

A London town house gets a fashionable makeover at the hands of designer *Bryan O'Sullivan*

LOCAL COLOR

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THE PLAYROOM IS COCOONED IN A WATTS OF WESTMINSTER FABRIC, WHILE THE SOFA WEARS A PINK MOHAIR FROM GEORGE SMITH. CUSHIONS CRAFTED BY LIZ O'SULLIVAN; ROSE UNIACKE COCKTAIL TABLE; KASTHALL RUG. FOR DETAILS SEE RESOURCES.

"I was acclimatizing from L.A. and was desperate to have my own little oasis in London," says homeowner Maire Coulson.



FROM THE FONTANAARTE PENDANT LIGHT TO THE MASSIMO AND LELLA VIGNELLI COCKTAIL TABLE, A SOPHISTICATED MIX OF ITALIAN MIDCENTURY DESIGN DEFINES THE DRAWING ROOM. FRANCO ALBINI BUREAU WITH SHELVES; CARLO ERBA MIRROR; ROBERTO GIULIO RIDA SCONCES; PAOLO BUFFA CABINET. A MONOLOGUE LONDON SOFA SITS OPPOSITE A PAIR OF VINTAGE ARMCHAIRS THAT HOMEOWNER MAIRE COULSON BOUGHT IN LOS ANGELES.

ALAN RABGETT.



ABOVE JOSEF FRANK CHAIRS UPHOLSTERED IN VARIOUS FRANK-DESIGNED TEXTILES SURROUND THE DINING TABLE. VINTAGE ITALIAN LIGHT FIXTURE. ARTWORKS BY HEATH NEWMAN. **OPPOSITE** BRASS DETAILS ON THE ANTIQUE PENDANTS AND BESPOKE CABINETRY WARM UP THE KITCHEN. GAGGENAU WALL OVENS AND COOKTOP.

London's

riverside enclave of Chelsea has been a chic address since Oscar Wilde took up residence in 1884, but historically it was a poor working-class area, and despite the occasional mansion, most of its houses are rather modest in scale. Even so, this bijou property on one of the neighborhood's swankiest streets, recently reconfigured by designer Bryan O'Sullivan, packs a lot into its narrow lot. It was bought in 2019 by the Irish angel investor Maire Coulson, who had spent the last decade living in Los Angeles but was looking for a change of pace and a London pied-à-terre for her and her three-year-old son, Edward.

Built in the late 1930s, the house had been expanded by its previous owner, with a long rear extension and a full-length basement underneath, but, says O'Sullivan, the interiors "felt too linear and somewhat soulless." Work started in March 2019, and as Coulson recalls, "I was acclimatizing from L.A. and was desperate to have my own little oasis in London. I wanted to feel total escapism, which ultimately translated into an overload of texture, color, and comfort, all while being functional—especially as I have a toddler whose fingers are perpetually sticky."

Luckily she already knew O'Sullivan, a fellow countryman who had worked on numerous private projects for her parents but who really made headlines in 2019 with his much-admired Berkeley Bar & Terrace in Knightsbridge. After studying architecture in London, O'Sullivan worked with several AD100 architects and designers, including Annabelle Selldorf, the late David Collins, Martin Brudnizki, and Luis Laplace, before setting up his own studio in 2013. For this project, he explains, "Maire's brief was to add personality and playfulness to the house, while still functioning as a place to entertain family and friends."

Though the place has good-size rooms, the first floor is far deeper than it is wide, so thoughtful reconfiguration was required to avoid a corridor feel. O'Sullivan's solution was to stick to a calm, cool palette, applying a polished marmorino plaster finish to the walls, which bounces sunlight back into the kitchen and dining area from the courtyard garden. The drawing room, at the front of the house, has the same luminous finish and offers a calm, pared-back space, perfect for displaying some choice examples of midcentury Italian furniture as well as the boxy vintage armchairs that Coulson brought with her from L.A.

At the back, by contrast, client and designer have run riot with color and pattern in the playroom, converted from a former garage, and the basement cinema room immediately beneath. Psychedelic wallpapers and fabrics cover the walls (and in the case of the cinema room the ceiling), along with brightly colored sofas and contrasting cushions. "These are spaces used sporadically through the day," O'Sullivan explains, "so we wanted to make them feel cozy and welcoming, with a sense of playfulness—the perfect place to escape from a dull, rainy London day." The painted battens that divide the wall-paper into panels have both decorative and optical functions: "The cinema room is particularly big and lacks an obvious focal point," O'Sullivan says, "so dividing up the wall planes makes the space feel smaller, as well as adding some refinement to the maximalist patterns."

Moving upstairs, the second-floor primary bedroom uses pattern in a more restrained way, with Bennison's Osiris matchy-matching the walls, headboard, and curtains. It's a thoroughly decorated look, but this was very much a collaboration between client and designer. As O'Sullivan says,

"Maire travels frequently and has lived in Paris, London, Dublin, and New York, so she has a very international and eclectic approach to design. I love how she has no fear when it comes to pattern or print, and in many ways she pushed me too."

The second floor originally had two bedrooms, with the primary one located on the third, attic floor, but that was deemed impractical, not least because of Coulson's extensive clothing collection, which needed a walk-in wardrobe of its own. By converting the spare bedroom on the second floor into a dressing room, with its own bathroom, O'Sullivan was able to create a suite.

This isn't the first time Coulson has lived in the area. "I did a brief stint at London College of Fashion before moving to L.A. and lived in Chelsea for a couple of years," she says. "I find it strikes the perfect balance of city living with a bit more space. I love having everything on my doorstep, and given that most of my family are now based in Europe, London seemed like the right call." Her only regret? "I'm currently working on a cosmetics start-up with a friend in L.A., which is a constant reminder of the amazing weather and relaxed lifestyle I've traded off!"

HEATH NEWMAN



A PRINTED LINEN BY HOUSE OF HACKNEY
PANELS THE CINEMA ROOM. BESPOKE SOFA
IN A SCHUMACHER VELVET. VINTAGE HANS
WEGNER ARMCHAIRS. PENDANT LIGHTS BY
LUTYENS FURNITURE & LIGHTING. TOTEM POLE
BY BRYAN O'SULLIVAN STUDIO. ON WALLS,
PAINT & PAPER LIBRARY PAINT.



THE PRIMARY BEDROOM IS SWATHED IN A BENNISON TEXTILE. BESPOKE BED AND BENCH; VINTAGE KALMAR PENDANT LIGHT; SOHO HOME FOOTSTOOL. OPPOSITE A WHIMSICAL FLOTILLA OF MODEL HOT AIR BALLOONS DEFINES THE SON'S ROOM. CUSTOM CLOUD MURAL BY CLARE WALLIS; BESPOKE WHEELED BED; ROMAN SHADES OF A MANUEL CANOVAS FABRIC.



“Maire has no fear when it comes to pattern or print, and in many ways she pushed me too,” notes designer Bryan O’Sullivan.