

RD Was furniture something you were always intrigued by?

JF I was thinking about this the other day. My parents always had really beautiful furniture around the house that was passed down through the family. We had this Butler’s chair, which I could never understand why everyone was making such a huge fuss about. But it wasn’t like an ornament—it was a usable object. It was such a part of the house and well-loved to the fullest, one of those things that stayed with us and probably will forever. My mum still has it! I think furniture should be usable, and that you should be able to live well amongst it.

RD How do you approach sourcing your pieces for Oswalde?

JF It’s a closely guarded secret, but I do have a huge, manifesto-like bible of designers and the pieces that they’re famous for, and I just kind of go through that and stick to it. I would never put anything in the shop that I wouldn’t have in my own house. In fact, I always buy two of everything!

RD Had you thought about making Oswalde into a physical space?

JF I think for now it’s more of a project. I don’t want to be defined by what floor I have in the shop and what the signage is like. I’m quite enjoying the light, liminal space of Instagram right now. I’m also too anal to have a physical space. It would need to be everything I wanted it to be, and I would have to budget for that!

RD You mentioned your manifesto-type list. Does it have a “most desired” item on it?

JF I try not to have these obsessive pieces because it becomes too polarizing. But do I have a piece that I would die for? Joe Colombo made these amazing universal units to live in—roughly the size of a small bedroom, maybe bigger—and I would like to have one of those in an empty barn somewhere, with nothing else but a kettle.

RD What advice would you give to burgeoning furniture collectors?

JF Start with items that really make you feel things. Don’t concentrate on having the biggest, best, most expensive piece. Buy shit that you like, if that makes sense for your space, as the furniture around you forms your narrative as a person and informs your connection to a space. I’m trying to make things accessible with Oswalde by playing down these intricately, amazingly designed things.

RD Any Black architects whose work you really want to acquire?

JF This has been a big thing for me this year: delving into our history in terms of architects—and not just being “makers” or “craftsmen,” but being architects!

In my mind, the “institution of architecture” only serves a purpose for elitism. So I think about the people building and designing functional structures from the beginning of time, including people of color—and I’m like, “Where are they?” I would say Paul R. Williams is someone I really admire. He was a very famous architect in Los Angeles. He wouldn’t deal with his clients face to face because they wouldn’t deal with him, knowing he was Black. I honestly don’t even know more past David Adjaye. I have this problem with what I’m buying for the Oswalde stock: it’s just old Italian guys. I would so love to know of any Black people who were in that field of that time.

RD Lastly, who is Oswalde?

JF Naming your business is really hard—especially if you’re someone like me, who overthinks literally everything in life. I think it was a very Caribbean name. I like that it can be a bit of a persona: people message me like, “Hi Oswalde!” and I reply as this character, which I find quite funny.

There’s this club in Mayfair called Oswald’s, a private members club. I’m still waiting for the cease and desist from them!

Recently founded by Jenna Fletcher, Oswalde Shop is the new London-based Instagram design platform offering a selection of functional and iconic second-hand vintage furniture and homewares.

OSWALDE

FANCY PLASTICS

Interview by Rhea Dillon



Photo credit: Diogo Lopes