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THE GO-BETWEEN

A NEW YORK DECORATOR BECOMES THE MEDIATOR BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT AND EAST AND WEST WHEN RENOVATING A FILMMAKER'S LONDON APARTMENT
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The living room in the apartment was a challenge for decorator Sarah Upton. The room was filled with a mix of styles, from a 19th-century chair to a modern lamp. Upton's goal was to create a cohesive look that honored the room's history while adding contemporary touches. She chose a mix of colors and textures, including the blue ceramic lamps and the floral rug. The room is a perfect example of how to blend old and new.



WHERE WE ALL TEST FLAMEWORKS

When the project first took the form of a story, it was about a woman who had a passion for art and a need to be present in the world. The room was the stage for her life, and she was the star. The room was a mix of styles, from a 19th-century chair to a modern lamp. Upton's goal was to create a cohesive look that honored the room's history while adding contemporary touches. She chose a mix of colors and textures, including the blue ceramic lamps and the floral rug. The room is a perfect example of how to blend old and new.

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The living room has an early 20th-century Spanish influence. Facing each other are the terrace with plants and flowers from Harper & Fort's. The Anglo Indian movement during the early 1900s country. Anglo Indian style and some chairs are paired with a Renaissance style library table in the study. A late 19th-century painted oil on canvas the landscape. See Resources.



To top it all off, nothing was trifling or unimportant, from the beautiful porcelain bust of Wellington that the client had spotted in a garden in South London during the early '90s and bought for a pound after knocking the vendor's door to the glass decorative fire that a relative had purchased in Austria, saved 100 lire pesos, and brought back to London on a plane. It now graces the top of an ever-popular case in the study. "Every object has a story," says Smith. "Nothing's there just to fill a void." The narrative weight of the items in the Victorian row house, which dates from the 1870s or '80s, suits architect Peter Smith's job was to assure that it wouldn't look like the Old Country Shop. "I had to make it modern though I had nothing modern to work with."

Symmetry, balance, and editing were key. Painted lamps, chairs, and candleholders needed "a soothing quality," Smith says. And he grouped the waxy small pieces to keep them from being overwhelmed. A collection of Indian silver nosewater sprinklers, gazing stone figurines, vases on a shelf mirrored the four corner cabinets that Bannerberg installed in the dining room. To further highlight them, Smith skinned the cabinets and lit them from within, "so everything would pop" at night, and dinner guests would be surrounded by a soft glow.

If Smith didn't want the apartment to look like a shop, neither did he want it to evoke a museum, despite the presence of a Van Dyck, a Klimt, and a marble statue by Canova, all inherited. "We wanted to make sure it didn't come across as stuffy," he says. That meant moving the Canova. Bannerberg had placed it in a niche of the dining room window, flanked on each. Smith stuck the statue in an alcove off the dining room where it wouldn't be "intruding," and tried to window seat with a pair of light-admitting Magnal jet screens (or jet noise screens). "You might not even notice the statue, an anniversary present from the client's father to his mother, until you return from the bath room and see



In a guest bedroom, a William Stearn print of Delhi hangs beside an antique Brighton bedstead bed with an Indian cotton coverlet. Facing page: An 18th-century Moghul facade from a merchant's house is used as a headboard for a bed from the Cornish Shop in the master bedroom. The European chandelier since hung in an Indian palace, the printed cotton on the pillows are from India, and the curtain is 18th-century. See Restoration.



it to the side of the screen, adding surprise and, as Smyth says, creating a contrast of "East meets West, which runs through the whole apartment."

The biggest job bed came in the master bedroom. The client took Smyth to see a section of an 18th-century Moghul facade he had taken in love with at an antique store in Notting Hill. Neither knew where it might go. It arrived in some 50 pieces. "I didn't know I'd bought the whole thing," the client admits. Smyth had a dream team to transform it into a kind of headboard, raised on a pedestal, over a clean-lined bed from the Cornish Shop. "It could look

like a chair," says Smyth, "but it works in the scale of the room," which has 13-foot ceilings. "It makes the room much more intimate."

Wading through centuries of history can be an epic novel task. But Smyth remains modest about his accomplishments. "It was just a matter of cleaning it up. My job was to recover the whole apartment." The client gives a stronger review: "He's truly remarkable. He has great taste but he doesn't force his on you. You can have crazy ideas"—like finding a passage to India via Germany, Alabama, New York, and London—and he makes it work." ■

