

SYBIL COLEFAX

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sibyl_Colefax

Wiki:

Widely admired for her taste, after she had lost most of her fortune in the [Wall Street crash](#) she began to decorate professionally, using her formidable address book for contacts. She was able to purchase the decorating division of the antique dealers Stair and Andrew of [Bruton Street](#), [Mayfair](#) and established Sibyl Colefax Ltd in partnership with Peggy Ward, the Countess Munster. On her retirement, following a family tragedy, Ward advised her to take on [John Fowler](#) as her partner, which she did in April 1938. The advent of war cut short this partnership. During the [Second World War](#), she organised a [soup kitchen](#) and continued to entertain. She often held small lunch parties at [The Dorchester](#) known as 'Ordinaries' after which the guest would receive a small bill.^[8]

She had an affair with [Virginia Woolf](#), and corresponded with Woolf's husband upon Woolf's death in 1941.^{[9][10]}

In 1944, the business, managed by John Fowler, took a lease on 39 [Brook Street](#), Mayfair where it remained until December 2016.^[citation needed] Also in 1944 Sibyl Colefax sold the business to [Tree](#) for around £1,0000. She renamed the business Sibyl Colefax and John Fowler Ltd, the name continuing today as the decorating division of the [Colefax Group Plc](#).^[citation needed]

Colefax died at her home in [Lord North Street](#), Westminster on 22 September 1950. [Harold Nicolson](#) penned an affectionate tribute that appeared in [The Listener](#).^[11] She was the inspiration, according to the art historian John Richardson, for the designer Mrs Beaver in [Evelyn Waugh](#)'s *A Handful of Dust*, and for Mrs Aldwinkle in [Aldous Huxley](#)'s *Those Barren Leaves*.^[12] In the 1940s she was referred to frequently by the diarist and socialite politician [Henry "Chips" Channon](#), who described her as "charming, gentle and sad".^[13]

