

Looking Glass

Mark Kebble peers into one of the more quirky designs soon to be appearing at the Country Living Magazine Spring Fair in March.

Inspiration can come in all forms, but Angel admits that liquorice being one is a little surprising. "I love the colours," grins a delighted Aline Johnson in her studio at Cockpit Arts. A quick double take and its effect on Aline is apparent - all of her work features glisteningly beautiful colours.

The Dutch-born Aline, and Islington resident for some ten years (that too has had an effect on her - there is not a trace of an accent in her speech, and Aline explains "it just goes after a while"), designs and produces a range of fused and kiln-formed glass tableware, lighting and vases. It was when she moved to England that she felt a desire to translate her fascination for colour, pattern and surface texture into a new medium from her fashion background.



During the hour or so Angel spends with Aline, her passion for her craft is obvious, and she energetically scampers around the studio to find examples of what she is talking about. "The Business Design Centre is very light and it is a great venue," she says on the forthcoming Country Living Spring Fair whilst tinkering with one of her two kilns, "and that is one of the reasons I am doing the show. Also, the country living aspect acts as an escape for Londoners - if you couldn't get away from everyday life sometimes, it would be a very confusing world."

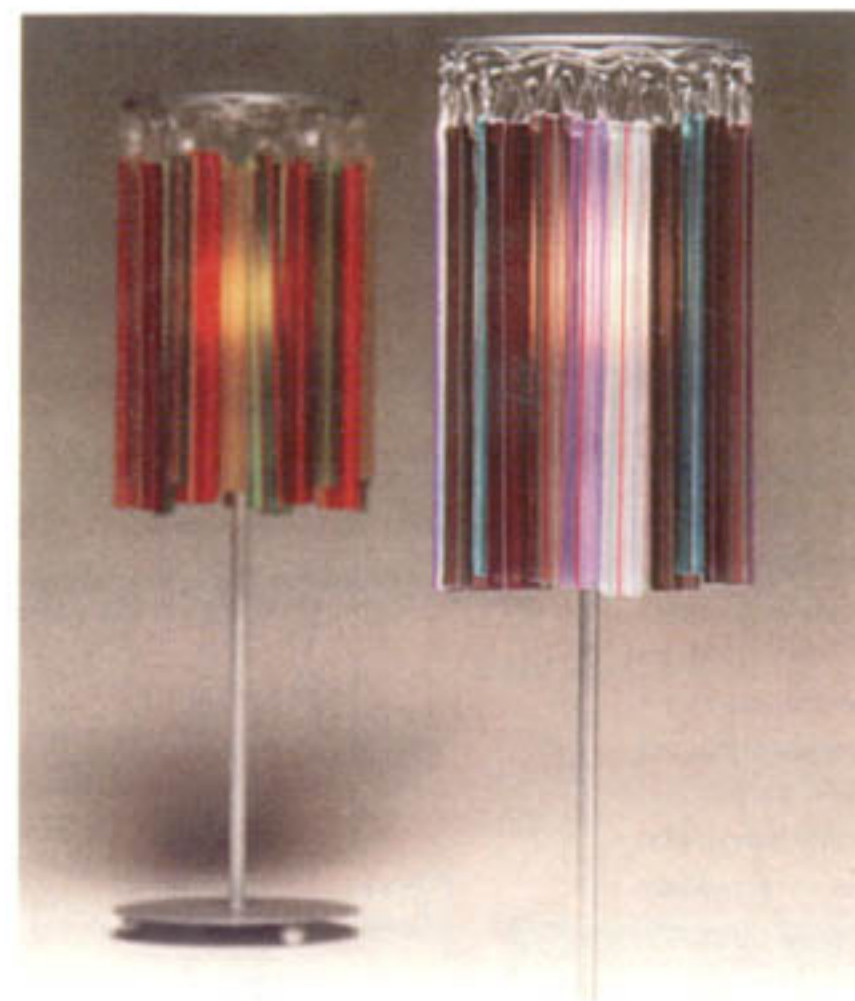
For Aline, her escape is the Jurassic coast of Dorset, where she has the time to contemplate furthering what's her second career. Asked why she changed her focus from fashion design, she says simply: "After I had children, I didn't want to go back to my old job, and then discovered

that glass and colour is a very strong medium. Glass has had a revival."

After a period of working from home, she moved her operation into Cockpit Arts, just off Clerkenwell, which has witnessed a burgeoning career. "I love it here!" she enthuses. "In my studio there are two other jewellers, so we bounce ideas off of each other. Although everyone is ten years younger than me, I am still the baby here!"

Her rapid rise has attracted the likes of Channel 4 to her craft. "I have just designed eight fused glass platters for their Political

Awards," Aline beams as she searches out one of the designs. Angel discovers that it is on this very day that the Awards will be screened, and Aline sneakily informs that "Robin Cook won the major award, and Private Eye won a satire award - they called me to say they loved the platter!"



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It is commissions of this sort that Aline lives for. "I can get bored working on my own things!" she exclaims. "But I can only make two items a day, so I do want to keep the operation quite small. Glass behaves in different ways, so it can be quite technical with bigger work." And does she take note of the current trends in London homes? "Oh yes, because of my fashion background I am always aware of what's out there. And I do like change - I have quite a short attention span!"

With her forthcoming appearance at the Business Design Centre, and recent exposure in the national press, busy times could be ahead - something that's fine by her. She looks so at home working with the kilns, and decides it is time to show Angel the result of the day's work. Raising the lid, she sighs at one failed experiment. "When things happen like that, the job is frustrating," Aline shakes her head.

"That's life though, and things that go wrong can be used again." With that, she pops liquorice into her mouth and gets to work on something new. . . **Aline will be appearing at C13 in the main hall at the Country Living Spring Fair - for more please log on to www.countrylivingfair.com. For more on Aline's work, visit www.alinejohnson.co.uk or call 07775 616868.**