

Sublime Suburbia

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Lucinda Lambton

Text taken from the ITV website: <http://www2.itv.com>

[Jools Holland](#) – village based on Portmeirion

[Don & Barbara Currie](#) – home cinema

[Painshill Park](#)

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Whilst South East London does not always set the spirits soaring, Lucinda discovers that flights of fancy have flourished on a sliver of land between terraced houses and the railway line. **Jools Holland**, king of the keyboard and amateur architect, has created an entire village to house his band and recording studios, based on Portmeirion, an Italianate fantasy village in North Wales.

“I think music and architecture are very closely linked,” says Jules who has had no formal training either as a musician or an architect. “I’ve always loved buildings ever since I was small. I used to draw them and build models as a hobby, and it’s still one of my big passions”.

Stardust has been sprinkled over **Don and Barbara Currie** who live out their fantasies in their suburban garage in Reading where they have created a dazzling home cinema based on a 1930s Odeon picture house. “It takes me back to the days when just sitting in the cinema was as exhilarating as seeing the film itself,” says Lucy.

Lucy visits **Painshill Park**, which was created between 1738-1773 by Charles Hamilton – a grandee plantsman, painter and designer who took to the brand new fashion for the Picturesque Movement in a vibrantly original way, producing a galaxy of buildings and placing them in the landscape as his fancy took him. “The more exotic the building the more exciting the landscape garden and this is where Painshill excels” says Lucy. “Here you are sent spinning along your way like in a rarefied version of a theme park, so great and various are the shocks and surprises.” These surprises include a Turkish tent, a hermitage with a real hermit, a Gothic temple, a ruined abbey and a grotto.

Greenwich Millennium Village, with its adventurous forms heaving into the sky with a vengeance, shows what can be done with imagination on a brown-field site. Designed by the Anglo-Swedish architect Ralph Erskine, “it cocks colourful snooks at the endless identikit sprawls we are allowing to despoil the fair face of Britain”, says Lucinda. “In the midst of all this, who could not fail to be excited by the Millennium School which weaves its wooden way into the heart of the village. Surely this colourful collection of buildings must lift the spirits of local life?”

The programme also features **Saint Hill Manor**, just outside East Grinstead – a Georgian house that has had a most colourful collection of owners, including an American Ambassador, the Maharaja of Jaipur, and L. Ron Hubbard, the founder of the Church of Scientology.

It was however the wife of the American Ambassador Mrs Drexil Biddle who left the most idiosyncratic mark on this house in 1945. It was she who commissioned John Spencer Churchill, the nephew of Sir Winston, to paint a room covered from floor to ceiling with monkeys.

“There is even a good monkey likeness of my husband’s great aunt Gwendoline Churchill, looking very fetching as a monkey in high heels with a charming handbag,” says Lucinda.

Her final visit of the programme is to **St Mary’s Church, Beddington**, South London – a 15th Century church that most commuters would pass by without a second glance on their way home from work. “But step inside” says Lucinda “ and you are stunned. Every inch on high is richly decorated and William Morris’s decoration around the church organ makes you want to sing “All things bright and beautiful....”

SUBLIME SUBURBIA is a Clementine production in association with Carlton, commissioned by Emma Barker. The series producer is Anne Clements of Clementine Productions.