

Daphne loves to collect crockery and for special occasions brings out a Havilland Limoges set with a festive gold trim, a wedding gift. She looks out for antique cutlery when browsing antique shops: this Empire pattern knife and fork set is from Buccellati. The Nutcracker tree ornament is from Fortnum & Mason and the Lingonberry Champagne coupes, crackers, and pink glass tumblers, used as tealights, are from Sophie Conran. The glass cakestand, cream bauble and silver pinecone are all Daphne's vintage pieces. The pink berries are from Bloom & Wild.

CELEBRATING IN STYLE

A love of European design and a penchant for antiques markets inspired Daphne and Gordon Dunn on their journey to create their home

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Left: A pair of ornate antique carved panels from M Charpentier Antiques have been repurposed as the cupboards in the dining room where Daphne (pictured above) stores china and tablelinen. The simpler doors were made by Linden-Bauer in MDF, with an aged finish by artisan decorator Chris McClure that echoes the antique panels. The French reproduction Louis XIV table and cane chairs were made in the 1920s and came from the USA. Daphne made the slip covers from a fabric embroidered with regal emblems, which she bought from 1stdibs

Above: The dining room is Daphne's most indulgent room. She reinstated the dividing wall between here and the kitchen, then papered it with Ananbo Chestnut wallpaper to create a trompe l'oeil effect. The pricket candlesticks on the table came from fleamarkets in France and Amsterdam but would originally have been used in churches. The 19th-century Staffordshire relief-moulded stone jug – one of many dotted around the house – came from Ardingly Antiques & Collectors Fair. In the corner is a Balsam Hill candlelit European silver fir Christmas tree, its decorations and the rose gold tealight holders from The Contemporary Home; other accessories, as before

Daphne and Gordon Dunn's 1840s west London home is an emporium of antiques and curiosities that stimulate the imagination and infuse rooms with drama. Period elegance unfolds

on all four floors, heightened at Christmas and New Year when sparkling fairy lights, and sprigs of eucalyptus and fresh greenery turn the Victorian townhouse into the quintessential festive home. The setting is a world away from Daphne and Gordon's American roots, yet is exactly where Daphne dreamed she might live one day.

'I've yearned to live in England since I was seven as I loved all the classic English stories like *The Secret Garden* and *A Little Princess*,' she explains. 'Then I came to London as a student, and being where my favourite writers had lived was magical.'

Daphne and Gordon made the move to London in the 1990s and bought this house in 1999. They immediately extended the basement kitchen, and turned a tiny bathroom and spare bedroom on the first floor into a master bedroom en suite and dressing room. They also added reproduction Victorian cornicing – using original moulds – to the living room and bedrooms, and tongue and groove panelling up the stairs and along the hallways.

'Back then I thought dark, dramatic walls looked very grown-up, but as time went on I wanted a younger, lighter touch,' says Daphne. 'Nine years ago this became the catalyst for how the house looks today. I'm still drawn towards the theatrical in my interiors, but my ornaments and antiques carry the drama rather than the wall colours.'

Daphne scours antiques fairs here and abroad for quirky and unusual pieces. A pair of 19th-century church shutters are now cupboard doors, expertly replicated in MDF for the cupboard opposite, by artisan decorator Chris McClure. His work is on show in other rooms, too: a faux limestone 'column' masks the downpipe in the kitchen, and an Italian 'armoire' conceals the TV. He also copied the carved wood panelling in the dining room after Daphne closed the room off from the kitchen. The new wall is covered with a trompe l'oeil landscape wallpaper.

'This room transports me to a different time and place,' she says. 'I love that the Baroque pricket candlesticks are displayed haphazardly as if they've

been found in an undiscovered attic in a shabby French château. The neutral greige tones on the walls work well in here too, because I can have fun changing the table settings to suit the time of year. Back on the ground floor, the rich colours in the interconnecting reception rooms show Daphne's passion for vibrant decoration. Inspired by a trip to Venice, she's used a palette of greens, yellows and pinks, playing with jewelled and muted tones to complement and define the two spaces.

'This is Venice by day and Venice by night,' she explains. 'Rich burgundy and mustard yellows in the rear living room warm to gold, emerald and fuchsia pink in the front living room.' Venetian elegance is evoked with blown glass lamps, angels poised among Baroque sculptures, and Italian Colony and Fortuny fabrics for upholstery and cushions. The furniture in both rooms – and elsewhere – is largely antique, but Continental rather than traditional English Victorian.

'I imagined an Italian or French person moving to London in the Victorian times and bringing their furniture and belongings with them,' says Daphne. 'Most of what I own is from the same era but is a much lighter and more feminine Continental style.'

One constant throughout the years is the Smallbone of Devizes kitchen, unchanged except for a recent repaint from cream to grey. Even here, Daphne's sense of fun is very much in evidence. The urn on the wall and a huge key in the window – once a shop sign for a 19th-century key-cutter – are great conversation points. None of Daphne's idiosyncratic pieces are taken too seriously, though. She hung a portrait of an 18th-century German frau in her bedroom 'because her voluminous hair amuses me', and a crown sits rather regally atop an antique plinth instead of an ordinary shelf.

It has taken Daphne years to get her home to a point of satisfaction, and it's a quest that never ceases. She holidays in Europe around antiques fairs and seeks out at least one antique shop wherever she goes. 'Just like I'm always evolving, the house is as well,' she says. 'Home is like another skin, and if your house reflects you and things that delight you, then it can truly enhance your everyday life.'

THE STORY

Owners Daphne Dunn, who runs an interior design business (daphnedunninteriors.com), her husband, Gordon, a corporate executive, and their two children, Chloe, 21 and Finn, 17.

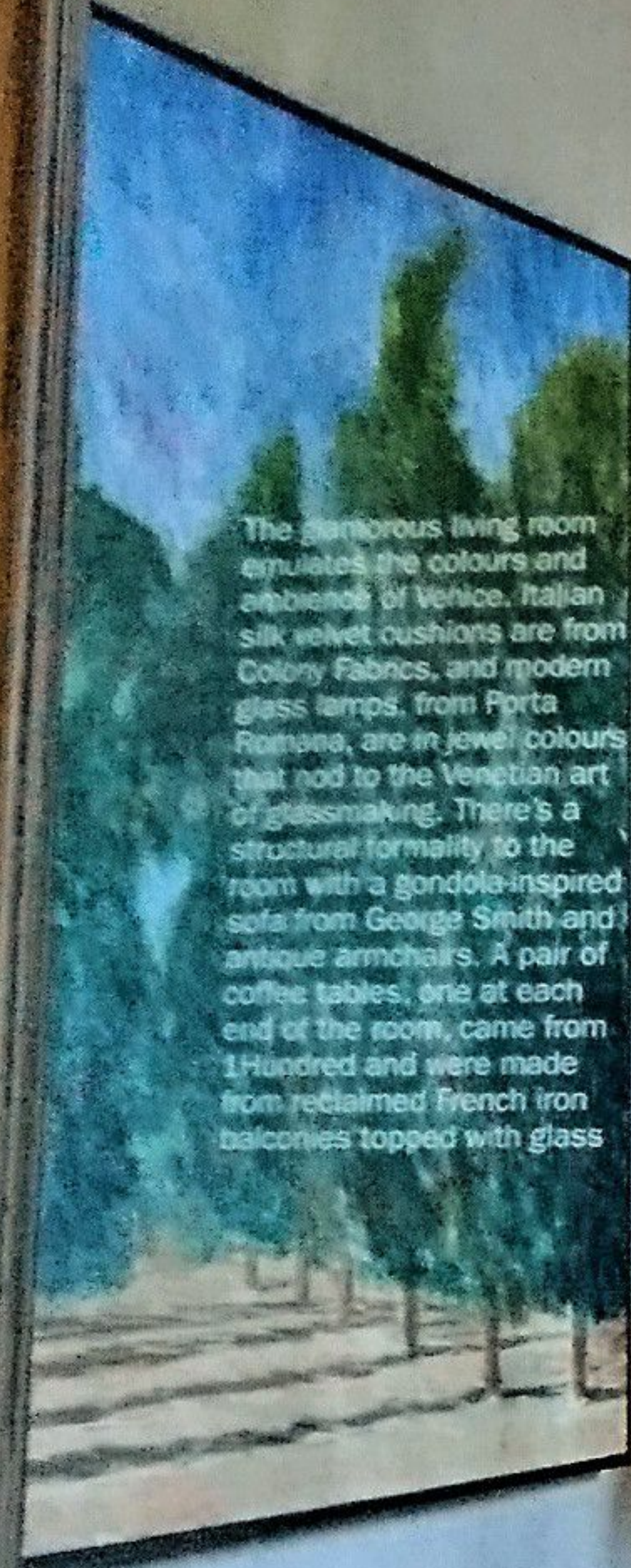
Property A four-bedroom Victorian terrace in west London, built in 1848, with a small rear extension that the couple added in 1999.

What they did The couple demolished an old conservatory, built a wrap-around brick kitchen-diner extension, turned a bedroom into a dressing room and en suite, and reinstated the wall between the kitchen and dining room.

Extended Victorian Townhouse



Mustard and faded pink tones contrast with the jewelled gold and fuchsia in the double-ended living room that spans the length of the house. The TV is hidden in a cupboard that replicates the Italian armoire doors above it. To the left, above a 19th-century French chest of drawers from Seventeen-Twenty One, are two panels of a painted silk chinoiserie room screen that Daphne bought from Bonhams Auctions. The George Smith chair was reupholstered by Ian Sargent in Mulberry's mohair velvet, and the antique crowns are part of a collection. The George Smith chair was reupholstered by Ian Sargent in Mulberry's mohair velvet, and the antique crowns are part of a collection. Daphne has amassed over the years. 'I love poetry and symbolism, and many of my objects, like the keys, crowns and cherubs, are my equivalent of literary symbols,' she says. 'I think they inspire a kind of whimsical fantasy in the same way that artwork feeds the imagination'



The glamorous living room epitomizes the colours and ambience of Venice. Italian silk velvet cushions are from Colony Fabrics, and modern glass lamps, from Porta Romana, are in jewel colours that nod to the Venetian art of glassmaking. There's a structural formality to the room with a gondole-inspired sofa from George Smith and antique armchairs. A pair of coffee tables, one at each end of the room, came from 1Hundred and were made from reclaimed French iron balconies topped with glass.





Above: In the kitchen, even the goose – an antique working decoy – gets a touch of glamour with its own tiny crown. With a rustic 19th-century table from M Charpentier, the room has a Provencal feel. The 'painting' is a French amoire door from one of the many antique shops on Lillie Road, the sconce was from Spencer Swaffler Antiques and the chandelier from a French antiques shop. On top of the larder are more relief-moulded jugs: 'The best were made by the Ridgway brothers and are date-stamped,' says Daphne. The Nordic Star is from The White Company after a repaint in Slate II from Paint & Paper Library. The riven slate tiles, topped with dark green granite, was fitted 18 years ago but looks just as fresh today from Tile & Stone Online. A faux limestone column, another of decorator Chris McClure's paint effects, cleverly disguises an ugly downpipe

Extended Victorian Townhouse





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Above: The opulent wood and mirror bed frame was made by Linden Bauer, with painted motifs by Chris McClure. The French look continues with a 19th-century dressing table from Paris's Clignancourt flea market and a chair in a Jane Churchill stripe; for similar, try Ian Mankin's Candy Stripe in Peony. Daphne found the oil paintings in a charity shop and had them restored. She since discovered they are by an artist that has sold at Christie's. The red fabrics complement the Farrow & Ball shades chosen for the walls – Mizzle – and woodwork – Pigeon. For a similar fabric to that on the headboard, try Paris Rose from Cabbages & Roses. The bouquet on the dressing table is by Bloom & Wild. Opposite: The antique urn in the fireplace was from Bonhams Auctions and creates a striking focal point in the room, along with the 18th-century German portrait of Frau Fifi, which Daphne bought at Christie's. The wall sconces are from Lots Road Auctions, and the French 1920s chair, from Marchand Antiques, is a copy of a Louis XVI chair. The chaise longue is from Pierre Frey.