

says Romanos Brihi, co-founder of interior design firm Studio Vero, of the black-and-white-patterned entrance lobby that he and fellow founder Venetia Rudebeck created for this west London apartment. 'As you walk through it, you see the raspberry-coloured hallway and staircase,' he adds. 'It's not for the faint-hearted.' But then, the design of this home was always about pushing boundaries.

The two-storey flat, which is hidden behind the traditional brickwork façade of the old King's College in London's well-heeled Chelsea, was once a practical family home, complete with a dedicated homework area and children's bedrooms that differed only by the colours of the headboards. When Romanos and Venetia's Dubai-based client approached them, however, the plan for a luxurious entertaining space began to take shape, with French interior designer Jean-Louis Deniot – known for his deft balancing act of minimalism and excess – named as an influence.

The new kitchen, crafted in collaboration with Lanserring, is now the ideal place for hosting dinner parties, with its Calacatta marble floor extending not only into the open-plan dining area, but also over the work surfaces and island. It's when you step into the living room, however, that this home's full potential to wow becomes apparent.

Here, a dreamy palette of pale blue, teal and pearly white emphasises the light that pours in through the windows. The sheer scale of the space is impressive: the walls, hand-carved by artisan Henry Van der Vijver to resemble detailed marquetry, took 16 weeks to complete, while the sofas, constructed on site by George Smith, each measure almost four metres long. 'The Antony Gormley above the fireplace looked much bigger hanging in the Royal Academy than it does here,' says Romanos.

That painting, spotted at the artist's recent retrospective, is just one of a collection of works that champions British artists. 'I think, in the end, we purchased pieces from 25 different galleries,' remembers Romanos. 'Sometimes art in interiors can be too curated, but I wanted this to be the start of an evolving collection.'

Upstairs, each of the six bedrooms is like a miniature art installation in its own right. There's the 'Kelly', with its striking wallpaper by American designer Kelly Wearstler, and the 'Palm Beach', which, with its bright pink walls, transports guests away from the capital. 'They are all so different they verge on being like Marmite,' says Venetia, 'but that's great!'

Despite the air of experimentation, there is also a knowing nod to this property's past. 'A lot of the textures and finishes are quite traditional, just in fun colours,' explains Romanos. 'There's a lot of velvet and artisan touches, but with some tweaks that speak to both the past and the future.' 'It's pure escapism,' adds Venetia. 'This may be a historic building, but its interior is a total surprise.' *studio-vero.com* 



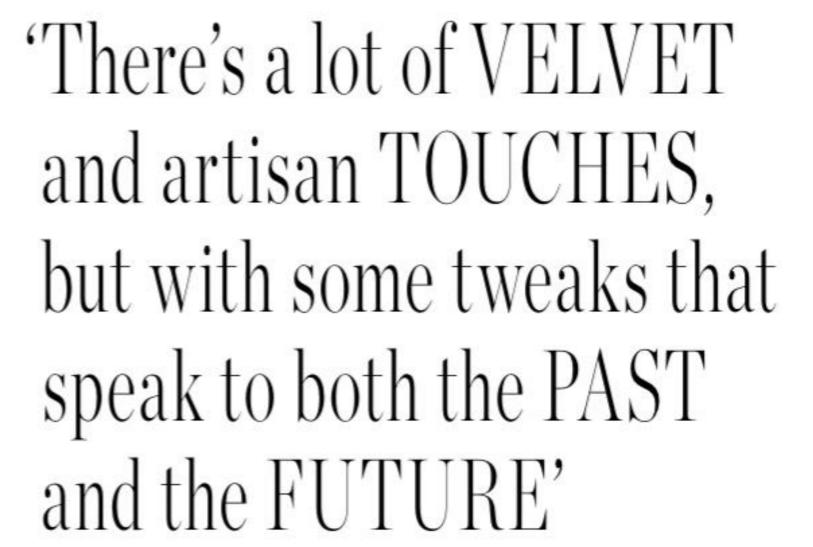












Smoking room (left and top left) The desk is a black stitched leather Jacques Adnet piece from the 1940s. A Gio Ponti wall cabinet is used as a bar, and the floor lamp is an antique. Beside it, the 1950s armchair is by François Letourneur from Portuondo and the rug is by Paul Smith for The Rug Company Stairway 'Focus Symbol' wallpaper by Arte in an eye-catching raspberry hue makes a striking backdrop to artworks by Gary Hume, Ethan Cook and Jeremy Annear Bedroom 'Graffito' wallpaper by Kelly Wearstler makes a bold statement, complemented by the bespoke bedside table. The headboard is covered in 'Cambon Damier' fabric by Abbott & Boyd, the table lamp is the 'Linden' by Kelly Wearstler and the bedspread was created using 'Caton' fabric from Zimmer & Rohde







