

OWNERS OF THE SURPRISE PUB IN CHELSEA

## 90/ Trade Secrets: Poppy and Jack Greenall

This month, we meet a couple with the kind of job people dream about. Poppy and Jack Greenall own and run The Surprise, a beautifully designed pub filled with eclectic objects and artwork, offering delicious food and some of the cosiest corners in Chelsea. First built in 1985, the Surprise is an art and interiors-lover's dream, so we asked Poppy and Jack about their personal style and how they use art in the pub, and in the process learned how guests will try to buy the art off their walls and how Jack earned himself the nickname 'Basil'.



**When did you decide to open your first pub? Was it something you'd been dreaming of for a while?**

I have been fascinated by pubs from a young age...I began working in my family's pub and restaurant business in Jersey as a teenager, initially as an opportunity to escape the less exciting work experience in the law and accountancy firms my father had in mind! I soon fell in love with the excitement of the industry and haven't looked back! I worked for a pub company with pubs across the South of England as the Operations Manager for 5 years when The Pheasant Inn, Hungerford came up for sale and I jumped at the opportunity. I was 27 at the time,

so fairly young but I was just so excited and thrilled to get my hands on a pub of my own that I threw everything I had into it and I'm pleased to say was able to make a huge success of it! That experience, at a young age taught me a huge amount about the world of hospitality and myself for which I am extremely grateful for. We sold the pub in January 2021 to Young's Pub group and decided to embark on a journey in London...



**Design and art play a huge part in the look of The Surprise, are your interiors at home similar in style? How did you choose the look you wanted for The Surprise?**

We were fortunate enough to work with a very talented interior designer, Isabella Worsley who previously worked at Firmdale Hotels. The brief for the style of the pub was for the interiors to be really beautiful, with lots of lovely art works, but remain authentic and true to a traditional pub. We describe ourselves as 'a country pub in the heart of London'. We also wanted guests to feel as though they were in an extension of their own home, which we hope we have managed to achieve...With regards to our home, my wife Poppy has always been very interested in interior design and together we have worked on two home renovations, one in the countryside and one that has only very recently been

completed in London. I would describe our interior style as cosy and colourful with lots of textures and patterns thrown in!



**You must witness a lot of pretty weird and wonderful things running a pub, what is the weirdest thing you have overheard/seen/witnessed?**

You really do see it all and it's one of the best parts of the business....When I opened my first pub, The Pheasant near Hungerford, there were so many bizarre occasions from a mouse running through the open garden door, through my feet and into a guest's handbag to another guest losing their pet African Grey Parrot leading to multiple search parties and my friends giving me the nickname Basil, (as in Basil Fawlty)!



**Who would be invited to your dream dinner party to serve at the pub? (living or dead!)**

George Orwell, whose book "Down and Out in London and Paris" is one of my favourites and includes a brilliant account of working in a kitchen in Paris in the



1920s. Some things have changed but worryingly not all! Orwell's views on the society and culture wars of today would be fascinating to hear!

**How does the art you've chosen for The Surprise affect the space? Does it support a certain theme, or create a particular atmosphere?**

There are a lot of art works in The Surprise, covering much of the wall space which we feel adds to the pub's charm and cosiness. Isabella has been very clever in sourcing art works from all over: antique markets, Instagram, bespoke commissions, limited edition prints etc. which has made for a diverse and quirky collection of art works. We often overhear / see guests admiring the art works around the pub and have even had requests from guests to buy the art which is very flattering...So the art works definitely do create a talking point which is great.



**What would your ideal next project be?**

A second London pub will be coming to Notting Hill soon! One day, our dream would be to open a townhouse hotel... Watch this space!

**What is your recipe for a successful pub?**

A beautiful, interesting but comfortable interior, top quality produce and a warm and friendly team. It doesn't have to be complicated!





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POPPY AND JACK'S CURATION

- [Off The Rocks At Woodcombe](#)<sup>SOLD</sup>

There is something very special about being in the sea, even when the water is very cold! Jack and I often describe swimming in the sea is the best tonic to the fast paced city life in London. The water in this picture is a beautiful green colour and the swimmer appears very content and relaxed.

Off The Rocks At Woodcombe

Vendor

[Josephine Birch](#)

Regular price  
Sold

- [Running In](#)<sup>SOLD</sup>

Jack and I love the sea and have a lot of art works in our home that feature the sea. The colour of the sea in this particular artwork is beautiful and we love the way the artist has captured the soft pink light reflecting onto the water.

Running In

Vendor

[Josephine Birch](#)

Regular price  
Sold

- [Olives](#)

Olives are our daughter, Willow's favourite food and whenever we eat out, we always order a bowl to share! We really love the combination of the orange and the olive green paint colours together and could see this painting hanging in our kitchen!

Olives

Vendor

[Brendan Lancaster](#)

Regular price  
£390.00

- [All These Spaces VII \(Framed\)](#)

These paintings remind us of the coastal environment; rugged and textured. The colours reflect nature and the outdoors and conjure up a sense of serene.

All These Spaces VII (Framed)

Vendor

[Harriet Hoult](#)

Regular price  
£450.00

- [Where The Sea Trout Swim](#)

We were drawn to this artwork by the big smiles of the two women – it's a very happy scene! We love the colour palette and pattern used in this canvas and of course the glimpse of the sea.

Where The Sea Trout Swim

Vendor

[Ali Bassett](#)

Regular price  
£800.00

- [Servíos, ser vivo, ser vida](#)

We love this vibrant and colourful picture of an outdoor dining scene somewhere warm / tropical with guests clearly having a great time! The use of colour, layers and different forms really adds to the sense of liveliness and viveur.

Servíos, ser vivo, ser vida

Vendor

[Francisca Brunet Bayón](#)

Regular price  
£1,750.00