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This page: Lit only by candles, the dining room is an opulent entertaining space. Opposite: The library was the first room that Alladad decorated.

The max factor

INTERIOR DESIGNER ALIDAD USES LAYERS OF RICH TEXTURE TO BRING A TIMELESS FEEL TO HIS MAYFAIR APARTMENT.

WORDS RUTH CORBETT PHOTOGRAPHY CHRIS TUBBS STYLIST SHANI ZION

This page: The library is known as the Red Room. Opposite, clockwise from top left: Alidad likes to use antique tapestries as well as paintings; crystal glasses add to the luxurious feel of the dining room; the walls of the main bedroom have been lacquered; the apartment is a treasure house of rare finds.







Above, from left to right: Alidad was a director at Sotheby's before moving into interior design; the ochre walls of the drawing room make the most of the light; a marble bust greets visitors in the hall.

Alidad's top five for antique furnishings and textiles

Peta Smyth Antique Textiles,

42 Moreton Street, SW1,
tel: (020) 7630 9898.
Specialist in 16th- to 19th-century textiles, tapestry, needlework fragments, cushion braids and fringes.

Joanna Booth,

247 King's Road, SW3,
tel: (020) 7352 8998.
17th-century tapestry, hangings, brocatelle, damask and early velvets. Joanna also sells wonderful Old Master drawings, early sculpture and furniture.

Guinevere,

574-580 King's Road, SW6,
tel: (020) 7736 2917.
Antiques range from Chinese Neolithic to Art Deco, plus antique crystal and Chinese ceramics.

Christopher Hodson,

89-91 Pimlico Road, SW1,
tel: (020) 7730 3370.
Unusual antiques – big dramatic pieces of 18th- and 19th-century furniture, sculpture and pictures.

Classic Binding,

61 Cambridge Street, SW1,
tel: (020) 7834 5554.
This company specialises in individual antique books or you can buy a yard of books. Great for both serious and decorative books. I love the bindings.

A TOUR AROUND THE SPECTACULAR HOME OF

interior designer Alidad is a real treat. The top-floor apartment, which is in one of Mayfair's finest streets, is the perfect showcase for what Alidad does best: creating timeless interiors that are as much about finish and detail as they are about colour and pattern. It's a look that's rich and comfortable – a mélange of the English gentleman's club and the weathered opulence of a Venetian palazzo.

'My rooms look as though they have been developed over generations,' he explains. 'I enjoy a sense of deep, timeless elegance and matured nonchalance.'

Each room in the apartment has its own distinct flavour, providing different atmospheres throughout the day and night. The drawing room, or day room, is a sun-filled space, decorated in warm yellows. Alidad employed an unusual furniture layout here, with two small seating arrangements, to give it a cosy feel where small groups can sit and chat.

As well as paintings, ancient tapestries and antique fabric samples adorn the walls. There's an 18th-century Mogul Indian textile above the sofa, which was once part of a huge tent, and a 17th-century Spanish textile hangs in an alcove near the fireplace.

'I can achieve the equivalent of a 17th-century Old Master in a 17th-century textile wall hanging for a tenth of the price,' explains Alidad.

Through decorative double doors lies the sumptuous library – known as the Red Room. Layered with pattern, texture and colour, it's an intimate, theatrical space and one that Alidad loves to spend time in during the cold winter months. 'When the grey days and nights draw in, it's important to have a room in which to relax and curl up,' he says.

Although it appears to be incredibly patterned and colourful, look closely and you'll see that Alidad also uses lots of plain fabrics. For all his love of mixing and layering, he knows exactly when to stop. An artist friend, Alex Davidson, came up with the concept for the Islamic-style décor of the walls and ceiling, which adds to the overall 'wow' factor here.

The library was actually the first room that Alidad decorated. At the time he was departmental director at Sotheby's, working with antique carpets and textiles. He

enjoyed the process so much that he decided to leave his job and set up his own decorating company.

'Once I had finished this room I thought to myself, "God, this is easy. Maybe I should become an interior designer,"' he explains. Over the next decade, Alidad built a global reputation. But it was in 1997 that things really took off. At the British Interior Design Exhibition that year he walked away with all three main awards under his arm. 'It was actually rather embarrassing,' he says. 'I managed to win the Elle Decoration, World of Interiors and House & Garden awards.'

Texture on the walls, whether fabric, leather or plaster, is a key part of Alidad's distinct decorating style. Perhaps the best example is in the deliciously over-the-top dining room. The walls have been covered with bespoke leather, which has been embossed and antiqued to create a dramatic finish. Above that is a homage to a 17th-century coffered Italian ceiling.

'You can afford to go slightly over the top with a dining room,' says Alidad. 'This is a completely candlelit room and the play of the candlelight on the crystal and silver make it a very special place to dine.'

Further use of interesting wall-coverings can be found in the hall, where thick, camel-coloured felt is hung with a selection of monochrome, cameo portraits. Alidad cut these from a swathe of Timney Fowler fabric and had them mounted on boards and trimmed with cord. 'Halls can be tricky areas to integrate with the rest of a scheme,' he explains. 'The introduction of these portraits was rather fun and brought the look together very successfully.'

In Alidad's bedroom the walls are painted in the deepest green and finished with lacquer to add a sense of depth. What looks like a Dutch Master is, in fact, a commission by Alidad in which his own face appears. 'I like amusing things,' he says. 'I'm not a purest. I want to live in a home, not a museum.'

So, after nearly 20 years of designing other people's homes, what's next for Alidad? 'I have recently created a fabric collection for Pierre Frey,' he says. It was warmly received, earning him yet another award to add to the collection. Doubtless, there will be many more to follow. ■

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