

FOREIGN EXCHANGE

During the decoration of this American home in a modern pastoral genre, British design studio Salvesen Graham took away a few new ideas

WORDS EMMA J PAGE PHOTOGRAPHY SIMON BROWN

HOUSES





t is safe to say that not many turn-of-the-20th-century houses in Colorado feature gutsy floral curtains and pelmets, matching wall and window treatments and skirted floral lampshades, but few are lucky enough to have British design duo Nicole Salvesen and Mary Graham at the helm of their renovation.

The house, located in a former mining town at the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, features traditional American millwork (think hand-carved banisters, chunky newel posts and high oak skirtings) and a classic timber front. But its English country house interiors are a reflection of the British heritage of one half of the couple who lives here. 'I settled in America more than a decade ago,' she says, 'but during the pandemic I craved the comfort and familiarity of the interiors I grew up with: that relaxed mix of pattern, colour and antiques that feels refined but not overly precious.'

That craving for home came soon after the couple and their three young children moved to this town from California, attracted by its slower pace of life and the appeal of summer hiking and winter skiing. Built in 1903, the house has listed status so there was a limit to the structural changes the family could undertake. 'But that didn't stop us from fine-tuning the floor plan and adding a quintessentially decorative flavour,' says Mary Graham of Salvesen Graham, the design firm known for its relaxed yet elegant take on British style.

The renovation was kick-started by a simple but pressing request: sumptuous window treatments that unashamedly celebrated blowsy florals, frills and pleats. 'When we compared notes, we found that the owners' scrapbook of favourite fabrics featured many we had already picked out,' says Mary. 'It's always gratifying when ideas dovetail.' The pair selected classic florals by Jean Monro, simple sacking by Guy Goodfellow and vivid suzani textiles from Pentreath & Hall, which together introduce warmth and vibrancy throughout.

Their application carries a nonchalance and exuberance that has a distinctly British feel. 'The execution was in fact the most challenging part,' admits Nicole. 'Americans are on the whole used to producing drapes and shades, rather than curtains and blinds and their treatments are more tailored. We spent a fair few Zoom calls encouraging the curtain maker to go bold with overscaled, gathered pelmets and generous swathes of fabric.'

The result is a home that the owner describes as 'rich and cosy, but not stuffy; full of colourful, light spaces that we love to spend time in'. Original flooring and woodwork that 'feels handcrafted and weighty' has been tempered by shades of soft greens and blues; the principal bedroom has been given a cosseting reading nook thanks to a pair of skirted floral armchairs, and the dining room, once a walk-through, is now defined by a bold matching wall, window and wall light treatment. A reworked basement now features a guest suite, laundry room and a chill-out zone for the children. 'We wanted something that felt sympathetic to the historical architecture of the house, while feeling relaxed, a little bit cluttered and eclectic,' continues the owner. 'That is what has always felt homelike for me.'

Although designers Mary and Nicole brought their inimitable style to Colorado, they also found themselves taking something home. 'Americans are brilliant at scaling up,' says Mary. 'We fell in love with their generous pot racks and chunky hardware, which we'll definitely be incorporating into our British schemes.'

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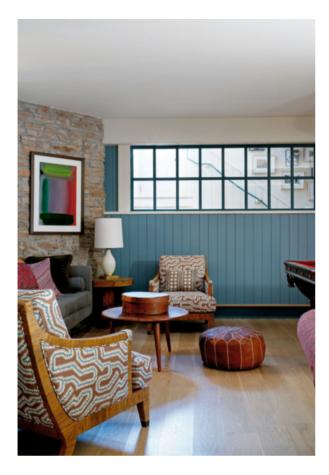
"WE WANTED TO IMBUE THIS HOME WITH A STRONGLY DECORATIVE FLAVOUR, EVOCATIVE OF CLASSIC BRITISH STYLE, BUT IT HAD TO BE PRACTICAL, TOO, WITH CLEVER STORAGE"



HOUSES









BASEMENT GAMES ROOM A horizontal black metal-framed window channels in additional light. Armchairs in Moorish Maze in Cinnamon, Rapture & Wright ENTRANCE HALL Woodwork painted in soft green helps to balance out the dark undertones of the flooring and stairs. Devonshire wallpaper in Blue/Green, Michael S Smith. Woodwork in Olive, Farrow & Ball. Runner in Serrano 8, Fleetwood Fox. Oil pendant lamp, Empel Collections

STUDY

Formerly a pantry, this area has been turned into a peaceful home office complete with panelled walls. Blinds and lampshades in Feuilles Nina, Décors Barbares. Desk in Desmond Grasscloth, Sister Parish. Parsons desk lamp, Susie Atkinson







MEET THE DESIGNERS

Mary Graham and Nicole Salvesen of Salvesen Graham share their style inspiration

SMALL CHANGE, BIG IMPACT

Panelling the ceiling in the family dining room added interest where it was lacking in architectural details.

FAVOURITE DECORATIVE

FLOURISH We adore a bold artwork by Sarah Graham in the drawing room, which adds vibrancy. YOUR STYLE IN THREE WORDS

Timeless, layered, comfortable.

GO-TO DESIGN DETAIL Fabric walling – and where this isn't possible, trimming a room with a tape or wallpaper border.

INSPIRATION American architects such as Gil Schafer, Peter Pennoyer and Ike Kligerman Barkley. And also the greats, of course: John Fowler's tricks of the trade are regularly revisited in our interiors.

GREATEST INDULGENCE Pattern on pattern – it doesn't have to be bold but it can be very pleasing to the eye.

HOUSES

MAIN BEDROOM Stripes, florals and suzani prints combine to striking effect, while the bed is anchored by a half tester. Fez wallpaper: valance in Olive Sacking, both Guy Goodfellow. Throw, Pentreath & Hall. Cane etagère table, Vaughan