

A conjuring in the country

Surrey meets Scandinavia in a Norwegian family's light-filled Arts and Crafts villa, which country-house specialist Todhunter Earle Interiors has imbued with a touch of magic

TEXT LISA FREEDMAN | PHOTOGRAPHS ALICIA TAYLOR | LOCATIONS EDITOR LIZ ELLIOT



DINING ROOM The **'Papa Bear Chair'** by Hans J Wegner is from Twentytwentyone. Swedish mid-century **wall hangings** from Sigmar are displayed above a **'Brass Cabinet'** from Studioilse. DRAWING ROOM Two sheepskin-covered **'Tired Man Armchairs'** by Flemming Lassen from Twentytwentyone are positioned near the French window, which has **curtains** in 'Ombre Alpaca Linen' by Rosemary Hallgarten from Holland & Sherry





DRAWING ROOM 'The Ilse Sofa', designed by Ilse Crawford for George Smith, picks up on the blue tones of a **painting** by Peter Joyce from Wilson Stephens & Jones. The green spiral is an Eighties gouache-on-board **artwork** by Norman Dilworth



DRAWING ROOM 'Studio Sofas' from Rose Uniacke and a lacquered **coffee table** from Baring Bespoke Furniture stand on a 'Vine' **rug** from The Rug Company. The crystal **chandelier** is from Norfolk Decorative Antiques, which specialises in lighting



KITCHEN Units by Orwells Furniture are teamed with **'The Crillon Stools'** from Soane, upholstered in 'Walnut Cowhide Leather'. Soane also made **'The Rattan Ripple Console'** in the dining area. The **table lamp** was designed by Kelly Wearstler

Scandinavia is known for its pale wood-panelled interiors and icy white light; Surrey, for its mellow Lutyens manors and misty rolling hills, so you might have thought it a rather challenging ambition for a London-based Norwegian family to graft a strong flavour of its roots onto a turn-of-the-century Arts and Crafts house. In the end, however, the cosmopolitan blend proved a great success.

The owners started at an advantage with a clever choice of house – the expansive red brick and stone villa, poised high up on a promontory with panoramic views, was already unusually bright. Astutely, too, they then turned to Todhunter Earle, a London interiors studio known for its magic touch with country living, to perform the conjuring act they were hoping for.

'The house was bought to be used at weekends, but with the idea that the family might eventually move there full time,' says Kate Earle, who took charge of the transformation. 'Initially, we were asked just to furnish it – in the end, we did a complete redesign.'

At the outset of a project, Todhunter Earle's designers have an in-depth conversation with their clients about how they like to live. Based on this, they present them with detailed furniture layouts. 'We start with the end and work backwards,' says Kate. 'The clients can see exactly how it will look when they walk into each room. They never say, "I didn't expect it to turn out like that."'

Here, Kate's brief was to supply a comfortable and contemporary home for busy weekends with three

young children and visiting friends, as well as more grown-up spaces for formal entertaining. 'The owners also had a strong feeling of the look that they wanted us to create and we started out with some Scandinavian furniture and art they already owned.'

Fortunately, the house, as Goldilocks might have put it, is just right for these objectives. Set primarily on two long, wide floors, it is compact enough to be intimate, while still offering dramatic living and dining space leading off an imposing central hall.

Undoubtedly, one of the star attractions is the ground-floor drawing room, which is flooded with light via south- and west-facing windows. Here, Kate set the tone with a palette of peaceful neutrals and Nordic blues, as subtle as it is striking. 'The room has odd architectural detailing and mouldings, so we worked with the paint expert Edward Bulmer to ensure the colours change at just the right point. The advantage of Edward's natural paints is that you can control the percentage of tint.'

So that not a ray was lost, breezy unlined curtains were set well away from the shuttered window frames and a sophisticated (but never daunting) elegance was achieved with a counterpoint of outsize Rose Uniacke-designed sofas and quietly patterned rugs punctuated with stand-out pieces of vintage furniture and artwork.

The tendency in large family houses is for certain corners to become neglected. To ensure that nowhere would have that once-a-year quality, spaces such as the nobly proportioned dining room were given a double function. 'We made a comfortable seating area next to the fireplace with an armchair and reading light, so an





DINING ROOM A glass and bronze **pendant light** from FBC London hangs over a '**Riva Table**' in walnut by Fiona McDonald. **Chairs** from Svenskt Tenn were upholstered in 'Fez Weave' by Guy Goodfellow Collection. ENTRANCE HALL The bespoke **sofa** is covered in Pierre Frey's 'Basile' in crème. The marble-topped '**Hole Coffee Table**' by Gabriel Tan is from The Conran Shop



BATHROOM AND DRESSING ROOM 'Scrolling Fern Frond' wallpaper in emerald from Soane was combined with Calacatta Oro marble flooring from Cullifords for a glamorous mid-century feel. The 'Paris' bath is from The Water Monopoly. Designed in the Forties by Danish architect Philip Arctander, the sheepskin-covered 'Arctander Chair' was bought from Skandium



MAIN BEDROOM The bespoke **four-poster** is from Beaudesert. **FIRST-FLOOR CORRIDOR** The mid-century **rug** is from Robert Stephenson. A Vico Magistretti **lamp** from Skandium stands on a **chest of drawers** by Josef Frank from Svenskt Tenn



DAUGHTERS' ROOM The **wallpaper** is CFA Voysey's 'The Anselm', scaled up by Surface View. The **light** is from Pinch

adult could sit and read quietly while the children are eating in the kitchen just next door.'

Scandinavian simplicity can sometimes border on the austere, but Kate mitigated against this tendency with a strong topnote of glamour. Alongside the main bedroom, the wife's generous marble-floored bathroom and dressing room has been softened with a sinuous green and white wallpaper and brass taps, which owe as much to Princess Margaret's Mustique as to Alvar Aalto's high-minded minimalism. Meanwhile, the forest-green marble and dark walnut of the husband's shower room pay tribute to the golden age of the gentlemen's club.

In the main bedroom, geometric pelmetted curtains bring a sense of scale, while the rock-crystal wardrobe handles glitter like jewels in the midday sun. The Bill Amberg leather handrail edging the staircase to the attic guest quarters is a further reminder that luxury so often lies in the details.

In keeping with the owners' initial brief, the furniture throughout is a careful mix of Scandi modern classics and contemporary pieces with a strong mid-century aesthetic, such as the Fiona McDonald sideboards in the dining room and drawing room. Woven wall hangings and a trove of period lighting further signpost the inspiration. 'I can't bear it when people walk in and say, ah yes, that's from X or Y,' explains Kate. 'We always carry out an extensive search for unusual vintage and antique pieces.' Which, of course, is what gives the design its unique edge – referential certainly, pastiche never □

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Todhunter Earle Interiors: todhunterearle.com