



PAUL JORDAN / MEGAN CROFT

GRAND DESIGNS

Doors to some of Scotland's best kept secrets and most prestigious homes have been opening exclusively to one man, Paul Jordan. He's been working his way up to the stately echelons of home and interior photography and we catch a moment in between shoots to find out more about his journey

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Towering tenement buildings, cobbled back streets and cutting edge new-build hotels are all jumbled into the bustling old walled city of Edinburgh. Walking down any street in this historic settlement, peering into glowing windows and catching glimpses through giant doorways is almost second nature. Edinburgh is a city pregnant with facades that intrigue and interiors that impress, and the holder of the golden ticket to venture beyond the front door is local resident and interior photographer Paul Jordan.

It hasn't always been that way, Paul comes from a background in music where touring and performing was the name of the game and photography was a secondary thought. A couple of interior shots for hotels on the side ended up changing his path and transforming into a full-blown, full-time career in photography. Wanting to stand out from the overcrowded pool of photographers, specialising in interiors made good business – and personal – sense. "I liked interior photography because it didn't involve people," laughs Paul when questioned on why he chose the subject.

"That's another art dealing with people and portraiture and I really didn't want to go down that road at all. Interiors really suited me and my personality."

Self-taught, Paul found the technical side came easily; the creative element presented more of a challenge. "I did a lot of reading up on the technical aspects of photography and I try my best artistically to get the shots that I need," he says. "I found the artistic side of it was a long process, to find out what works and what doesn't work." But wanting to carve out his own photographic style, it wasn't other interior photographers that he turned to for inspiration, instead he took influence and learned from other genres.

"I deliberately didn't want to look at other interior photographers because I didn't want to start copying their styles. I like other photographers, particularly Murdo MacLeod who works for *The Guardian* and *Observer*, I even assisted him which was very challenging, interesting and great fun. I look up to people like him and Rankin." It was their use of light and flash that has had the biggest influence on Paul's work.

His first commission after he went pro around ten years ago was for the Energy Saving Trust for a *Homes and Interiors* 



PREVIOUS SPREAD: Inside Dumfries House with its resplendent and majestic furnishings

LEFT: An impressive new-build overlooking Rothesay Bay

BELOW: The grand games room within the imposing Mount Stuart mansion



ABOVE: A formal dining room in Dumfries House

RIGHT: Making the most of both natural and artificial lighting in a Helensburgh home



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Scotland magazine. And that was the start of it. Further work with the Energy Saving Trust saw him travelling all over Scotland seeking out innovative, energy efficient homes, but it was one email in particular that proved to be the making of him as an interiors photographer. That email was to Rick Wilson, the then editor of *Home Plus Scotland* magazine, with an already impressive interiors portfolio and the offer of a free shoot landing him his very first assignment with the magazine and he's still reaping the benefits of it today. "Rick liked my work and from then on, there was no looking back," says Paul. "I've worked for that magazine on a freelance basis for many years now."

In the most part, it's magazine work that Paul's commissioned for, which requires a particular brand of interior photography and undoubtedly takes some time to become accustomed to. "Magazine shoots tend to follow a set format of two or three angles of each room in landscape and portrait format," he explains. "Normally you wouldn't shoot interiors in portrait format but actually in magazine shoots you need portrait formats for page layouts and for front covers."

Often out on assignments alone and with the bare bones of a brief, Paul's developed a keen eye for what constitutes a point of interest, whether that's spotting Chippendale furniture or valuable artwork. "Over the years you pick up these tips and incorporate them into your own work when you don't have the luxury of an assistant," he says, but when he has someone



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to style the room for him to shoot, that can be an enormous help.

In his kitbag he carries two full-frame Canon camera bodies, a large tripod, a wireless shutter trigger and of his stash of wide-angle lenses, the one most often attached to his main camera is the Canon 17-40mm lens for its high quality, light weight and versatile focal length. More recently though, Paul's been experimenting with mirrorless Canon systems. "I find that the smaller camera bodies are great for going in on small details and the quality they produce is superb," he enthuses. "You can use the whole range of Canon lenses on them as well with an adapter so you don't need to invest in new glass."

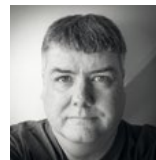
Sometimes it isn't always possible, particularly with interiors to get it right there and then. Artificial light can cause havoc with shadows and ruin an otherwise perfect shot. Paul inevitably has to put in some post-production time in either Photoshop or Lightroom to tweak and adjust mostly the shadows and highlights, as well as white-balance and a touch of sharpening.

Looking to specialise further, Paul wants to concentrate increasingly on stately homes as his staple. He already has a number under his belt, including the Isle of Bute's imposing Mount Stuart owned by the Marquis of Bute and the neoclassical Dumfries House, and it's easy to see why he'd want to continue having the red rope lifted for him in some of Scotland's most historically important homes.

One experience that has stayed with him came after a long drive through the

Scottish wilderness, where on arrival at the property he was whisked away to a silver service lunch with butler in white gloves and plate after plate of homegrown and cooked produce. "As well as an amazing property, we were treated amazingly well too. It was certainly a day never to be forgotten," he recalls fondly. But as with the nature of the job, there has been a less than desirable experience too when he knocked over a vase, shattering it to pieces. Luckily, as with all of the owners he's met through his line of work, this one was amiable and forgave the mishap as the vase wasn't of any sentimental or financial value.

Not to be deterred by a minor breakage, it's stately homes that Paul wants to concentrate on in the future - "there's so much space and you can really move in them". But his next move is to get himself signed up with an agent to help with PR and promoting his work as a photographer, which would free up more time to concentrate on doing what he loves most, photographing. He has his eyes firmly set on the prize: to be featured in *25 Beautiful Homes* magazine; we expect to be thumbing through and seeing his work in there soon. **▲**



Suiting his personality down to the ground, Paul Jordan has made a career out of interior photography and is channelling his efforts into stately homes.

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THIS IMAGE: Impressive Mount Stuart House

ABOVE LEFT: Behind the scenes at a home in Buckie in the middle of nowhere

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