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**Life in
colour**

**NEW WAYS
TO WORK WITH
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**KELLY
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MASTERCLASS**

**AN EXCLUSIVE
LOOK INSIDE
KIT KEMP'S
LONDON HOME**

**THE SECRET
TO CLASSIC
ENGLISH STYLE**

**BOLD DESIGN
& DECORATING
CONFIDENT LOOKS
FOR KITCHEN CABINETS**

**STANDOUT FABRIC
AND WALLPAPER IDEAS**

**INSPIRATION FOR
VIBRANT PLANTING,
WHATEVER THE SEASON**

AUGUST 2021

ENTRANCE

'I wanted to make this into an area you would want to stand in and look around,' says Kit of the choice of her whimsical wallpaper design, which offsets a collection of unusual pieces including a chair upholstered in an embroidered textile from Kazakhstan.

Walls in Mythical Land by Kit Kemp, Andrew Martin



DEPTH OF CHARACTER

Design maverick Kit Kemp's many passions – from folk art to the Bloomsbury Set – are celebrated in her redesigned London home

WORDS RACHEL LEEDHAM PHOTOGRAPHY SIMON BROWN



DRAWING ROOM
 The room's lively patterns are grounded with antiques, including a striking 18th-century Spanish chest, above which hangs a portrait by Duncan Grant. 'This home is very much a collaboration with my husband and the two of us share a love for Bloomsbury art,' says Kit.

Curtains and armchairs in One Way by Kit Kemp, Christopher Farr Cloth. **Sofa** in Eve in Robin's Egg, Raoul Textiles at Turnell & Gigon. **Cushions** in Under the Sea in Multi, Schumacher. Wood and slate **coffee table** (opposite), Tom Stogdon

Since they purchased their 1930s townhouse in central London, just over two decades ago, co-founders of Firmedale Hotels and the Kit Kemp Design Studio, Kit and Tim Kemp, have undertaken two major renovations. The first was prompted by a conversation between Kit and fellow designer Robert Kime. ‘He told me that he always advised making the best room in the house the kitchen – and it was like a light had been turned on,’ says Kit, who proceeded to transform their large, barrel-shaped dining room overlooking the garden into the kitchen, adding a conservatory leading off it for dining. ‘Which, of course, we now live in,’ she adds.

More recently, with the couple’s three daughters having flown the nest, it was time to tweak the layout again. ‘We had a front room that was no longer being used so we knocked it through to the drawing room, which in turn links to the kitchen, so now everything is open plan,’ explains Kit, who also sacrificed one of the four bedrooms on the first floor to create a walk-through music room housing their grand piano. ‘Both Tim and I are naturally untalented so we didn’t want the piano in our main living space,’ she laughs, adding, ‘I lined this area with bookshelves and I now think that might have been acoustically rather a good thing.’

In the process of the redesign, the front door was moved and the hallway enlarged and it was with this space that Kit commenced the redecoration of the entire house. ‘It is one of our old sayings that if the in-between spaces – hallways, landings and so on – are given character, then your house is double the size, as you are not through them and out the other side,’ says Kit, who papered with her three-metre-

repeat Mythical Land design, which forms an enchanting backdrop to intriguing pieces, including a Swedish wedding clock and an old beehive.

For the drawing room – now with glorious east-west light – she teamed her oversized One Way geometric linen with an exuberant botanical print, tempering the two bolder designs with a neat paisley pattern. On the walls hang a collection of works by seminal Bloomsbury artists. ‘The Bloomsbury Set has been so much a part of our lives ever since we designed the Charlotte Street Hotel,’ says Kit. ‘Because they are all by British artists, we find that these paintings are perfect in our light, as they are not too strong.’

Although every room has witnessed an overhaul, Kit has been mindful to reuse pieces where she can. ‘If the frame is good I will always reupholster it and we donate our fabrics to a number of different charities, while smaller offcuts get made into toys,’ she says. Kit also loves a barter system, devising one of the bedroom schemes around pieces garnered from a showroom set she designed, while another bedroom houses armchairs she created for a stand for home furnishings company Blithfield.

Creativity is at the heart of everything Kit does and, indeed, it forms the focus of her latest book, written during the pandemic. ‘Through doing my weekly blog, we saw that creativity at home has had enormous traction and that people want to customise their interiors,’ she says. ‘I think we have got over the idea of big designer names; now it’s more about your name – something you are bringing to your interior so that it is truly one of a kind.’ 📖

■ kitkemp.com; *Kit Kemp Design Secrets* (£25, Hardie Grant Books)

“TO ENTER THE DOOR AND HAVE A WHOLE MAGICAL WORLD GOING ON AROUND YOU DOES RATHER TAKE AWAY THE BITE OF THE DAY”

KITCHEN
The bespoke cabinetry was installed several years ago and it has seen a number of colour changes. Kit had the beaded lampshades made from colourful Kurdi aprons. Cabinetry in Red Earth and Sudbury Yellow, both Farrow & Ball, and Winter Morning, Designers Guild





CONSERVATORY
Tord Boontje's chandelier
 casts filigree shadows on
 the ceiling at night.
Ivy Shadow chandelier
 in Forest White, Porta
 Romana. **Handle and wing**
chairs, Kit Kemp. **Handle**
chairs in Sari in a bespoke
 colourway, Raoul Textiles.
Blinds and **wing chair** in
 Walker in India, Raoul
 Textiles at Turnell & Gigon

MUSIC ROOM
 The enlarged landing
 has been turned into a
 book-lined music space.
Joinery in Pomona,
 Edward Bulmer and
 Ointment Pink, Farrow &
 Ball. **Lampshade** in Mixed
 Tones Canvas by John
 Derian, Designers Guild.
 Greenwich globe **light**,
 Vaughan



MAIN BEDROOM
Tucked beneath the eaves, this space benefits from interesting volumes that are emphasised with a grand half-tester bed. Bedspread, cushions and headboard in Ashenwood by Kit Kemp, Chelsea Textiles. Pelmet in Canterbury, Borderline Fabrics at Rosebank Fabrics



BEDROOM
This fantastical headboard was created by Kit for a showroom display; by a stroke of serendipity she found a lamp base that chimes perfectly with the aquatic theme. Headboard in Under the Sea in Multi, Schumacher. Sea table lamp, Richard Taylor Designs. Walls in Isabena, Nina Campbell. Curtains in Majuli, Thibaut

MEET THE HOMEOWNER

Kit Kemp shares her style vision and loves **SMALL CHANGE, BIG IMPACT** Relocating the front door and making the drawing room front-to-back with east-west light.

MUSEUM TO VISIT Museum of the Home – formerly the Geffrye Museum – in Shoreditch.

MAKERS TO WATCH Artist and ceramicist Katherine Cuthbert and O.K. David for fanciful fabrics.

GO-TO COLOURS Edward Bulmer's Invisible Green, Brimstone and Pomona Green. I'm loving green and yellow at the moment.

WHAT WOULD YOU LOVE TO CREATE NEXT My rug and bedlinen collection is coming along well with American designer Annie Selke.

OBJECT YOU WILL NEVER PART WITH My Tony Cragg miniature bronze sculpture.

