

'I fell in love with this LoSo wallpaper in Cinnamon by Scion Living. I was tempted to choose the orange colourway, but this yellow-brown shade suited the rest of the scheme much better. The sideboard is from Gurntree

style idea
Clash prints and patterns for an effortless eclectic look

COLOURFUL KITSCH TRANSFORMATION

I CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF CHEERFUL retro interiors

Discovering Sixties and Seventies music and fashion as a teen stayed with **Emily Brinkley**, who decorated her first home with the joyful design era at its heart

My story

I was renting while I was saving to buy but getting increasingly frustrated with not being able to go to town with decorating. When my landlord gave me notice, I bought my own place near family and friends in Bromley. I instantly loved this flat because of the separate kitchen and I knew that I could bring my own personality to the space. I didn't care that the rooms were plain and boring as I knew exactly what I was going to do. I got into Sixties and Seventies culture after watching the film, *Across the Universe* when I was a teenager, and I knew it would be the perfect inspo for my first place.

I decorated my childhood bedroom with an Orla Kiely wallpaper and her designs continue to inspire me – one of her rugs became the focal point in my new living room. The yellow, pink and brown tones were the starting point for the whole décor scheme, and I carried the palette through the rest of the flat in different wallpaper prints and accessories. My furniture and lighting are mostly vintage and bargains from eBay and Facebook Marketplace. I love pattern clashing so I went wild with cushions – the bold colours make my home feel so happy.

It's been so good to decorate without restrictions – nothing beats living in a space which I've put so much of myself into. I won't change anything now; I love this nostalgic style too much!



Welcome to my home

A BIT ABOUT ME

I'm Emily Brinkley, 29. I'm a graphic designer / illustrator for a company that designs stationery, greetings cards, board games and toys. You can see more from me on Instagram @emilybrinkley and @theretroflat for interior updates.

WHERE I LIVE

My home is a one-bedroom flat in Bromley, Greater London. I live above a shop on the top floor with my dog, Dolly. I moved here in August 2021.

WHAT I WANTED TO CHANGE

The layout was fine and liveable, but the entire flat was beige and dull and screaming out for a makeover. I wanted to bring my love of retro style to the place to make it feel more 'me.'

HOW I MADE IT MY OWN

I absolutely love vibrant colours and patterns and instantly knew wallpaper prints, paint and bright accessories would add personality and bring life into my home. Filling the space with second-hand finds has been a quick and easy way to bring character to the space.

MY FAVOURITE PART

I thought I was stuck with the boring beige kitchen as I didn't have a big budget to work with. I'm delighted with the retro look achieved by replacing the cupboard doors and worktop – it looks like a brand-new kitchen!

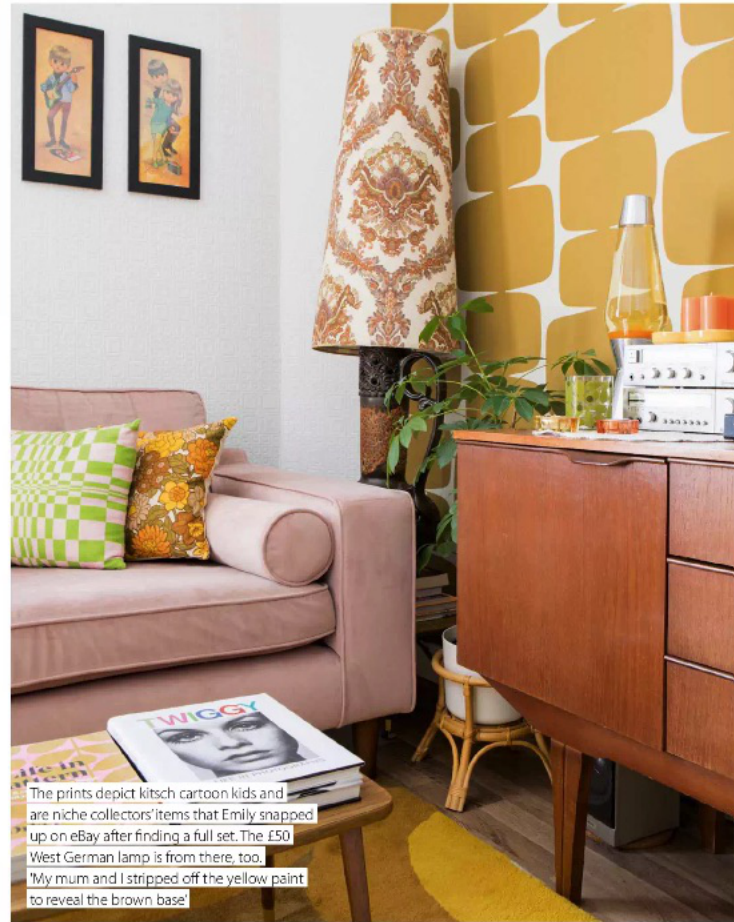
'Nothing beats living in a space which I've put so much of myself into. I won't change anything. I love this nostalgic style too much!'

Living room

The space is smaller than Emily's last living room, and a different shape, so it took a while for her to get the layout right with her existing furniture. 'I kept switching things around but once I'd decided to put my sideboard against the longest wall, everything else fell into place. To avoid crowding the room, I've had to store some smaller pieces in the loft for now. The pink sofa and yellow chair came with me and were a great find at DFS because they were the right budget and style. I've gone for a deliberate mismatch in this room and picked out the colours from the Orla Kiely Pulse Yellow rug in the accessories.'



'The lamp is from eBay and the dogs are boot sale finds. I imagine my collection will only grow!'



The prints depict kitsch cartoon kids and are niche collectors' items that Emily snapped up on eBay after finding a full set. The £50 West German lamp is from there, too. 'My mum and I stripped off the yellow paint to reveal the brown base'



Emily bought the mustard Peace chair from DFS. For a similar daisy cushion, try Dunelm



'I spend a lot of time rummaging around car boot sales and charity shops for quirky bric-a-brac and furniture. I like things to be as original as they can be'



make this graphic art p58

'There isn't really room for a dining table and desk, so the fold-down vintage style is a flexible solution, and it goes well with Habitat's Macadam folding chairs. The artwork is from GoodMood prints'

How to work with wallpaper

Follow these tips to nail a gorgeous scheme of colour and pattern

- If you're inspired by 1960s and 1970s designs, like Emily, but don't want to turn your home into a museum, pick a retro-inspired brand like Orla Kiely or Scion Living. Lust Home also sell a fun retro wallpaper collection. Another way to keep vintage prints fresh is to go for modern colours, like pinks and blues.
- Avoid crowding small spaces, or making a room feel too busy, by papering two opposite walls. If you still feel hesitant, put large wallpaper samples into frames and hang as art.
- To make patterned wallpaper the main talking point, leave surrounding walls white. Emily stepped this up a gear in the living room with a cheap white wallpaper embossed with squares to add texture, subtle interest, and hide uneven surfaces. The style is a throwback to her nan's house when she was a child.
- Fitting a picture rail around the room and painting the wall and ceiling above in white is also a good way to balance the vibrancy of wallpaper. At the same time, you'll save money, as you won't need as many rolls.
- Do your research on Instagram and Pinterest and, if you can, find a picture you can recreate so you're assured the wallpaper pattern complements the rest of your scheme.



'I've got plans to decorate the hallway with a funky wallpaper or carpet,' says Emily.

Hallway

'After a decorating disaster, I got a bit nervous and went back to plain white walls in the hallway,' says Emily. 'To make the space more homely, I added wicker shelves, which I found on Facebook Marketplace. I display plants and retro ornaments here and I enjoy changing them up a bit to keep it interesting. I want to bring even more colour to this space, but it works for now.'



I love that there is pink or yellow everywhere in my flat

Kitchen

Emily's kitchen was her biggest makeover project where her handy dad replaced the oven and gas hob with white appliances, tiled the splashback and changed the beige laminate to a white worktop. 'The kitchen wasn't that old and didn't need replacing, plus I didn't have the budget, so I needed another solution,' says Emily. 'My brother had recently replaced his cupboard doors and recommended a company called Homestyle who sell custom-made kitchen doors and accessories. I found they had the exact teak look I wanted. They offer a made-to-measure service and what's even better is they sell matching sheet vinyl, so I was able to cover the side panels, too. Now, it looks like a brand-new kitchen.'

'I was in love with a picture of an expensive teak kitchen with white surfaces, which had a retro feel, and I recreated it for just £1,500,' says Emily.



'Wallpaper was an important part of the look, and I wanted a busy floral that felt very Seventies,' says Emily, who went for Duro's Paskilja wallpaper from Wallpassion. The white laminate worktop, oven and hob are from IKEA.



Going for an all-white worktop and matching sink brightened the beige room. Emily found the reeded glass and laminate cupboard on Facebook Marketplace for £50.



'I didn't want the boiler on show, so my dad made a matching cupboard. I wanted shelves beneath to display my cups, which he built with MDF and covered in matching vinyl.'

STEAL MY STYLE

Get Emily's sunny home style with these buys

→ Flowers cushion, £31.99, Gisela Graham

→ Sunburst rattan mirror, £35, Mint & May

→ Natural History Museum Corallite bud vase, £4, Dunelm

'The crochet blanket is my favourite thing I bought from BHS when I was a teenager,' says Emily. The daisy cushions are from Dunelm and the polka-dot rug is from George Home

'I had so many Pinterest photos of old wicker headboards and found this one at La Redoute

'I try to buy local so I can see what the quality of the furniture is like and there are no surprises. I picked up the G-plan bookshelves for free on Facebook Marketplace'

The wicker mirror is from Flying Tiger Copenhagen while the chest of drawers was £50 on Gumtree

Master bedroom

'I've wanted to use this particular wallpaper pattern – Orla Kiely's Multi Striped Petal, which I bought at Jane Clayton – for years, so it's lovely to have what I want at last. The Seventies peacock chair was a present from my parents and has only ever had one previous owner, so she was pleased it was going to a happy home. I like to balance my vintage pieces with colourful furniture, like Habitat's yellow metal lockers as bedside tables. It's so bright and cheerful in here, even on gloomy days.'



A mirror with built-in storage saves space in the small bathroom

Bathroom

Emily wanted to rip out the boring beige bathroom and start again but she didn't have the budget. She was wary of using wallpaper in the windowless room but desperately wanted to bring in pattern. 'I didn't know anything about vinyl and happened to start following Faye Jennifer Vinyl Design on Instagram and realised this could be an easy, effective solution. I took a swatch of the vinyl to B&Q, and they colour-matched the wall paint to the green in the floral pattern. This project has been my biggest success. No plumbing, no tiling, just a cheap and cheerful way to inject personality.'



style idea
Mirrors help bounce light around a small bathroom

'I chose Retro Peachy Petals vinyl from Faye Jennifer Vinyl Design because it looks like wallpaper. Green walls plus yellow and pink accents bring the space together'

shop flower power p56

Emily bought the pink toilet seat from Amazon. For a similar bath mat, try the Groovy runner from Peachy Parrot and for a similar towel, try George Home's Yellow Sunflower design



What I Learned

- I had a moment of madness and bought orange paint for the hallway on a whim. I painted two coats, but I hated it and spent the rest of the weekend painting everything white again. This proved that I shouldn't rush into things – and I should definitely use a tester first!
- I was wary of using vinyl for the first time, but it turned out great. I lined the piece up to an edge and peeled the backing off, sticking down one section at a time. I used a credit card to smooth the surface and trimmed the edges with a craft knife.