

PAINTERLY BLUES AND BESPOKE TOUCHES MAKE THIS MANHATTAN APARTMENT HEAVENLY

For a family of ex-Londoners, Emily Todhunter crafts a home designed to be “nearer to the sky.”

BY ELIZABETH FAZZARE PUBLISHED: DEC 30, 2022

When longtime clients said they were moving their young family from London to New York in time for the 2021 school year, designer Emily Todhunter knew the pressure to transform their new stateside home would be on. But as the COVID-19 pandemic began soon after the project did, it kicked the gauge up high. “I’m having heart palpitations just thinking about it,” jokes Todhunter, founder of London-based [Todhunter Earle Interiors](#), who not only completed the gut renovation and redesign on time, but did so fully remotely, with the help of New York City-based architect [John B. Murray](#).

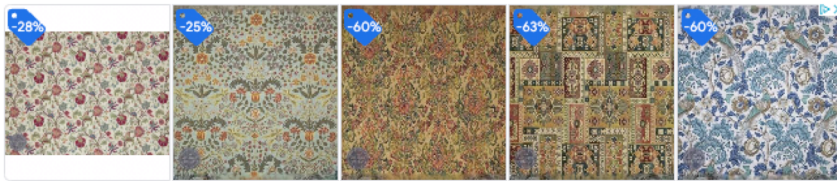


Soft teals define many of the home’s spaces, including in the living room, which is swathed in a ribbed silk from Claremont.

Francesco Lagnese

In their new four-bedroom apartment in a historic building on Manhattan’s Upper East Side, the family wanted to live the way they had in London: casually, communally, and surrounded by art, books, and objects from their travels. But they also wanted to be able to enjoy time apart, in rooms both elegant and multipurpose. “There’s a lovely balance of open spaces and quiet, private spaces,” explains the designer of the new floor plan, which is centered around an enfilade from the entry. “If everything’s open, you can shut a door and feel totally peaceful and able to concentrate.”

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“It’s got a rather cool palette with a few surprises.”

Todhunter knew her clients weren’t afraid of color, and their preferences often steered toward teal blues, chocolate browns, and mushroom beiges in combination with warm timber. In New York, however, pops of hues—like orange in a breakfast nook banquette and raspberry in a velvet-covered dressing room bench—add a sense of playfulness to the design. “It’s got a rather cool palette with a few surprises,” she says.



De Gournay’s deep blue Hippolyta’s Forest wallpaper creates a dramatic backdrop for diners.

Francesco Lagnese

The dining room is particularly astonishing. “I was quite shocked when she said, ‘You can go mad.’” Wrapped in de Gournay’s silk Hippolyta’s Forest wallcovering, with a deep blue-and-white floral pattern, this standout space is entirely bespoke. An [Hervé Van der Straeten](#) pendant hangs over the custom table, armchairs, and ombré rug by [Rosemary Hallgarten](#). A straw marquetry sideboard by [Yann Jallu](#) and another in walnut and vellum by Rupert Bevan color-match the walls. And a padded window seat provides a space to either read a book or hold an intimate conversation at a late-night dinner party. Blue silk curtains, bookcases, and a fireplace complete its bold yet cozy feel.

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Blue tones are picked up too in the open-plan breakfast room and [kitchen](#), where all the custom cabinetry is [painted](#) in a muted pastel. In the living room, meanwhile, a blue velvet sofa and pair of custom pale teal loveseats made by [Tim Gosling](#) congregate in front of the marble hearth. In the primary bedroom, a bespoke rug made with artist [Olympia Olympitis](#) and the [Rug Company](#) gives the illusion of fallen blue flowers, a reference to the delicate de Gournay cherry blossom wallpaper on closet door panels in an adjacent dressing room cum office. “You see that very rich turquoise throughout the rooms,” Todhunter explains. “So it’s not just completely out of nowhere; you’re eased into the experience [of the dining room], even though it’s pretty far-fetched.”



Brass-inlaid double doors lead into the wood-clad library.
Francesco Lagnese

Against this restrained color palette, bespoke details play a starring role. Brass-inlaid double doors lead to the wood-paneled library, where an abstract painting by artist Deborah Tarr hangs over the sitting area. In the living room, parchment, sycamore, and bronze add intriguing character to a pair of custom marble-topped Van der Straeten buffet tables, while tactile cast bronze hardware by [Francis Sultana](#) adds a handsome touch to suede-paneled cabinets in a dressing room. In fact, virtually anywhere one looks, there are excitements to discover, almost calling out to be touched. “There are so many textures, from silk wallpaper to rattan wallcoverings to lovely patterns in the timber floors,” says the designer. “It was a slightly no-holds-barred job given the circumstances. They just said, ‘Go for it.’”

So how does it all compare with the family’s London townhouse? This home feels “slightly bluer, stronger, and nearer to the sky,” Todhunter reflects. “It’s just more New York, less London.”