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In the living room of a London residence that David Kleinberg Design Associates renovated in collaboration with architecture firm Donald Insall Associates, artworks by Sterling Ruby (left) and Tadaaki Kuwayama frame the view into the library, where a mirror by Sam Orlando Miller is mounted above an antique mantelpiece. For details see Sources.



classic reboot

On London's historic Eaton Square, designer David Kleinberg infuses a series of reunited 19th-century rooms with gracious modern verve

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One morning

while sitting in his Manhattan office, designer David Kleinberg got a call from a potential client wanting to discuss a project in London, where he was combining two apartments on historic Eaton Square. “I told him that sounded interesting, and I looked forward to discussing it,” recounts Kleinberg. “He replied, ‘Great, how about two o’clock? I’m in the Rizzoli Bookstore across town, flipping through your book.’”

“It was so disarming and charming,” continues the designer, who invited the caller, a financial investor who splits his time between the Middle East, Switzerland, and London, to pop over for a meeting. That was nearly ten years ago, and a detail of an antique mantelpiece in the home they completed together now graces the cover of Kleinberg’s second book, coming out from The Monacelli Press in March.

The renovations took years to finish, thanks in part to the approvals required for changes to the National Heritage-listed neoclassical townhouses that line Eaton Square. Built in the 19th century, the residences were commonly broken up into apartments after World War II, and Kleinberg’s client was

able to join side-by-side units. “It’s not vast at all but has beautifully proportioned rooms,” says Kleinberg, noting that the apartment contains the original entertaining spaces with 12-foot ceilings, exquisite plaster cornices, and soaring windows that overlook the square.

Donald Insall Associates, a firm with extensive experience updating historic properties, oversaw the architectural work, including tweaks to the layout to ensure a gracious flow. In the living room—the heart and jewel of the apartment, with its ceiling of swirling leafy plasterwork—stately symmetrical doorways were added at both ends, creating an enfilade with the dining area and kitchen on one side and an inviting library opposite. Towering mahogany doors can be closed to create separation as desired.

“The idea was to make a comfortable but elegant apartment for a bachelor, maybe eventually not a bachelor,” says Kleinberg. “He wanted to be able to entertain, and it needed to function for work from home.”

The only things the client brought with him were a mixed-media abstraction by Sterling Ruby and a yellow-and-white-striped canvas by Tadaaki Kuwayama, both of which now hang at one end of the living room. Contemporary artwork combined with an elevated, old-meets-new mix of furnishings is typically part of



A chandelier by Régis Botta for Ozone hangs above the sitting area, where Kleinberg designed the sofa and armchair, both covered in a Pierre Frey fabric; the mahogany cocktail table; and the daybed. Joining the mix are pinkish crystal-resin drum tables by Atta and a custom rug by Edward Fields. OPPOSITE: Windows in the library overlooking Eaton Square are curtained in a custom-embroidered Holland & Sherry fabric. The room features an ebonized-wood desk by Object Studio topped by a Paavo Tynell lamp.



In the dining area near the open kitchen, Kleinberg installed a pair of custom pedestal tables and lacquered mahogany chairs beneath a pendant by Michael Anastassiades. OPPOSITE, FROM TOP: A vintage Italian chandelier spirals above the primary bedroom's bespoke parchment-clad bed. In a marble-lined powder room, custom sconces by Jonathan Browning from the Bright Group illuminate the custom-made vanity with Lefroy Brooks sink fixtures.

Kleinberg's well-honed approach to enlivening traditional spaces. "In the living room, we put in one or two things to reference the time period," says the designer. But most of the decor has more of a modern vibe, including the branching brass light fixture that, he notes, "holds its own against the Baroque garlanded ceiling."

Anchoring the sitting area below are a custom-tailored sofa with matching armchairs and a Tommi Parzinger-inspired daybed. Also arrayed around the space are sculptural accent pieces in distinctive materials, from a pair of rose-hued, crystal-resin drum tables by Atta to an Erwan Boulloud bronze cabinet covered in ziggurat-like protrusions, a design Kleinberg calls "very textural and masculine but sensual at the same time."

It's a description that applies to the decor throughout, not least in the library, where Kleinberg clad the walls in pale linen and installed mahogany bookcases with gently curving tops on either side of the 19th-century neoclassical mantelpiece that appears on the cover of his new monograph. Here, too, the furnishings exude modern refinement, including a pair of 1930s Maxime Old chairs

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with shapely armrests, an Aldo Tura-style tiered parchment cocktail table stained chocolate brown, and a sofa upholstered in tufted russet suede. The bespoke ebonized-wood desk by Tom Vaughan of Object Studio is "a tour de force of woodworking," as Kleinberg puts it, "forming this incredible spiraling scroll at one end, and it splits into separate ribbons at the other."

On the opposite side of the living room, the dining area is outfitted with a pair of square pedestal tables inspired by Carlo de Carli that can be separated when the owner is alone or combined when hosting a group. In the adjacent kitchen, the cabinets are finished in pearl-gray lacquer with graphic brass inlays, while the eye-catching backsplash is reverse-painted glass in gold and amber tones.

The client had some specific ideas, notably, that his bedroom be a Zenlike cocoon of calm. He also offered up a clever way of thinking about the three main spaces. "He saw the living room as having a spring-summer feel, with some yellows and baby lettuce greens; the library as being autumnal; and the kitchen feeling icy and wintry," says Kleinberg. It's an imaginative description for this home, which blends eras, styles, and moods, all with consummate aplomb. □

