

Retail's rising STARS

The best buyers in the business have a knack for spotting and nurturing design talent. Here, they introduce their current protégés

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BRYONY SHERIDAN,
*buying manager for home and
gifting at Liberty, with vintage dealer
and designer* **JERMAINE
GALLACHER**

Having started in the fashion and accessories buying departments at Liberty 10 years ago, straight from a degree in product design and development at the London College of Fashion, Bryony Sheridan soon realised that buying for the home was her passion. 'I wanted to bridge the gap between fashion, home and interiors, because I felt that

changing small things within your home to help it evolve over time was similar to adding a new handbag or coat to your wardrobe,' she explains. With an eagle eye for spotting rising design talent, she recently snapped up Jermaine Gallagher's zig-zag shaped candlesticks and snuffers, tables and coat hooks for the store. 'The candlesticks are a particularly perfect "mantlescaping" piece,' she enthuses. 'I love them from an aesthetic point of view, but also because there's nothing else like them on the market.' For Jermaine, who started in the interiors world running a vintage stall when he was 18 ('I'm drawn to unusual, memorable things that catch the eye. I love seeing what I can

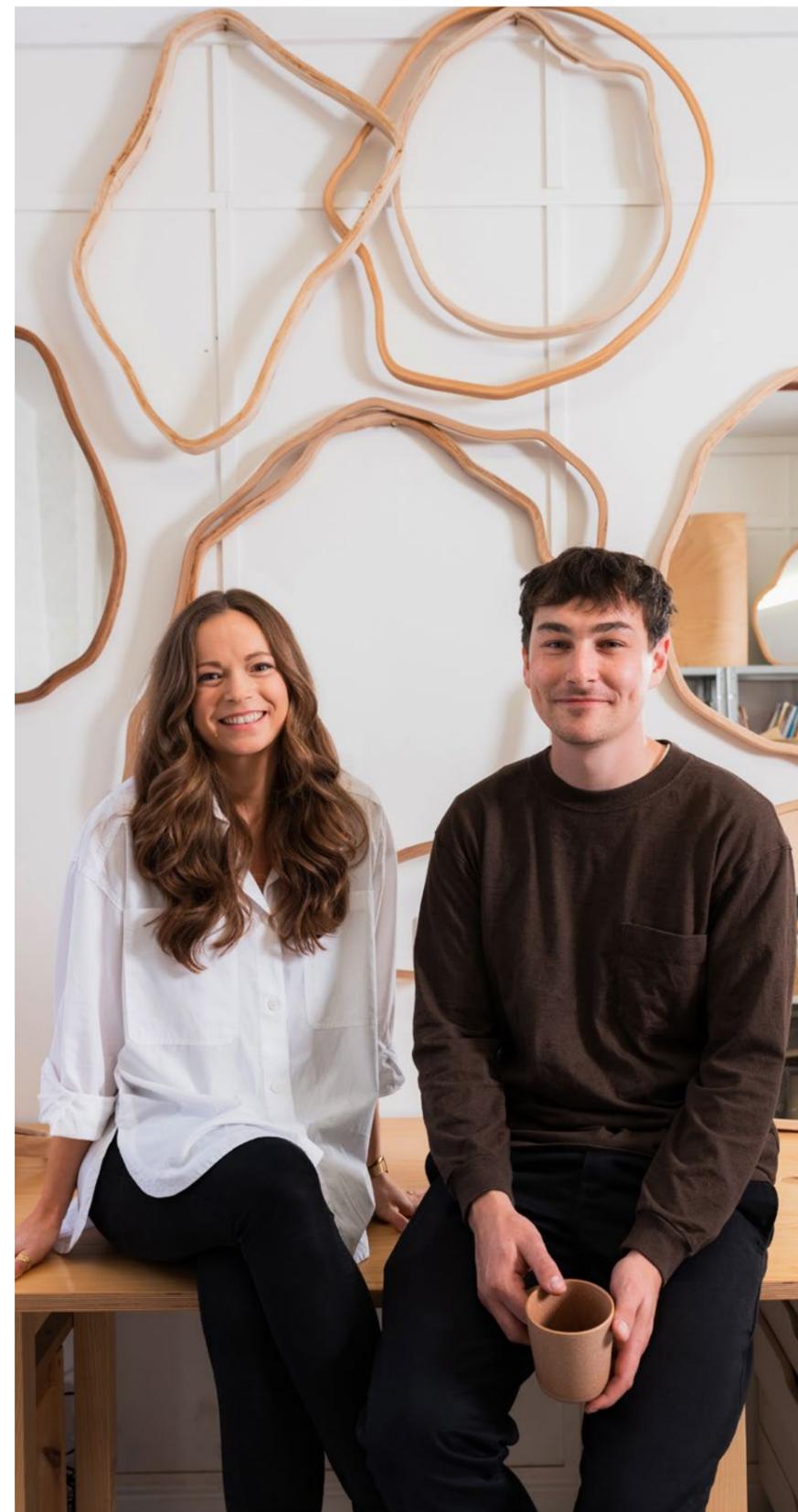
cheekily get away with,' he laughs), working with Liberty has been the tipping point in taking his design work more seriously. 'Bryony has made me think about all the things I wouldn't normally consider when wholesaling into stores,' he says. Collections by independent designers such as Jermaine are what 'make Liberty special', Bryony adds. 'We spend a lot of our time nurturing designers like Jermaine – he can call me anytime for help.' His gain is her gain, she adds. 'It's important we stay one step ahead, giving our customers interesting pieces they can play with in a way that helps them to express their personality at home.' libertylondon.com; jermainegallacher.com ➤

TYRONE JOSEPH,
buying and development manager for
Tate Enterprises, and textile designer
KANGAN ARORA

A mutual love for celebrating the arts emerged when Tyrone Joseph and Kangan Arora recently came together to create an exclusive homeware and textile collection inspired by the 'Blavatnik' check of Tate Modern's Switch House façade, the scalloped floor tiles of Tate Britain, and the undulating waves of the River Thames. Tyrone, who is responsible for 'everything to do with print' for the galleries' gift shops – postcards, art and custom-made prints, as well as recently transforming Anni Albers' designs into rugs and accessories – has long wanted to work

with Kangan. Both are Central Saint Martins graduates, enrolled in the same year but never connected until now, 12 years later. For Punjabi-born Kangan, who in the past has also collaborated with Floor Story, Heal's and Ikea, it was a thrill to create patterns for the Tate, which proffered the potential of becoming, she says, 'part of the vocabulary of London'. 'If you live in the capital and you're creative, you go to the Tate, weekend after weekend – it's just a part of your life,' she adds. The range, which includes socks, mugs, pouches, totes and tea towels, exemplifies Tyrone's aim to create 'useable, giftable items that relate to art or being creative in some way'. Joining forces with Kangan provided the route to drawing inspiration from the buildings themselves – 'so recognisable yet so simple', as he

describes them – as well as reflecting on 'what the Tate represents'. Dashes of neon, offset with dirtier or duller hues, come as standard in Kangan's designs. 'Even if it's just an accent colour on the tag or buttons, these bright touches symbolise London's energy alongside which everything else plays,' she explains. For Tyrone, working with young rising talent is, he says, 'one of the perks of the job'. 'There's a more flexible response when working with new and young designers,' he continues. 'I want to know how they want to work and then how we can work together, rather than me telling them what to do, which takes the creativity away.' Kangan agrees: 'The scope is wider when you can learn from each other – you end up making something more exciting.' tate.org; kanganarora.com



EMILY DUNSTAN,
home buyer for Heal's, introduces
artist and furniture-maker
KIERAN LETTS

Graduating with a degree in criminology isn't the most conventional route into furniture buying, but for Emily Dunstan, who started at Loaf before joining Heal's three-and-a-half years ago, it certainly taught her to keep her eyes peeled. It's how she discovered Kieran Letts' wobbly steam-bent mirrors via an Instagram story posted by the furniture designer Sebastian Cox (for whom Kieran is currently working). 'Giving young talents a platform is important to me – it's vital to have our finger on the pulse, finding these amazing people for our customers to discover through us – and

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that's where social media gives us the chance to find talent that might otherwise go under our radar,' she enthuses. Steam bending had played a key role in Kieran's materials practice during his fine-art degree at Goldsmiths, University of London, where he used it to make 'a sculptural stance on the picture frame, designed for images I'd taken or drawn', he explains. In need of a gift for his partner's birthday, he decided to make a curvy frame with a mirror in it. 'The reception was really encouraging,' he recalls. So much so that he launched a set of curvy frames to great response during LDF last year. Drawn to Kieran's 'amazing craftsmanship', Emily chose to stock his 'Coastal' mirror design at Heal's – it ties perfectly with her search for unique pieces. 'Mirrors are usually rectangular or round, so these ones really reinvent a classic idea,' she says. 'Plus they have a sustainability angle, because they're made in the UK using British elm.' Giving makers like Kieran exposure via a platform like the Heal's Discovers programme also offers them the chance 'to learn, grow and go on to do incredible things on their own, with Heal's and other retailers,' adds Emily. For Kieran, being championed by the retailer this year has left him both 'grateful and surprised', he admits. 'I've always made things that feel personal, so to see how much Emily cares about the same things as I do really feels like a big step forward in terms of my future.' heals.com; kieranletts.com ▶

**'I CAN SEE THINGS MAYBE
THEY CAN'T. I GET SATISFACTION
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**CAMPBELL
THOMPSON**, *head of
furniture and lighting at The
Conran Shop, and industrial designer*
FRANK WINTER

Fostering talent like the recently graduated designer Frank Winter, winner of The Conran Design Award for his 'Workshop System' collection in 2020, goes all the way back to the late Sir Terence Conran, the design emporium's charismatic and groundbreaking founder. 'It's something he was always involved in, working with the likes of Russell Pinch, Thomas Heatherwick and Sebastian Cox in the infancy of their careers,' says Campbell Thompson, whose own past

experience includes working with Skandium, Ligne Roset and Harrods. 'So now it's part of our DNA.' Frank's design for a coffee table – inspired by looking at the way picture frames are joined – intentionally exposes how the wooden frame supporting the glass top inserts neatly into the tubular metal leg. 'By not hiding this small detail, it allows people to understand my thought process and maybe changes the way they look at and appreciate the design,' he says. 'It really ticked the box for me,' enthuses Campbell. 'It's a simple idea and it won't be too hard or too expensive to make. It shows great design integrity.' Bringing such fresh talent into the fold not only helps to grow what the retailer offers in its own collections, but also 'attracts different audiences, especially younger customers', Campbell adds.

'Younger designers are living in a different time with a different perspective, absorbing a huge volume of inspiration via social media, so it sparks different thoughts; but with my experience I can see things maybe they can't. I get a lot of satisfaction from the bouncing of ideas between us.' Campbell wanted to add a diverse mix of products, at accessible price points but 'with potentially the same distinctive silhouette as the icons have', and this is what led him to Frank's collection. For an up-and-coming designer, The Conran Shop's support is invaluable. 'If you haven't had much experience or you don't have many connections, it can be hard to get your work noticed,' says Frank. 'This prize is an opportunity to get my foot in the door and to work with some very talented people.' conranshop.co.uk **ED**