

Town & Country

ESTABLISHED IN 1846

THE EXOTIC LIFE

SPECIAL HOME ISSUE

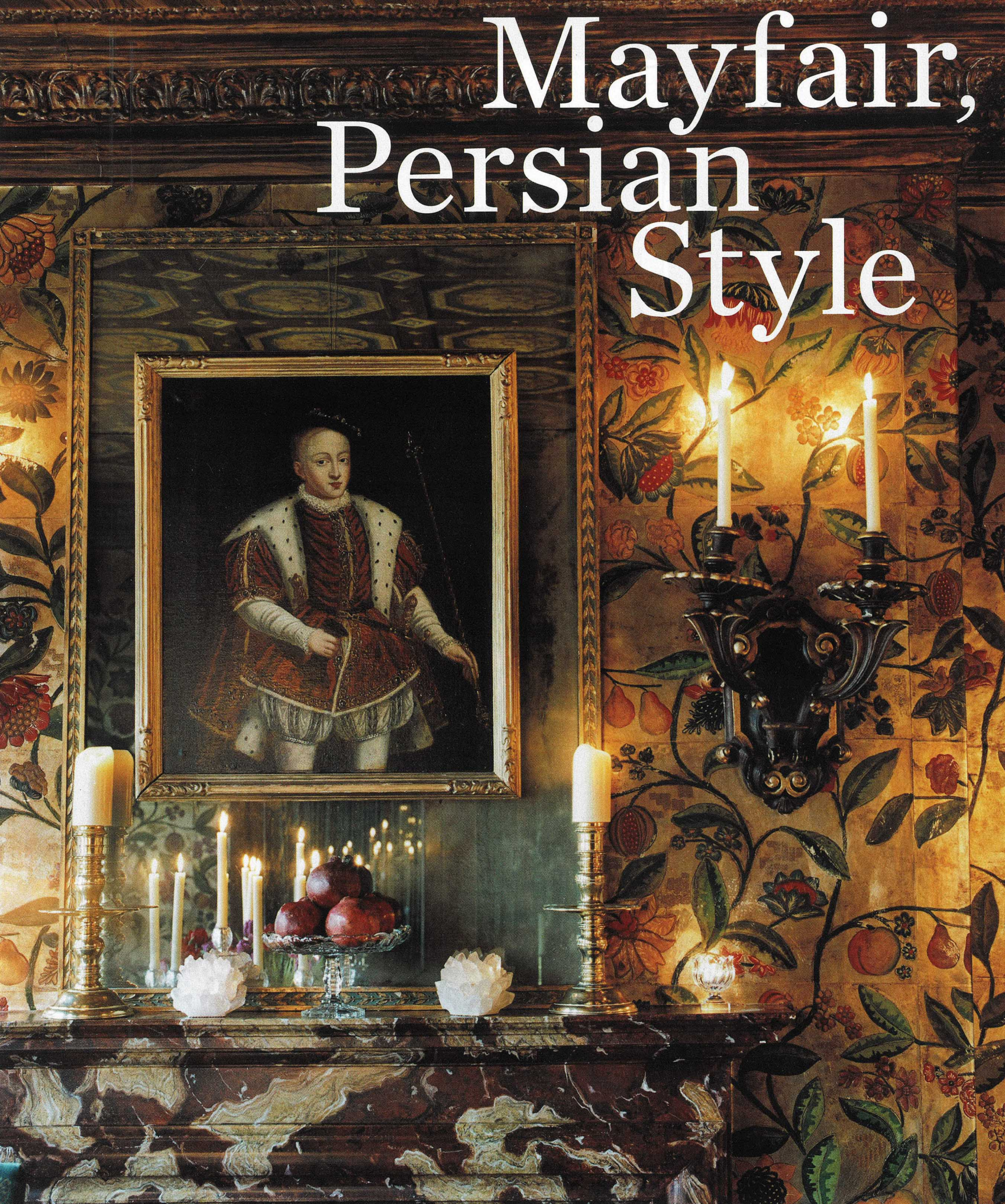
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Marisa Noel Brown
and son Ford on Mustique

Mayfair, Persian Style



Rich, romantic and full of foreign intrigue:
that's the look that London designer Alidad
is known for—and the look he goes
home to. *By Anthony Gardner*
Photographs by *James Merrell*



Above the mantel in Alidad's dining room (opposite), a 17th-century portrait tops an antique mirror. The walls are custom-made embossed-leather panels. This page: The designer in his drawing room. The studded side table is from his new Velvet furniture collection.



things, to create what Alidad (as he is usually known) calls a layered effect: neoclassical lamps and antique side tables; doors, walls and a ceiling painted with elaborate Islamic-inspired designs; above all, exquisite fabrics. From pristine new chenille to ancient, worn-out ikat, they cover sofas, chairs, floors and walls and even tumble from the tops of doors. It comes as no surprise to learn that Alidad started out in the carpets and textiles department of Sotheby's in London, or that it was his knowledge of fabrics that gave him the confidence to become a designer.

What makes this cornucopia all the more remarkable is that hardly anything matches. Alidad explains that his inspiration came from visiting stately homes: "I remember looking around these lovely rooms and thinking, *That does not go with this*. When you start dissecting it, you realize that there were once a pair of chairs, but one broke, so they brought another one that looked vaguely like it from another room. So this became my thing: I wanted my rooms to look as if they had evolved over the years, as different generations added different things."

Timeless Designs is thus the catchphrase appended to his company's name, Alidad. It is an approach to decor that seems, ironically, very much of the moment, now that the collective passion for minimalism is on the wane. But if he is hard to place in history, Alidad is also geographically elusive. "I always think of myself as a traveler," he says. "I was born in Tehran, lived there till I was about fourteen, then moved to Switzerland for a year, then came here. But in terms of where I am in a design sense—it's as if I've traveled

IN CONVERSATION with Alidad Mahloudji, the adjective that most frequently recurs is "cozy." You might expect something more rarefied of a cosmopolitan aesthete born and raised in Persia, but nothing better describes the ornate fusion of East and West that has made him one of London's most admired interior designers and that is epitomized by the Mayfair apartment where he has lived for more than twenty years.

"In England," he explains, "you need womblike rooms where you can be warm and comfortable and relax; otherwise, you'd go mad with the gray skies and the rain."

The heart of his apartment consists of a red library and an ochry-yellow drawing room connected by double doors to form an L. Each brims with an extraordinary profusion of beautiful

On display in both the master bedroom (above) and the drawing room (opposite): Alidad's mastery in mixing textiles old and new—including ones from unexpected sources. The gold-printed velvet panel over the drawing-room sofa is from an 18th-century Mogul tent.





Alidad's early career included a stint in the carpets and textiles department of Sotheby's, so it's only fitting that his library houses an estimable collection of them—along with books. Though London's Peta Smyth gallery is a favorite textile resource, "I sort of grab them up whenever I see them," he says.



London's Exotic Side

After living in the British capital for more than two decades, Alidad has winnowed down his list of decorating sources to a handful of favorites.

Antiquus. Gothic and Renaissance textiles. 90-92 Pimlico Road; 011-44-20-7730-8681.

Christopher Hodson. Antique sofas. 89-91 Pimlico Road; 011-44-20-7730-3370.

Daniel Katz Gallery. Fifteenth- to 18th-century sculpture and busts. 13 Old Bond Street; 011-44-20-7493-0688.

Guinevere Antiques. Candelabra and glassware. 574-580 Kings Road; 011-44-20-7736-2917.

Oriental Heritage. Persian Mahal Ziegler carpets. 47 Sloane Avenue; 011-44-20-7589-9919.

Peta Smyth Antique Textiles. European 17th- to 19th-century textiles. 42 Moreton Street; 011-44-20-7630-9898.

Pierre Frey. Trimmings, carpets, furniture, home accessories and contemporary fabrics and reissues of French archival patterns. Open to the public only on Saturdays. 251-253 Fulham Road; 011-44-20-7376-5599. A.G.

slowly through Turkey toward Europe, stopping to pick up a bit here and a bit there, and I've come to London and learned about cozy living, but then perhaps I've gone back to somewhere like Venice, which was the melting pot of the two worlds [East and West]. I'm only happy in a place that accepts both."

In 1988, when he re-created his own red library for the British Interior Design Exhibition, the results thrilled the press and brought Alidad his first taste of fame. Nine years later, at the same exhibition, he invented an imaginary client for himself—tellingly, a stateless person living in a bachelor apartment surrounded by family heirlooms—and claimed his place in the top tier of London designers by carrying off every major award. Alidad now employs five full-time and three part-time staffers to help cope with the demand for his services.

"I would rank him at the very top," says Ruth Kennedy, the managing director of Linley, David Linley's furniture >215

More material splendor: on Alidad's bed (above), a coverlet made of Granada chenille from his new Pierre Frey fabric collection. On the library's walls (opposite), the designer adapted an Islamic pattern, combining stenciling and hand-painting. The painting above the sofa shows Alidad in the same room. For design resources, see page 216.

