opened up my interior design company 25 years ago.

DO YOU HAVE A SIGNATURE STYLE THAT YOU ARE KNOWN FOR?

My signature brand for our shops on the Lisburn Road, Belfast, and at the House of Fraser is instantly recognisable. It is classically black, a frame for all our beautiful furniture and accessories, also used throughout our signature products and extended to our packaging. When I am designing for clients the style is dictated by the client, their interests and their lifestyle. Clients are now more sophisticated and design-conscious and this is great because clued-up clients are better, it makes for a fabulous design, it raises the game.

DOES YOUR OWN HOME REFLECT YOUR STYLE?

I would say our home reflects our individual lifestyle and is designed sympathetically for the period of the cottage. The design makes

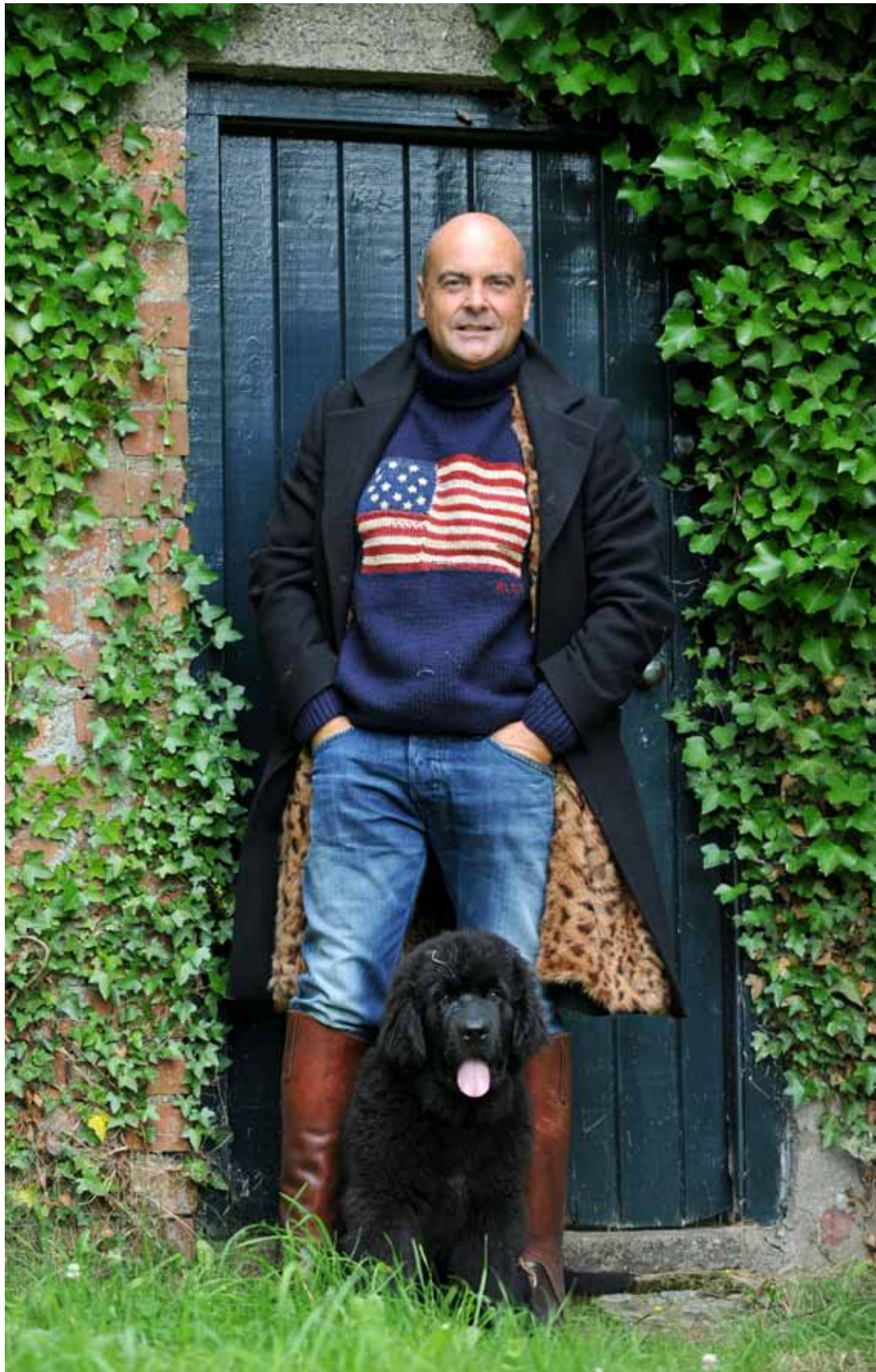
a very comfortable home for Cheryl and I to curl up in with our children and pets, we have luxurious fabrics with lots of textures and colour, but nothing is too precious the house has to be able to adapt to the Newfoundland dogs lying on the sofas, and muddy boots tramped in from horse riding.

DO YOU BRING YOUR WORK HOME, BY THIS I MEAN ARE YOU CONSTANTLY REDECORATING AND CHANGING ROOMS WITHIN YOUR OWN HOME?

Always, it's a laboratory for new techniques and styles. It gives me a chance to try things out to test that it is perfect for the client. Our home is part of our business, there are always books and magazines everywhere to give inspiration and keep us up-to-date with trends and global influences. It is used for private client meetings and the study is normally full of drawings, fabrics and evolving designs for clients.

TELL US ABOUT SOME OF THE PROJECTS YOU HAVE WORKED ON?

Over the last 25 years in business I have been privileged to work on some amazing projects throughout Europe and the here at home; such as Hillsborough Castle, a Chateau in France, a old apartment in Budapest, an apartment in Paris, a fabulous villa in Monaco, a penthouse



in Marbella and renovation of a home in Cannes. The La Mon Hotel which then won the Best Hotel of the Year 2009. Local homes, hotels and restaurants in Northern Ireland are always the favourite. Each one of them different and designed to match the client's personality and needs should it be for a stately home or a small apartment.

DO YOU HAVE A PROJECT THAT REALLY STANDS OUT FOR YOU?

A couple of years ago I created a beautiful little mews in London that was installed for a client's daughter. Meetings sparked an opportunity to present our designs to be judged by the Andrew Martin Interior Design Award "The Oscars of Interior Design" (The Times) and to be chosen as part of the Review Book Vol 11. That was incredibly satisfying for the team to be the First Interior Designer in Northern Ireland to be part of the Global Award and picked out of 533 worldwide designers.

WHAT IS THE LAST PLACE YOU VISITED THAT MADE YOU THINK, I WISH I'D DESIGNED THAT?

Travel gives me lots of inspiration. Designs that I have admired by Anoushka Hempel at her home, the hotels and last year in Mykonos on her Yacht "Beluga" are always a favourite. Nicky Haslem for his quintessentially English designs and Jacques Garcia for his wonderful French designs at Hotel Costes in Paris and Hotel Majestic in Cannes. My latest graving is JK Place in Capri, I adore Michele Bonan's design, it is simply stunning and is a home from home in unadulterated luxury.

WHAT FUTURE PROJECTS HAVE YOU GOT COMING UP?

In the next few days the team and I will be off to Portugal to fit a favourite client's holiday villa. I love this opportunity to use different colours and styles that I would not necessarily use in a home in Ireland.

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU'VE NOT HAD A CHANCE TO DO THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE INVOLVED IN?

To be able to design a movie set.

HOW DO YOU LIKE TO RELAX AWAY FROM WORK?

Curled up by the fire with my wife Cheryl, dogs at my feet, glass of wine in hand and watching a movie. Even then I will be watching the movie's interior backdrop, I love what I do, and see ideas from everything every minute.

FOR ANYONE DECORATING THEIR HOME, DO YOU HAVE ANY PROFESSIONAL ADVICE FOR THEM?

Train your eye by looking through as many books and magazines as possible. Pull out what images you like and make your own mood board or file, this visualises your style and personality, then start sourcing. Build the room with a base of structure, colour and lighting and then add the detail by layering the accessories. Using an interior designer is always going to be quicker, easier, and cost effective. You are tapping into a resource of tried and tested suppliers, a design built to your lifestyle specifications and to your budget with no costly mistakes. **IN3**