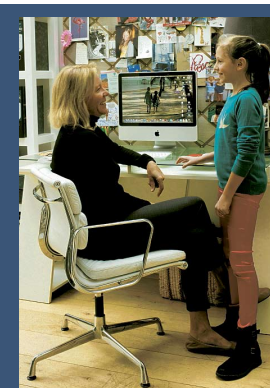


THERE MUST BE SOME MIX-UP

Stay away from contrived themes and trust your instincts when it comes to combining patterns, paints, trinkets and treasures, says interiors guru Samantha Todhunter

Words RACHEL LEEDHAM Photographs RACHAEL SMITH



THE FAMILY

Interior designer Samantha Todhunter shares her home with her daughters Carla and Lucia (left) and king charles spaniels Wellington and Boo. Samantha's previous career, as a writer and design editor for magazines including *Australia Vogue Living* and *House & Garden*, has helped inform her innovative approach to decorating.

THE HOME

A classic terraced Victorian worker's cottage in West London, with three bedrooms and a small courtyard garden. The house was in good shape, but was in need of a decorative overhaul.

This project was all about creating a cosy home for the three of us,' says Samantha. 'I didn't want it to be too "designed" – the last thing that the girls and I were looking for was to come home to a perfect set piece.

'The basic bones of the property were fine, so it was a question of redecorating and giving the kitchen and bathroom a face-lift. My approach was very non-formulaic, but I wanted to make the walls and floors consistent, so I used a soft French grey on the walls throughout, with oak boards on the ground floor, and dark grey velvety carpet on the first and second floors.

'The house we were moving from was much larger, but I kept many favourite pieces, including the 1960s Arco lamp I grew up with as a child in Milan, and an old sofa and armchairs, which I re-covered. I also found myself with a collection of pictures I had amassed over the years. It made sense to group them together on one wall – they make much more of an impact.

'I like the idea of busy spaces, which is why I have introduced lots of pattern. As long as these designs are balanced with a simple canvas, it all works, and they turn a bland room into something more interesting.

'It's still a work in progress; I'm continually collecting and my inventory is always changing.' samanthatodhunter.com

THE LIVING ROOM The bold geometric rug (Key Shadow by Suzanne Sharp for the Rug Company, therugcompany.com) and floral tapestry cushions (Birdie Blossom by Paul Smith for the Rug Company) showcase Samantha's brave approach to mixing colour and pattern. Classic brass Hardwick table lamps (vaughandesigns.com) sit on glossy yellow side tables, designed by Samantha, which add another injection of high-voltage colour to the scheme. The original 1960s Platner table is still produced by Knoll (knoll.com)



ABOVE 'I am vaguely obsessed with birds,' says Samantha of her framed photograph of a budgerigar by Australian fine art photographer Leila Jeffreys (leilajeffreys.com). The storage flanking the fireplace was smartened up with a lick of paint – French Grey Mid by Little Greene (littlegreene.com) – and new door handles. The armchair was revived with slip covers in Samantha's all-time favourite linen, Cabot by Olicana Textiles (olicana.co.uk)

MAKE AN EXHIBITION FOR YOURSELF

Originating in Paris in the 17th century, salon-style picture hanging is a good way to create maximum impact with a collection of prints, photos and paintings. In the living room, self-portraits by Samantha's daughters, a watercolour by her grandfather and a personal note given to her by the late Gianni Versace are all grouped together. The pictures were laid out on the floor and then moved around until the arrangement looked right. 'It's like a jigsaw puzzle,' says Samantha. Many of the frames used here are from the simple Ribba series by Ikea (ikea.com). >



'Matching everything has never done it for me; I tend to go with my gut instinct. Unexpected combinations draw you into a room and give it an edge'

THE BATHROOM 'This was originally a very bleak room – it was all white, with a hard, black tiled floor,' says Samantha, who wallpapered three of the walls in Squiggle by Vivienne Westwood for Cole & Son (cole-and-son.com). 'It's busy and a bit mad, but I think that if you are going to use wallpaper, you should go for it. It

turns an otherwise utilitarian space into something chic and fabulous.' The fourth wall is mirrored to give the modest-sized room the illusion of space. The hexagonal mosaic floor tiles are from Criterion Tiles (criteriontiles.co.uk); the shutters are from The New England Shutter Company (thenewenglandshuttercompany.com)

WELLINGTON AND BOO (right) keep Samantha company in her office. Their basket is from Oka (okadirect.com)



CARLA IN THE KITCHEN (above) Samantha gave the kitchen a face-lift by sanding back the cupboards and painting them white, and adding Carrara marble worktops. For similar drawer handles, try Willow & Stone (willowandstone.co.uk). The metro tiles, from Criterion Tiles (criteriontiles.co.uk), add an urban edge that is softened with a zebra-print cowhide from the French Bedroom Company (frenchbedroomcompany.co.uk)

THE DINING ROOM (opposite) To make this relatively small space feel larger, Samantha panelled the alcoves with mirrored glass. The mirrors were drilled with holes prior to installation so that she could hang favourite watercolours by Australian artist James Gordon (jamesgordon.com.au). The circular table (from thedormyhouse.com) is covered with a tablecloth made from faded damask linen (Chimère by Metaphores, from Abbott & Boyd, abbottandboyd.co.uk) and topped with glass. The Arco light is available from the Conran Shop (conranshop.co.uk) >





NIFTY SHADES OF GREY
 Samantha used soft grey paint – French Grey by Little Greene (littlegreene.com) – for the walls, as it's less harsh than white. It comes in three tones, so she used darker shades for the woodwork and in the bedroom to create a cosy feel. For more greys in tonal shades, try Paint Library (paintlibrary.co.uk).

THE MASTER BEDROOM (above and left) Samantha mixed cocooning grey walls and a headboard covered in luxurious Tabularasa cotton by Dedar (dedar.com). Chinese trunks from Oka (okadirect.com) are used as bedside tables and double as clothes storage. The crystal ball pendant light is available from Holloways of Ludlow (hollowaysofludlow.com)

CARLA'S BEDROOM (right) Red lacquer shelves from Ikea make a simple display area in the light-filled room tucked beneath the eaves. The sleigh bed is from Bump (bumpstuff.com) and the leather pouffe from Graham and Green (grahamandgreen.co.uk)

