



An eye for style

Filling her London home with artwork, colour and natural light has created unusual but timeless and beautiful rooms for designer Victoria Cator.

Interior designer Victoria Cator's renovation and extension of her double-fronted Victorian home in London has almost doubled the floor space and created a stylish four-storey home that is flooded with natural light.

Celebrating strong colours and sumptuous textures, the home has green velvet wall coverings, wall panelling, natural stone floors, painted hardwood flooring and plenty of original features.

"I wanted to create a home that was good for all seasons, and colour is a good way of doing that. There is no point painting a dark room white in the hope it will brighten it – accept that it's a dark space

PERIOD FEATURES

Where possible, original features have been kept, while period detailing such as ornate skirting and coving, wall panelling and traditionally styled doors have been selected.

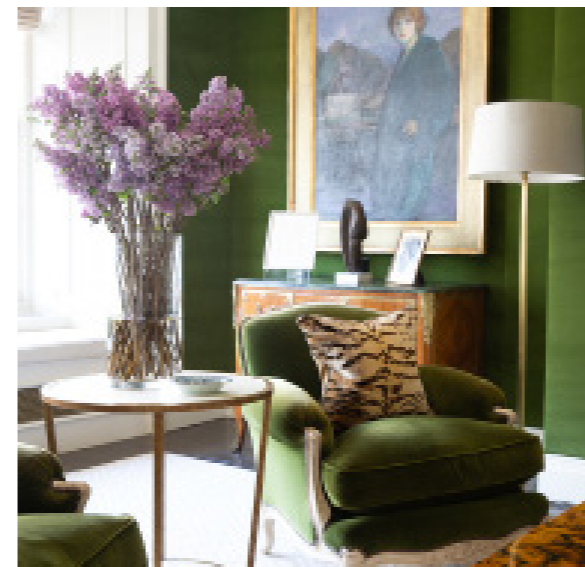


Meet the designer
Victoria Cator has lived all over the world and worked in Hong Kong and New York in jobs from fashion and retail to government work. In London in the 1990s she studied at Christies and developed her own interior decorating business in 1997, which she runs from Chelsea. Her cookery book, *Flavour of the Month*, was published in 2008.



VICTORIA'S TOP TIPS

- Don't follow trends – follow your instincts, and focus on light, orientation and scale.
- Don't be afraid to use larger furniture – it can appear more robust and can improve the feel of a room.
- Be bold with colour. Use deep colours, texture and artwork to bring a space to life.
- Spend on things when needed, but experiment with effects. Sometimes it doesn't cost much to recreate something you would pay huge amounts for.



ARTWORK

Victoria already owned the pieces of art that adorn the wall of her home.

KITCHEN

A bank of appliances has been built into an alcove that conceals it within the wall.



and celebrate that. Paint it dark!" Victoria suggests. "My green velvet walls are lovely in winter."

A design was produced by architect Eamon McGurnaghan and planning permission sought to dig out a basement as well as add a storey on top, which was ultimately successful but not without local controversy. The house, which is in a Conservation Area, is now more harmonious with other properties in the street, but some owners of neighbouring homes were resistant to the plans because of fears that an additional storey would encroach on their views.

The interior walls were pared back to bare brick, and three of the six existing fireplaces were removed to increasing usable space, and all but three windows were replaced with double-glazed soundproof sashes.

A large light well has been positioned at the top of the house allowing daylight to filter down the stairs, and a further glass panel provides light into the basement, which has 2.7m-high ceilings. Down here is a media room that provides a place for Victoria's sons to hang out on their holidays from university, and there is also a guest en suite.

"I decided against a light well in the media room, because light isn't really needed there. Instead I focused on the main living areas, and on really good lighting with clever little techniques," explains Victoria, who took inspiration from John Cullen Lighting's London showroom to light a bookcase with LED tape at the back of the shelves. "It feels really inviting," she says.

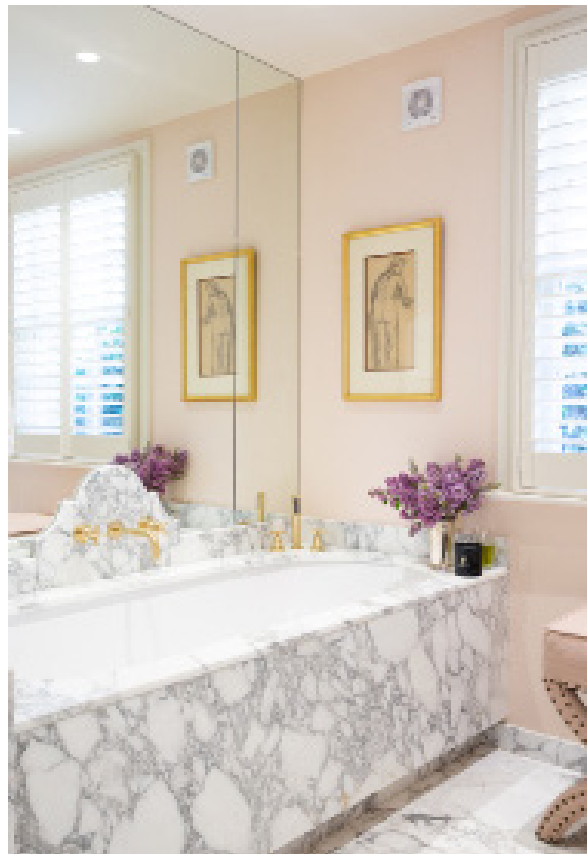
Inspired by European designers such as Jacques Garcia and Alberto Pinto, the interiors are rich and classic but simple, with old school colours and a 'less is more' ethos.



The idea for the green velvet was inspired by a house in Los Angeles that Victoria visited many years ago, and was created by an upholsterer who sewed the fabric together and applied it to battens on the wall.

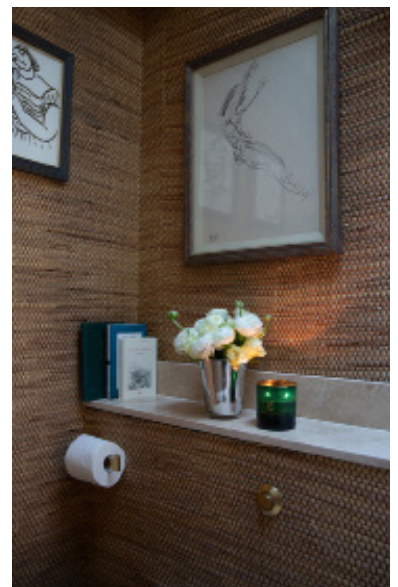
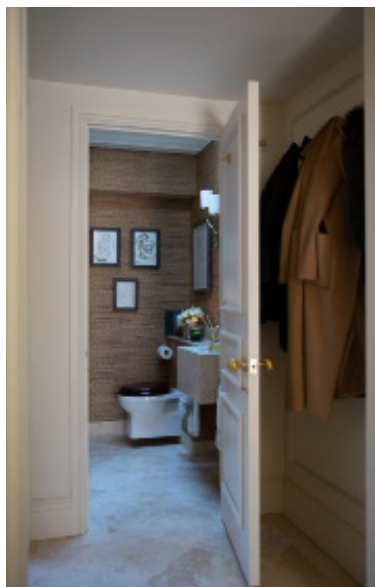
The hallway is clean and light with natural tones and wall panelling painted in white, which adds a sense of timelessness but was actually installed by the builder using MDF and beading. The staircases were replaced and fitted with wrought iron spindles and a square-edged handrail. "Hallways are underrated," says Victoria. "People so often get rid of them, but they can tie rooms together brilliantly." Pale honed travertine covers the floor, complete with fossils that are visible on the surface, while a beige and cream runner, with a geometric pattern, is laid on the stairs.

A stylish dining room has a wall clad in antique mirrors which imbue a vintage feel while also visually enhancing the sense of space. Double doors connect this with the kitchen which has an enormous island unit providing ample cupboard space and housing all the appliances and bins. Handleless light oak cabinet doors and drawer fronts are topped with a chocolate brown Silestone worktop in a suede finish that is



BATHROOM

Marble and mirrors have been used in the bathroom to create light, luxury and a deceptive sense of space.



“There is no point painting a dark room white in the hope it will brighten it.”

neither glossy nor matt. "It's absolutely remarkable," says Victoria. "You can put anything on it, such as hot pans, and it never marks. It's really durable."

Storage has been an important focus of this renovation, with cupboard space packed into every available nook, cranny and corner. Bathrooms in particular lend themselves to this.

Artwork plays a crucial role throughout the home, as does scent. As a designer of scented candles, Victoria uses fragrance to create mood. "Scent can be very powerful, and can have a surprising effect on the way people feel in their own homes," she says. "It is as important as colour."

IN DETAIL

Architect Eamon McGurnaghan: emgalimited.com

Builders Speargold: speargold.co.uk

Kitchen 202 Design: 202design.co.uk

Lighting West Elm: westelm.co.uk

Upstairs carpets, sisal and rug

Carpet Express: londoncarpetexpress.co.uk;

Tim Paige Carpets: timpagecarpets.com

Travertine Floors of Stone: floorsofstone.com

Soft Furnishings

Fineline Upholstery: finelineupholstery.co.uk;

Sue Whimster Curtains: suewhimster.co.uk

Paint Paint and Paper Library: paintandpaperlibrary.com;

Dulux: dulux.co.uk; Farrow and Ball: farrow-ball.com

Top and sanitary ware

Vado: vado.com; and Quooker: quooker.co.uk

Sink Franke: franke.com/gb/