

# IDFX Magazine

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# Home and away

*Few interior designers can have had such a varied career as Mia Watts. She talks to Kay Hill about summers in Norfolk, winters in India and how her design skills have led her from film sets to stately homes. Photography by Mark Luscombe-Whyte*

It's hard to get a grip on Mia Watts' career – so wide and varied has her history been that she jumps effortlessly from talking about working on pop videos for the Boomtown Rats to designing houses in Sydney, working on the set design for a Lee Remick movie to running a fish restaurant.

One thing is certain. Watts is becoming high-profile, thanks to her recent refit of The Victoria, a pub in the Norfolk town of Holtkham owned by Viscount Tom Coke. Once what she terms 'a sad, horrible little pub with stud walls and mean little bedrooms' – it has been transformed into a gem of a place, furnished with furniture and textiles from India that give it a stylish, colonial feel.

Watts lives just along the coast at Barnham Market, a country town so populated with weekendling Londoners that it is nicknamed Chelsea-on-Sea. She is to be found in a small shop, House Bait 2, strangely

sited on a garage forecourt.

Here she stocks an eclectic, veering on the eccentric, mix of antique and new household accessories. A marble font fights for space with an antique French bed, Indian baby dresses sit alongside a 1920s' snakeskin bag, while an African tribal mask stares at a stuffed dove.

In the tiny bit of floorspace left, Watts sprawls on a floor cushion, sipping Earl Grey tea and muttering that she would rather be in India. She was there, sourcing products for her first shop, House Bait 1, when the call came through from Viscount Coke, so it seemed obvious to her to make the most of a modest budget by sourcing almost everything there.

Watts travels abroad regularly, not only to India, but to France, Morocco, Tunisia, Indonesia and the Far East, preferring to spend the winter months away from Norfolk. 'I travel as much as I can, but having the shops pulls me