

# Just what I wanted

*Ruth Ryan's Bramhall home is the perfect example of how working with an interior designer can help deliver your home style dreams, writes KATE HOUGHTON*

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RUTH Ryan moved into her home in Bramhall with husband Aiden and daughter Issie in 2016. It had been extended by the previous owners, but – as is so often the case – the interior décor wasn't precisely to Ruth's tastes.

'I knew I wanted to change a lot,' says Ruth. 'But before I rushed in, we decided just to live in it for a few months, to understand how we wanted to make the house work for us, so that then we could change it to suit both our tastes and our needs.'

'I decided to work with an interior designer and a friend of mine put me in touch with Caroline Firth, who also lives in Bramhall.'



PHOTOGRAPHY BY KIRSTY THOMPSON

'Before we met I had certain preconceptions, I admit. I thought an interior designer would immerse me in their own ideas and suppress mine. I wanted to be sure her creativity and my personal style complemented one another. Working with Caroline wasn't at all what I had expected.

'I travel a lot with my work and so stay in a lot of hotels, where I find plenty of inspiration. So, my brief was "boutique hotel." I created Pinterest boards to show my thinking and then Caroline showed me her ideas, which had a lot more colour and were quite different – but I just loved.

**Above:** Ruth's colour filled sitting room

**Far Left:** Ruth Ryan

'We chose to take the one-room-at-a-time approach, as you always feel better when something is complete! We started with the playroom, as I wanted my daughter Issie to have something to call her own.'

The playroom is a superb example of how bringing in an expert, someone who spends their working life researching styles, trends and interior solutions, can bring a whole new level of wow to a room. The fabulous wall map came from Etsy and is set off to perfection by the pale grey paint. This use of a neutral, but not traditional, colour is repeated in the furniture, which comes from John Lewis, and allows Caroline to throw



The contemporary kitchen has the same blue walls as used in the hall, to ensure the two rooms flow together

popping shades of pink and yellow about to create a room fit for a very small girl, but also one she can grow into – no cutesy princesses or baby pinks allowed here, thank you!

‘Caroline asked what my budget was and I said I didn’t have one, as such! She charges by the hour, and of course we agreed every element beforehand, so it was all very easily controlled. Caroline’s knowledge of what’s out there and her sourcing of everything at reasonable prices was invaluable.’

Once Issie’s playroom was sorted, Ruth and Caroline moved into the sitting room.

This is a fabulously elegant space, very ‘boutique hotel’ but also utterly unique to Ruth and Aiden’s own requirements. The diptych artwork on the main wall is quite jawdropping.

‘I like to have a statement piece, a focal



point, in every room,' Caroline explains. 'The painting was done for us by Gabrielle Dow, a Bramhall artist. We chose an image and gave her a colour scheme and this is what she created.'

Ruth says: 'Bramhall has proven to be a great resource. I love living here. I came from Dublin about 14 years ago and I find that here, like home, everybody looks out for each other and it's a very strong community.'

'I love the independent shops here and make a point of using them; it's so important to keep local businesses going or the whole 'leafy village' feel will simply fade away.'

'There are some great tradespeople here,' Caroline adds. 'I use Stuart Ford for all the joinery and Lionel White for the painting and decorating, who Ruth already knew in fact. I love Cheshire Art Gallery and BE Lifestyle, they're great for finding finishing touches and accessories.'

Upstairs Caroline and Ruth have completed two rooms so far, the guest room and master bedroom.

The guest room has a wonderfully relaxing ambience, nothing fussy or over-styled, but with a wow factor wall mural that lifts the space from simple to stunning.

The master suite has a very different feel, with a dazzling mix of styles – from snuggly hygge to glossy über-glam – and textures all coming together to create a space you'd struggle to quit in the morning.

'Caroline certainly surprised me with some



A place to relax: Ruth's bedroom 'reading corner'

of her ideas,' laughs Ruth. 'Such as the gold Kartel lamps in my bedroom, which I love but would never have considered myself! The bed we already had, and Caroline added the fabulous side tables (from M&S) and wonderful finishing touches such as the lamps and the chunky knit throw. ▶

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**Above:** Issie's playroom

**Right:** The hallway, set up for family meals until the actual dining room is complete





‘This is quite a big space, so I asked Caroline to create a reading corner for me. Ryan and I are both big readers. He enjoys history books and I love a good murder mystery. It’s so lovely to have a place to go to when you want some quiet time.’

It’s a wonderful idea; bedrooms are precisely the place you want to go to for an escape from the day’s pressures, but climbing into bed does feel wrong somehow, before the day is officially over.

I ask Ruth which her favourite room is, but it’s impossible to say, though she does insist I check out the downstairs loo, which, she says, she absolutely loves. Now here’s a proof that asking an interior designer to

**Above:** The master bedroom, with stunning gold lamps from Kartel

**Below left:** Even the downstairs loo has impact.

**Below right:** A soothing place to sleep, the guest bedroom

make some changes in your home is a great idea – it’s a mad but glorious vision of gigantic blooms, all packed into the tiniest room in the house.

‘I genuinely did not realise how much goes into creating a single room scheme and then making sure each flowed into the next. The same blue runs from the hallway into my kitchen, for example. I wanted to make our home a place that we could just walk into and feel it’s all a part of us. We all worked with Caroline on choosing elements in each room and it’s worked out beautifully. We’re tackling Issie’s bedroom next – and the excitement levels are high!’ ♦

[www.cheshireinteriordesign.com](http://www.cheshireinteriordesign.com)





**Hot spots**

Caroline's clever use of accent colours and accessories is what delivers the boutique hotel style Ruth desired.

- From top: rectangular graphic cushion cover, £18, [www.finchandcrane.com](http://www.finchandcrane.com)
- Mongolian lambskin cushion, £99 [www.modern-rugs.co.uk](http://www.modern-rugs.co.uk)
- Honeycomb Pop cushion, £16.99 [www.beanbagbazaar.co.uk](http://www.beanbagbazaar.co.uk)



**Wall to wall style**

While murals might be one of the most ancient interior design motifs, done well they are utterly contemporary.

Zephyr wall mural, £199 [www.woodchipandmagnolia.co.uk](http://www.woodchipandmagnolia.co.uk)



**Get switched on**

Traditional lighting, from standard lamps to shades, was given a contemporary makeover in Ruth's home.

- Above: Vita Eos feather pendant shade, from £69 [www.black-by-design.co.uk](http://www.black-by-design.co.uk)
- Right: Montreal floor lamp, £370 [www.noxuhome.com](http://www.noxuhome.com)
- Below: Bolle 3 table lamp, £1,185 [www.chaplins.co.uk](http://www.chaplins.co.uk)



# Get the look

Interior designer Caroline Firth worked with her client Ruth Ryan to create a contemporary yet cosy home. Here's how you can create that look



**And relax**  
If you want a reading corner you need a chaise.  
Charley chaise, £299 [www.made.com](http://www.made.com)

