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London CALLING

CLASSIC BRITISH ROW HOUSES PROVIDE
INSPIRATION FOR A HOUSTON HOME'S MAKEOVER.

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INTERIOR DESIGN / CHANDOS DODSON EPLEY
AND PHIL HUDSON, CHANDOS INTERIORS
HOME BUILDER / STEVE GOODCHILD AND
JOHN GOODCHILD, GOODCHILD BUILDERS

In the entry hall, art by Jacob Hashimoto from Leila Heller Gallery in New York City hangs above a Parzinger-style bench from Moxie upholstered in Pollack's painted velvet.



Certain fashionable London neighborhoods are known for their iconic townhouses, each one distinguished by a signature lacquered front door—like the one belonging to the home of Hugh Grant’s character in *Notting Hill*. And it was exactly this kind of first impression a Houston couple had in mind for the renovation of their River Oaks home. “We wanted the look of a typical London row house with a black lacquered door and brass hardware,” says the wife, who also desired to bring a certain “city chic” sophistication to the interiors of their residence.

With three daughters who have attended English boarding school, the owners keep a mews house in London, where they honed some of their urban design sensibilities. So while the Houston home they purchased had the basics—a good layout, clean palette and hardwood floors—its casual ambience was hardly the right setting for the blend of transitional furnishings and contemporary art they envisioned. “It had a very informal cottage feel,” says designer Chandos Dodson Epley, who took immediate steps to plaster the walls in the main living areas and make other cosmetic changes, like adding new cabinet hardware and decorative lighting.

Having worked previously with the couple on a home in Colorado, Epley—collaborating with project manager Phil Hudson—came to this project with a huge head start. “I already knew she prefers neutrals and contemporary art, and that she did not want an overly trendy house,” says the designer. With that in mind, Epley scoured every floor of the D&D building in New York City before embarking on an equally thorough search of the city’s Upper East Side antique shops. Her Herculean efforts proved fruitful and she returned to Texas with an assemblage of items guaranteed to elevate and distinguish every room. A two-tone goatskin cocktail table, vintage French curved-back beech wood armchairs and a glass table with painted stacked bronze ball legs set the bar.

With a game plan in place, blue became the base note for the otherwise black, cream and taupe color palette. “Every shade of blue is represented,” notes the designer, referencing the navy velvet on the dining room chairs and media room sectional, a hand-painted cerulean and white wallpaper backing the bar, and a serene shade of gray-blue in the master suite. “Playing the intensity up and down gives it a rhythm but keeps the vocabulary of the house intact,” she adds.

Meanwhile, interjections of metal provide another cohesive layer. While Epley treaded lightly with subtle brass tips on the dining room chairs, and brass and shagreen side tables in

the living room, she opted to go big with an Italian brass-and-glass chandelier in the master suite. “We didn’t want the room to read super feminine, so we brought in masculine lines with koa wood nightstands and the black dresser,” the designer explains. “And that stunning antique light fixture was the aha moment that helped it all come together.”

Statement-making lighting emerged as yet another theme in the form of a Sputnik chandelier here and glass orbs there, further elevating the already cosmopolitan interiors. With the help of builders Steve Goodchild and John Goodchild, a father-and-son team, new wall paneling and mirrored tiles were added in the dining room where the latter reflects the room’s Murano glass chandelier. The resulting light display transforms every gathering into a special occasion. “Finding that chandelier felt like kismet,” Epley says.

Mindful of the need for a contemporary edge to keep things fresh, the designer returned to New York City, this time with her client in tow, to make the art auction rounds. “We measured walls and went with an Excel spreadsheet in hand,” Epley says. Their efforts paid off in the form of Mark Flood’s modern work in the breakfast area and a David LaChapelle photo of fashion icons Alexander McQueen and Isabella Blow in a bedroom used by the couple’s fashion designer daughter. “Houses are not complete until there is art on the walls,” Epley notes. “A sofa is a sofa, but art is one unique piece that is just yours.”

The resulting mix of clean trimwork lines, soft upholstered pieces and edgy art checked every box on the clients’ wish list. “The house is perfect from both an aesthetic and functional standpoint,” says the wife. Epley concurs. “I think we nailed the London townhouse essence,” she says. “From the moment you walk through the lacquered front door, it’s a memorable experience.” **L**

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—CHANDOS DODSON EPLEY



Artistic Frame chairs upholstered in Holly Hunt Great Plains fabric, patterned armchairs covered in Cowtan & Tout Rajah material and a Murano glass floor lamp from Kirby Antiques round out a family room grouping atop a rug from Retorra. C2 Art Advisors assisted with the home's art collection, including a Robert Longo pigment print from McClain Gallery over the mantel and Christian Rosa's mixed media on canvas. Interior lighting is by Douglas Architectural Lighting.



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In the media room, a Dmitry & Co sectional swathed in velvet and a patterned Schumacher-clad custom banquette supply perfect spots for curling up on movie night. The Kimberly Denman side chairs are from Jean de Merry. The coffee table is from John Salibello in New York City. Art by Mark Fox is from Hiram Butler Gallery.



Opposite: An Italian brass-and-glass chandelier from Kirby Antiques stars in the serene master suite, where a bed fabricated by The Joseph Company is topped with a silk coverlet from Plush Home. An Objets Plus, Inc. lamp from Daniel Barney in New York City tops a Cameron chest from George Cameron Nash.

Below: The master suite's plaster walls by Segreto Finishes showcase a Catherine Howe painting from Winston Wächter Fine Art in New York City, hung above a custom firescreen made by Peck & Company. Schumacher's Jansen chair pairs with a brass side table from Area.





Left: The master bathroom features a Murano glass chandelier from Jean-Marc Fray. D&D Drapery Co. fashioned the lined Roman shade using Fret fabric.

Opposite: Feminine touches in a daughter's bedroom include Zoffany wallpaper, Lotus Lights from Valerie Wade and a custom tufted bed covered in a soft pink Jane Churchill fabric. Mirrored Ello nightstands from High Style Deco in New York City hold lamps from Area.