



THE KNOWLEDGE:
KATE EARLE

Q: What's your favourite interiors shop?

A: Gordon Watson on the Fulham Road. It has a mix of 1900s and 1940s furniture, accessories from Lalique and Cartier, and contemporary silver by Paul Behvoe.

Q: Which interior designer do you admire?

A: John Saladino for his mix of old and new with quirky elements, and the odd splash of vibrant colour.

Q: Who or what inspires you?

A: Our huge library of interiors books and magazines. Particularly David Hicks for being so ahead of his time with clear, simple lines and inspirational use of block colour.

Q: If you could choose anything, what product would you have loved to have designed?

A: Any piece of Lalique glass, especially their panels which look great set into limestone.

Q: Share your best interiors tip.

A: Keep it simple. It is much better to get the 'bones' of a room right first – you can always add to a room later when you've had time to live with it. Also, buy the most comfortable bed and sofa that you can afford.

Q: What's your favourite colour scheme?

A: Shades of pewter, grey and creamy white are very glamorous and easy to live with.



It is in the guest bedroom where hints of bright colour come through, most notably the Brunschwig & Fils floral fabric at the window and pink linen on the bed valence. 'The guest bedroom overlooks the garden,' says Kate. 'It's a really pretty room with plain white walls and the light lends itself to some decoration and colour.'

There's a further sprinkling of pattern on the staircase walls. This time, it's Curves, one of the wallpapers from the Emily Todhunter Collection which comes in the signature subdued palette of almond, vanilla, moss and corn, as well as a vibrant red sang de boeuf, just to keep us on our toes.

There's now a bigger collection of papers and fabrics, which is available from Designers Guild and inspired by the sophisticated Paris interiors of the 1920s and 1930s, as well as elegant hand-blown glass lamps with silk lampshades in tones of aubergine and dove grey. In fact, this is one area where the company is set to grow as the pair has recently designed a handknotted rug for the Rug Company's Designer Collection and their own range of bespoke furniture. There's also a bed and bath collection in the pipeline. 'It will be towels and accessories, very upmarket, top of the range,' adds Kate.

Rest assured, every single piece will have that cool, classic Todhunter Earle hallmark, a timeless low-key luxe that will suit anything from an East London loft to a country house. **SEE**

Clockwise from above

left: A Lawson Wood armchair sits next to an old Chinese lacquer trunk; creams, taupes and browns make up the colour scheme in the main bedroom; a William Youward nest of tables.



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THE SOFT TOUCH

With its effortless mix of styles and harmonious blend of neutrals, this calming London interior is unmistakably by Todhunter Earle. Lara Sargent takes a look at their work.

PHOTOGRAPHY WINFRIED HEINZ/FRED COVER

DESIGN DUO Kate Earle and Emily Todhunter are renowned for their use of a muted, understated palette – think shades of toffee, buttermilk, wispy mauve and silvery grey – so it might come as a surprise to hear that they're starting to experiment with colour.

'We are still using a predominantly neutral scheme as it's very calming,' explains Kate. 'But now we're adding accents of colour and it looks fantastic.'

There's a hint of this colour swing in the South London family home that Todhunter Earle has recently redesigned. Admittedly, the overall look is an elegant harmony of cream, taupe and caramel, but there's also the occasional purple glass vase sneaking into the fireplace, a mint green armchair and a shot of pink fabric in the guest room.



One thing that is clearly in evidence is Kate and Emily's understanding of how to make a room comfortable. Their success lies in taking a mixture of traditional and contemporary elements, not forgetting their gorgeous neutrals, and creating a quietly glamorous, yet altogether cosy ambience.

It was exactly this mix of style and luxury that attracted the owners of the house to Todhunter Earle. The clients wanted a cool, contemporary look which also needed to be comfortable and practical because they have three young boys,' explains Kate.

This transformation was easier said than done, given that the white stucco townhouse hadn't been touched for at least 15 years and all four floors needed attention.

Fortunately the existing layout was fine, so it was more a case of providing a totally new look and updating what was already there, rather than carrying out any major structural alterations.

'The owners knew what they wanted, but didn't know how to execute it,' says Kate. 'They were very keen on taking part in the sourcing and decision-making, and they didn't mind waiting for the perfect piece rather than buying something for the sake of it.'

It was a meticulousness that stretched to every last detail – they insisted on sitting on each sofa and chair to make sure it was just right and even designed their own walnut console table, which was made by a company near their country home. ▷

Above and above left: Todhunter Earle's signature palette of neutral colours runs throughout the house.



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Above: in the kitchen the Aga was replaced by a stainless steel range cooker. Opposite, clockwise from top left: A B&B Italia bed and linen blinds create a simple, stylish look in the main bedroom; the basement dining room features an original marble fireplace; the staircase walls are papered in Curves from the Emily Todhunter Collection; a freestanding bath from CP Hart in the large en suite bathroom.

The ground floor is undisputedly Todhunter Earle. In the drawing room, old and new furniture are mixed together with ease – a classic-style armchair sits comfortably between antique Chinese lacquer trunks and a horsehair-covered stool. There's also a simple painted fireplace with a slate hearth and an iron grate filled with smooth, sculptural stone balls from Woodhams. Walls are painted in a soft lilac-grey hue, while the neutral coloured carpet looks like sisal but is actually pure wool, which is less scratchy underfoot (there's that comfort factor again).

The house had some good architectural details – high ceilings, cornices, original shutters and a white marble fireplace,' recalls Kate. 'We left these, had the entire place painted and laid new flooring throughout.'

Downstairs in the basement this meant a seamless floor of wide, natural oak boards from Weldon Flooring to unify the different kitchen, dining and playroom areas.

The next project on the list was to replace the existing country-style kitchen with sleek, off-white Allmimo units from Alternative Plans and chunky limestone worktops. To complete the chic, modern look, Kate decided to ditch the Aga in favour of a big stainless steel range cooker. 'Usually people like to hold on to their Aga,' says Kate. 'But it made the house really hot all the time, so they were eager to get rid of it as soon as possible.'

The main bedroom is a luxuriously laid-back blend of taupes and creams offset with pared-down furniture from B&B Italia, and simple linen blinds bordered in brown suede. Meanwhile, the large, en suite bathroom was rejigged to make space for a freestanding, roll-top bath, separate shower and dressing area. 'It was dominated by a huge fitted marble bath which was fairly new at the time, but it had to be ripped out to make the best use of the space,' explains Kate. ▶

