

CONDÉ NAST

House & Garden

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DESIGN SOLUTIONS
13 UP-TO-THE-
MINUTE
BATHROOMS

**IN THE
SPOTLIGHT**
INDIGO & MOCHA
THE RED REVIVAL
ROOMS ON VIEW

GARDENS

DISCOVER THE NEW
WAY WITH GRASSES

CHOOSE THE
BEST PERGOLA

INTERIORS

KELLY WEARSTLER'S
SUNSHINE STYLE

GYPSY BRIGHTS
IN CONSTANTIA

Living with

COLOUR





Architect Tom Barlett's company, White Works, designed the coffee table in the living room and the blue-green-covered cabinet. What the client brought the wooden chair in Ethiopia. The dining room and adjoining dining area have distinct character but are linked by Barlett's clever use of colour

FEEL-GOOD COLOUR

USING STATEMENT HUES AS BOTH BLENDING AND PUNCTUATING TOOL, THE DESIGNER OF THIS CITY APARTMENT DELIVERS A HOME THAT'S HUMOROUS, AS WELL AS HOMELY

TEXT DINAH HALL PHOTOGRAPHS LUCAS ALLEN

Tom Bartlett's philosophy is rather radical for an architect: "We try to give people what they want. This is not quite as risky as it may sound, however, because his clients tend not to be the kind who'd want knotty pine furniture or stencilled dados; among his portfolio of residential and commercial projects are Jade Jagger's house in Ibiza and the London showrooms of jewellery giant Garrard."

With refined decor tastes, the owner of this apartment was never going to present much of a problem either. "Our client had grown up in quite "nice" places, so certain elements of home for her are fairly decorated," he says. "She feels very comfortable with high-end design. And from that point of view this was a dream job – not that she wasn't conscious of the budget but she does understand costs."

Having chosen the property for its outlook – a sensational view of Hyde Park – her only real request was that it wouldn't be too grown up or serious. Thus Bartlett was presented with an opportunity to do what he does best: cutting-edge design combined with a modern take on traditional comfort.

The flat had originally belonged to a Saudi family who had extended onto the roof without planning permission in the 70s. By the time it came onto the market it was, according to Bartlett, "kind of derelict and creepy – a warren of rooms with low ceilings and funny windows". A reconfiguration of the space was thus required, including rebuilding the roof extension with frameless glazing to get a better architectural connection between inside and out.

In terms of the decor brief, the idea was for it to be like a New York apartment, mainly because of the park connection. Bartlett used this as his starting point in the hall. "Those New York flats overlooking Central Park have amazing entrance halls, there's always something quite strong about them." The original hall – a confusing huddle of rather grim rooms – was thus reconstructed to give an architectural logic and hierarchy to the space. Some of the doors are quite prominent with their white paint, while others are like secret panels hidden in the wall. The statement red walls are tempered by brown paint which, Bartlett explains, is a slight reference to dado panelling. "There's quite a lot of red going on here, so I wanted to give it an extra layer of something. It would be a bit too *Hammer House of Horror* otherwise."

Red is a colour Bartlett uses a lot to animate space. "I did a party for Amnesty International once," he says. "And I had each room a different colour, including red. The organiser said that it was a complete waste of time because everyone would end up in the red room. I said that was ridiculous but she was absolutely right. So ever since then we tend to use bits of red in the middle of social rooms for people to congregate around."

In this flat, nowhere is more social than the dining room, with its extraordinary red chandelier, candelabra and Gio Ponti chairs. Hanging on the gunmetal silk-taffeta walls is a reproduction of Lambert's *Moment of the Glean*, an ironic gesture to country-house dining. This is a room with a sense of humour. For Bartlett, the problem was linking it to the sitting area without it feeling like the same room or looking like a suite. Again, it is something he achieves with colour – the red is an obvious separator but the French-guy walls in the sitting room and grey-green shagreen of the two matching cabinets he had made for it, provide the connection. ■



ABOVE The roof extension was built with frameless glazing for a better architectural connection between inside and out BELOW The Gio Ponti chairs flanking the sitting-room fireplace are covered in a Noisha Crosland fabric



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE The top floor has been designed as a viewing room, with a vast sofa – designed by Waldo Works – well placed to make the most of the outlook. Woodland photograph by Yannick Demmerle and elephant painting by art duo Oily and Suzi; a large scenic lampshade made by Waldo Works adds colour to the all-white kitchen; a 1930s mirror hangs in the hall





ABOVE A seating area in the main bedroom | BELOW The spare bedroom leads into a glamorous brass bathroom OPPOSITE PAGE The back wall of the main bedroom is decorated with a de Gournay wallpaper, which has also been used to cover the shades of the floor lamps



Bartlett gives short shrift to the suggestion that the client's huge wooden chair brought back from Ethiopia breaks the flow from sitting to dining area. 'I think we take all this stuff far too seriously,' he declares. 'I understand taking the detailing of a staircase seriously because that is going to stay there forever but I think that the fact that the chair sticks out is quite funny. And it makes it her own because she loves it. I like people having weird things. I mean, granny's chair is important.'

It's rare to find an architect who is so comfortable with decoration. 'I'm OK with the wallpaper. I don't mind wallpaper,' Bartlett says, somewhat defensively, standing in front of the de Gournay wallpaper in the main bedroom. 'But it has to be something rather nice. I think it has worked really well in here. The owner likes it and that's the important thing.' He is less hesitant about the David Hicks wallpaper in the spare bedroom, which he has complemented with a brass bathroom. 'Mmm, it's quite full on isn't it? I thought it would be funny and it will tarnish up to a good old gobb!'

But the decoration wouldn't work without the immaculate detailing. In the kitchen, marble counters are book-matched and mitre-edged, while the slick staircase leading up to the office and roof terrace is a feat of modern engineering but also uses traditional notching details on the treads. 'I hope with this flat that we've come up with something that's smart but not grand and also slightly playful,' he concludes. 'The client loves it, and that's what I care about. Obviously, I care that it's beautifully made and that I feel proud of it too but the best thing is giving someone a home they really like.' ■