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INSPIRING INTERIORS BY LEADING DECORATORS

JANUARY 2022



ABSTRACT THINKING

Unexpected, colourful, yet pulled-together – that was designer Irene Gunter and her clients' end goal for this Victorian apartment

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SITTING ROOM

'We enjoy round shapes and softened edges,' says homeowner Rebecca of this space, where a modern pendant and rug introduce a graphic element.

Castle 18-01 ceiling light by Jason Miller Roll & Hill.

Arcade sofa, Resident.

Bespoke rug, Nanimarquina

According to legendary American magazine editor Diana Vreeland, 'the eye has to travel', and that oft-repeated maxim couldn't be more apt when it comes to the layered, playful interiors of this London duplex. Intriguing details are everywhere, from inset terrazzo archways to intricate fluted tiling, each inviting the eye on a journey of exploration. Owned by Rebecca Young Riboldi, who grew up in North Carolina, and her Italian husband Riccardo, the reconfigured space has a distinctly international flavour, encompassing an irreverent mix of global elements.

'We share a very similar sense of humour and I think that comes through in the interiors,' says Rebecca, who turned to designer Irene Gunter of Gunter & Co to help revitalise the space. 'We like light, fun touches and also to go off-piste and even get a bit messy and imperfect at times.'

Messiness aside, Irene took that brief and ran with it. 'We took our cue from the couple's love of contemporary, abstract art,' says Irene. 'The piece hanging over their bed prompted the plaster pink and fresh green scheme – seeing how unexpected colours can work on a canvas makes it much easier to make braver interiors choices.'

Behind the decorative details lies a host of clever designs that have transformed the flat. Irene undertook 'opening-up works' to acquaint herself with the bones of the building and found that ceilings had been lowered and original proportions obscured. In the end, not a single room went unaltered, yet the resulting schemes look as if they have always been there. A narrow hall was removed between the kitchen and sitting room to join the

spaces, and a metal-framed glass extension added at the rear to accommodate a dining area. Downstairs, three bedrooms became two to make room for an en suite and dressing room, a guest bathroom and a cloakroom. 'Some decisions were practical rather than stylistic, such as placing the bath under the window in the bedroom to free up space in the shower room,' says Irene. 'But it works brilliantly – we enlarged the windows so that bathing there feels like a luxurious and cosy experience.'

Colour and pattern are essential elements. 'Where I grew up, in the American south, colour was everywhere,' says Rebecca. Riccardo, who was raised in Milan, also has a keen eye for design. 'That has come through in our kitchen, which is a real cook's space,' says Rebecca. 'And also in our use of terrazzo, which is a key Italian motif. While we were reworking this home, we were also renovating a place in Puglia and some of those design choices have been replicated here in London, including our large collection of Pugliese ceramics.'

Unexpected elements include generous archways, with the oak-framed double doors in the sitting room harking back to an earlier era. 'Victorian houses have always featured oak, so we wanted to return to that look, albeit in an updated way,' says Irene.

Four years in the making, Irene says that this project has barely strayed from the couple's initial vision of an unstuffy, colourful yet pulled-together home. 'As an interior designer, you come to expect a little pushback from clients who might be nervous of making a leap of faith,' she says. 'But in this case, we couldn't be freethinking enough.' The eye-catching results are testament to that spirit of adventure. ■

■ Gunter & Co, gunterandco.com

"WE REINSTATED ELABORATE CEILING MOULDINGS AND PANELLED WALLS – THEY BECAME A FOURTH DIMENSION, ADDING DEPTH AND INTEREST"

IRENE GUNTER



SITTING ROOM
The contemporary lines of the alcove unit and chair are a striking foil to the period architecture. Armchair by Resident; upholstered in Byram in Isabelle, Kvadrat. Unit, Porada. Systematic Arrangement 032 artwork by Andreas Diaz Andersson at Cadogan Contemporary

KITCHEN
The arched oak-framed doorway is decorative yet contemporary. We wanted to reference the traditional use of oak in period homes but with a modern twist,' says Irene. Oiled oak bespoke double doors, Gunter & Co. Bright Side pendant lights, Allied Maker





DINING AREA

The couple extended at the rear to create a light-filled banquette space. Its black frame is complemented by a classic Flos pendant. Aim pendant light, Flos. Banquette designed by Gunter & Co; upholstered in Powder faux leather by Kothea. Gent chairs, Gubi



MEET THE DESIGNER

Irene Gunter shares her loves and style inspiration

SECRET ADDRESS 36 Bourne Street for vintage fabric finds.

GO-TO COLOUR Sage green for its calming properties. It reminds me of growing up in the countryside.

FAVOURITE BUILDING The Natural History Museum – the architecture is so beautifully detailed.

IMPORTANT DESIGN DETAIL Don't forget about the ceiling, whether that be panelling, wallpaper, stickers or a paint colour.

LAST THING YOU BOUGHT FOR YOUR OWN HOME Seaweed wallpaper by Sibyl Colefax & John Fowler.

DESCRIBE YOUR STYLE IN THREE WORDS Eclectic, understated, playful.



SITTING ROOM

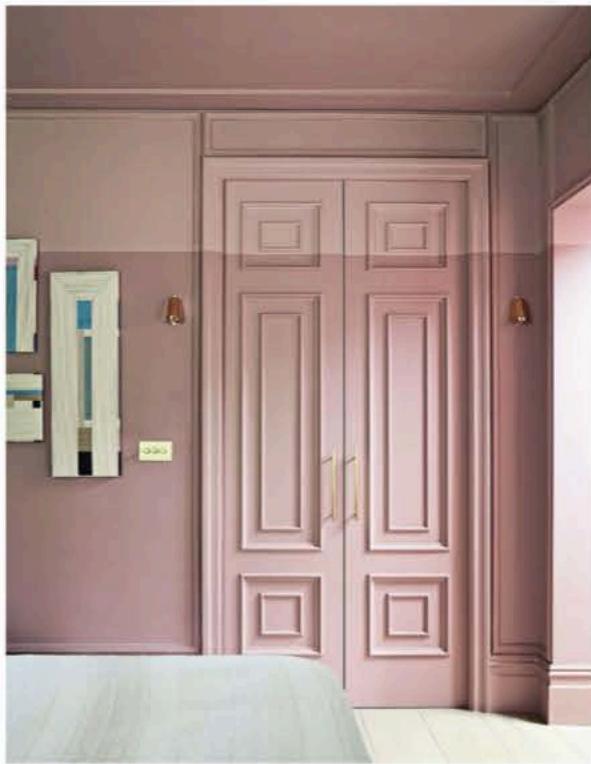
A built-in seat by Gunter & Co makes a feature out of this bay window. 'It's one of my favourite places to relax with a book,' says Rebecca.

Seating in Karakorum by Dedar. Pole and Circle II wall lights, Square in Circle. Tabouret Berger and Tabouret Meribel tables by Charlotte Perriand for Cassina. Round cushions, Bespoke Sofa London

KITCHEN

The glass-fronted cabinets have fluted detailing, which brings a whimsical touch. 'We also wanted to create a real cook's kitchen as we love to entertain,' says Rebecca.

Kitchen, including Volakas marble splashback and counter, 202 Design. **Cabinetry** in Bayleaf, Papers and Paints



MAIN BEDROOM
The striking layered tones of pink were inspired by the couple's *Puzzle IV* artwork by Kim Bartelt. The green headboard and black window frames ground the swathes of pink. A curved bath sits snugly under the window, affording the couple space for a generous shower in their en suite.

Lower wall in Rogue II, Paint & Paper Library. **Upper wall** in a bespoke colour mix by Gunter & Co. **Headboard panel** in Coda 2, Kvadrat and trimmed in Ferrat Eucalyptus, Manuel Canovas. Small Huck **wall light** in brass, Porta Romana. **Side table** decorated by Tess Newall. Agape **bath**, Patricia Urquiola. **Blinds and curtains** in Wide Wool Macro in Bianco, Dedar

