

# LONDON



IN THE DRAWING ROOM, TWO PIERRE AUGUSTIN ROSE SOFAS IN A PIERRE FREY MOHAIR AND TWO VINTAGE OTTO SCHULZ CHAIRS IN A LORO PIANA FABRIC ENCIRCLE A HONED-STONE COCKTAIL TABLE FROM STAHL + BAND. 1950s ITALIAN TRIPOD FLOOR LAMP; FLOOR-TO-CEILING LAMP BY DIMORESTUDIO; CIRCA 1880 INDIAN RUG.

ART: ERNESTO BURGOS, OTIS JONES/ NINO MIER GALLERY. © ED RUSCHA/ GAGOSIAN © 2023 ESTATE OF LOUISE NEVELSON / ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK.

# CALLING

Los Angeles – based designer  
*Olivia Williams* updates  
a classic Notting Hill town  
house for a young family

TEXT BY MITCHELL OWENS PHOTOGRAPHY BY HENRY BOURNE  
STYLED BY MICHAEL REYNOLDS



MARIO AND CHANTAL SPANICCIATI WITH THEIR FOUR CHILDREN IN THE DRAWING ROOM. GINO SARFATTI HANGING LIGHT; CAMALEONDA SECTIONAL BY MARIO BELLINI FOR B&B ITALIA; HANDWOVEN WOOL TAPESTRY BY SANAM KHATIBI.

ART: SANAM KHATIBI/RODOLPHE JANSSEN, BRUSSELS AND PIP.O.W. NEW YORK.  
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**RIGHT IN THE LIBRARY, A PAIR OF VINTAGE TRE PEZZI CHAIRS BY FRANCO ALBINI AND FRANCA HELG FACE AN INI ARCHIBONG TABLE. HANGING LIGHT BY GIOPATO & COOMBES; BESPOKE BOOKSHELVES DESIGNED BY MICHAELIS BOYD.**



nce upon a time, there was a house that had seen better days. Back in the middle of the 19th century, it had been constructed as a private residence in Notting Hill, one of London’s prettiest neighborhoods. By the 1920s, it had come down in the world, reconstituted into a “ladies’ residential club” (read: boarding house for women), and then, after the Second World War, it had become a hotel. The hotel was eventually divided into apartments, one occupied by a young magician advertising for a beautiful assistant. Today, a different type of sorcery—esthetic, architectural, familial—has brought it to domestic life again, a life ringing with lessons taken on an upright piano in the dining room, board games in the living room, and four lively children dashing in and out of the garden.

“Until this project, I never thought I’d be so invested in bunk beds,” says Los Angeles-based interior decorator Olivia Williams. The parents of the youngsters are Chantal Spanicciati, a former designer herself who now works as a therapist promoting mental well-being, and her husband, Mario Spanicciati, a software entrepreneur. They had met Williams back in California, but the designer’s schedule could not accommodate them as clients. Still, neither Williams nor the Spanicciatis forgot the instant camaraderie.

“I loved her simplicity and aesthetic,” says Chantal, while Williams recalls the couple’s “calm and gentle demeanor,” adding that “in this business, what’s important is to work with people you like.” A house in Montana for the growing family came into Williams’s hands, and then, when the Spanicciatis prepared to relocate to London, they knew precisely whom to call. Even if it meant having to conduct many tasks at long distance, because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The couple had only visited the house once or twice before the lockdowns began, and did not set foot inside until everything was complete.

The house is a Grade II property, meaning that alterations would be strictly controlled, if not entirely forbidden; but the couple’s London architects, Michaelis Boyd, are dab hands at dealing with imposed limitations and making inventive insertions. That would be the underground pool that the Spanicciatis desired: a mysterious, contemplative, partly skylit amenity, clad in honed Atlantic stone and tadelakt, that was inspired by Therme Vals, Peter Zumthor’s iconic spa in Switzerland, where Chantal has family roots. “It’s a bit of a challenge to bring a house into the 21st century yet to be respectful of its heritage,” says Tim Boyd, a cofounder of the firm. The pool, for example, was built under the garden, rather than directly beneath the



THE KITCHEN CABINETRY WAS FABRICATED BY PLAIN ENGLISH WITH BRECCIA CAPRAIA MARBLE COUNTERTOPS. WATERWORKS SINK FITTINGS; ROMAN SHADES OF A GEORGE SPENCER DESIGNS PRINTED LINEN THROUGH CLAREMONT; FARROW & BALL PAINTS ON WALLS AND CABINETS; ARTWORK BY MARY WEATHERFORD.

house, in order not to tamper with the building’s historic hierarchy. “Since we couldn’t knock out or change partitions, very little was done structurally. We were all keen to preserve the original cornicing, the baseboards, and the dado rail while also reinstating historical features that were relevant.”

**THE RESULTS ARE A LESSON** in how a past-perfect envelope can happily accommodate a contemporary spirit. “We’re a vibrant family, so I wanted to keep it subtle,” Chantal explains of the serene decor. Neutrals, yes, but there’s barely a bit of beige in sight. Instead, the walls of the primary rooms, including the kitchen, are largely covered in pale paints or watercolor paper that has a suede-like effect, with the architectural details painted to match or complement. It’s a color that causes the leafy views—a tree-lined square out front and a deep, luxurious, and invitingly livable garden at back, designed by Butter Wakefield Garden Design—to pop like C-prints. So does the couple’s art, a quietly provocative assemblage of works by Sam Gilliam, Ron Gorchov, and Sanam Khatibi, the last being a wall-spanning paradisiacal tapestry that brings the views into the family room. Additional warmth is provided by traces of polished brass and white-oak flooring. But Williams’s creative triumph is her marrying of antiques and vintage furnishings with sculpturally plump upholstered seating that looks as comfortable to nap on as it does to roughhouse on (within reason).

Call it sophistication with the comfort of a bear hug. Curving Mario Bellini sofas meet low-slung 1960s Otto Schulz armchairs in the drawing room, where board games are stored in a chic circa 1930 French cabinet-on-stand and the seating is grouped around a Dimorestudio lamp that stretches from floor to ceiling with acrobatic grace. A handblown glass light fixture dangles like a space-age hammock over the dining room’s rectilinear Mario Bellini chairs, the illuminator’s relaxed profile echoing the Victorian cornice’s undulating details. “It’s how we want to feel inside,” says Chantal, whose own former design practice was attuned to mental well-being. “Peaceful and calm and present.”

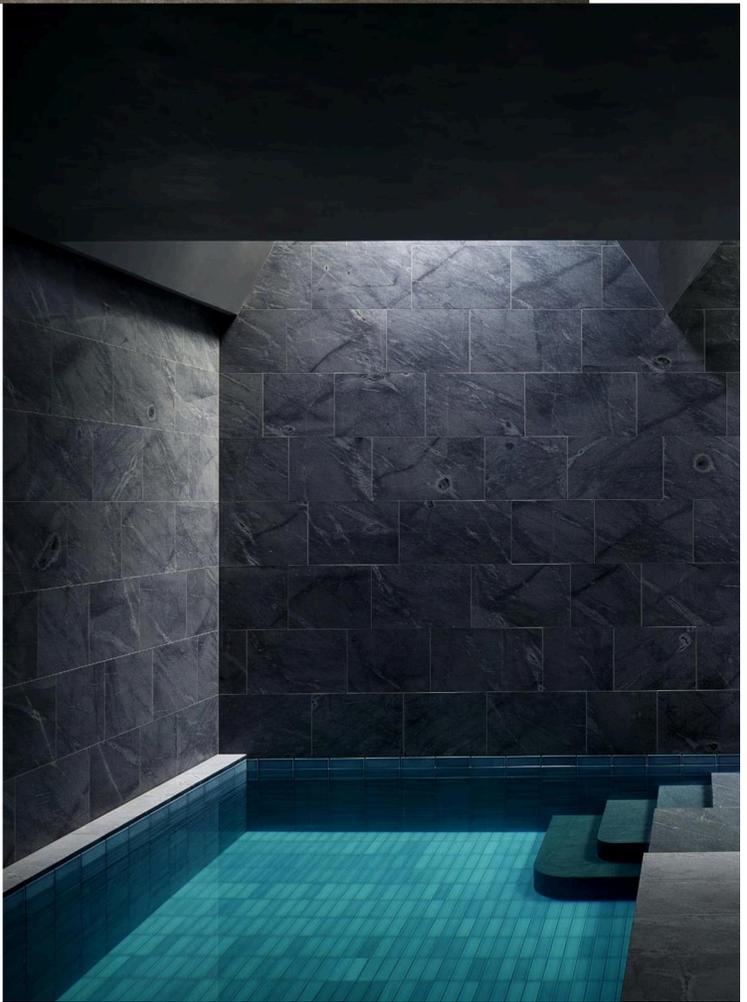
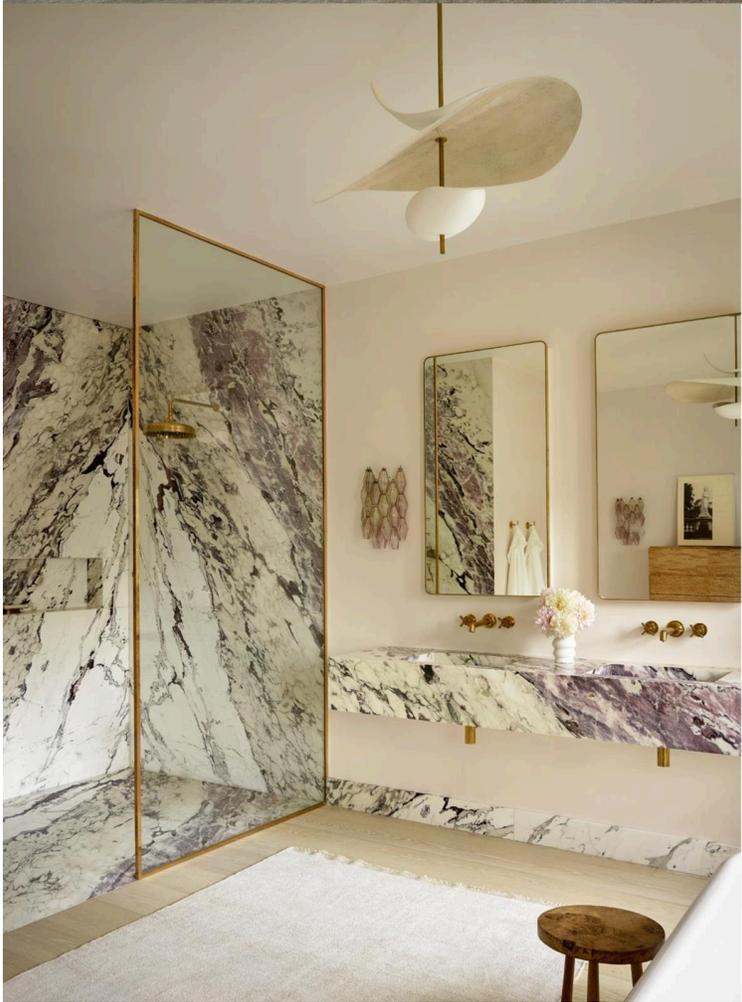
Upstairs in the bedrooms, though, color and pattern and whimsy rule. (Except for the creamy main one and its blush-pink bath: Like all parents, the Spanicciatis need a quiet after-hours escape.) One daughter’s room features a curtained bunk bed offset with a wall covering patterned with cascades of rosy clematis blossoms. Another child’s room is dressed in a hand-painted sprigged wallpaper, and the youngsters’ en suite baths are paved with identical marble-mosaic floors yet differentiated by towels with individualized borders. Add to that peals of laughter, rushing footsteps, and sing-alongs, and you’ve got rooms that are “lived in in a completely contemporary way,” Williams says. “But it still feels like a beautiful old terrace house.”



CIRCA 1980 SUEDE CHAIRS BY MARIO BELLINI FOR CASSINA SURROUND A RUEMMLER DINING TABLE.  
GHOST PENDANT LIGHT BY BRIAN THOREN, HÉCTOR ESRAWE, AND EMILIANO GODOY WITH NOUVEL FOR VISSIO;  
CUSTOM STEEL-AND-GLASS SIDE CABINET BY CHRISTOPHE CÔME; MIRROR PAINTING BY KIKO LÓPEZ.



A PHILIPPE ANTHONIOZ PLASTER LIGHT FROM RALPH PUCCI HANGS IN THE PRIMARY BEDROOM. CUSTOM BED COVERED WITH A ROSE UNIACKE SPREAD; ARTWORK BY HEIDI BUCHER (OVER FIREPLACE). **BELOW** BRECCIA CAPRAIA MARBLE DEFINES THE PRIMARY BATH.



BELOW THE GARDEN FAÇADE. RIGHT A TUB BY THE WATER MONOPOLY WITH WATERWORKS FITTINGS STANDS IN THE PRIMARY BATH. CERAMIC-AND-BRASS PENDANT LIGHT BY ELSA FOULON STUDIO; WALLS OF POLISHED TADELAKT.



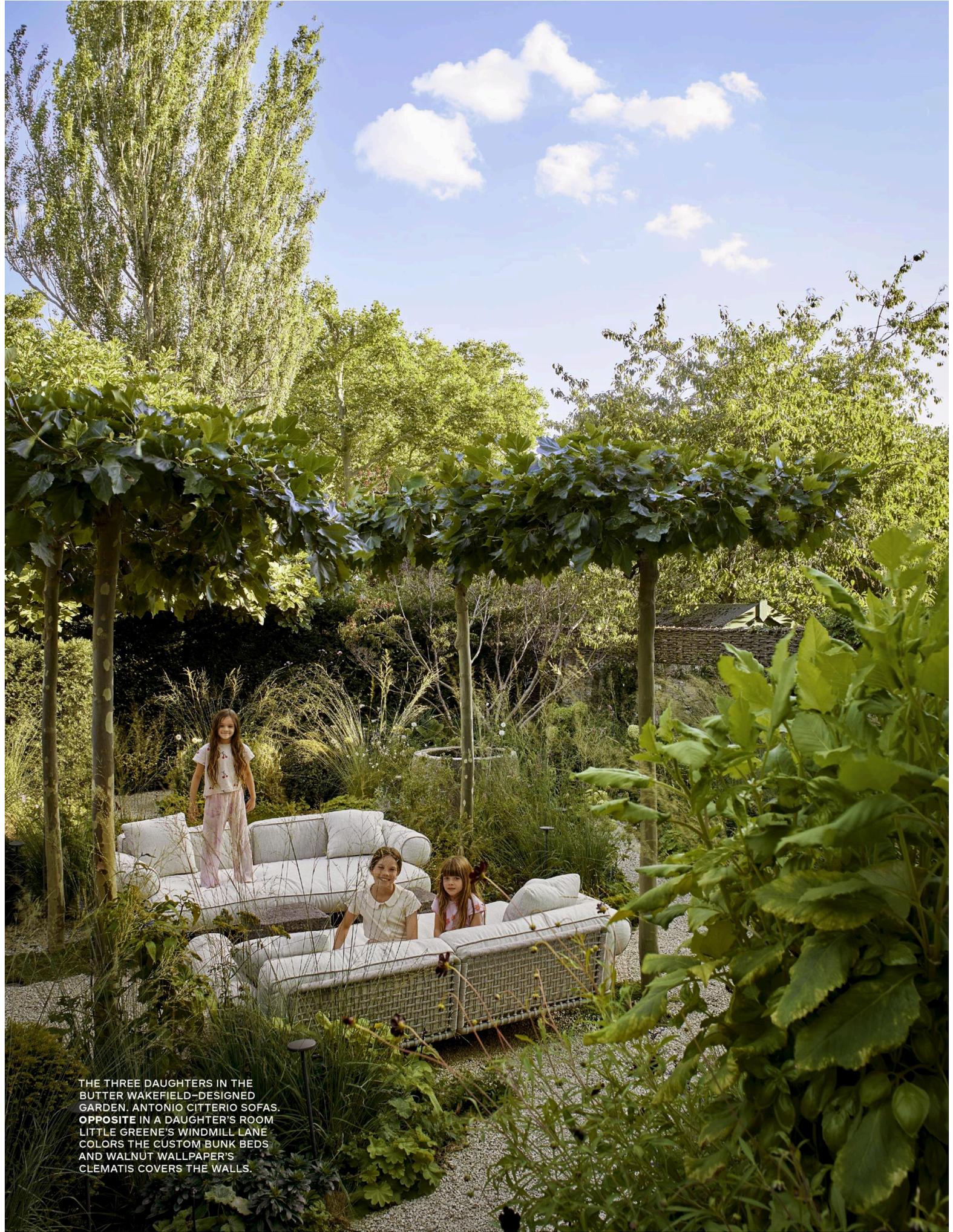
“We’re a vibrant family, so I wanted to keep it subtle,” homeowner *Chantal Spanicciati* explains of the serene decor.

LEFT GLAZED LAVA STONE TILES BY PYROLAVE COLOR THE LOWER-LEVEL POOL. WALLS AND FLOORING OF HONED ATLANTIC STONE CLADDING FROM GD STONES. ANTONIO CITTERIO CHAISE LONGUE; MIDCENTURY ITALIAN STOOL.

ART: HEIDI BUCHER; PATERSON ZEWI AND THE ESTATE OF HEIDI BUCHER, CHRISTO AND JEANNE-CLAUDE © 2023 ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK / ADAGP, PARIS.

“Until this project, I never thought I’d be so invested in bunk beds,” says designer *Olivia Williams*.





THE THREE DAUGHTERS IN THE BUTTER WAKEFIELD-DESIGNED GARDEN. ANTONIO CITTERIO SOFAS. OPPOSITE IN A DAUGHTER'S ROOM LITTLE GREENE'S WINDMILL LANE COLORS THE CUSTOM BUNK BEDS AND WALNUT WALLPAPER'S CLEMATIS COVERS THE WALLS.

# design notes

THE DETAILS THAT MAKE THE LOOK

THE WALLS IN A DAUGHTER'S ROOM ARE ENVELOPED IN CUSTOM HAND-PAINTED WALLPAPER BY TESS NEWALL.



NARROW PLEAT PORCELAIN LIGHT; FROM \$325. [DEVOL KITCHENS.COM](http://DEVOLKITCHENS.COM)

CLEMATIS MURAL WALLPAPER BY SIAN ZENG; \$237 FOR THREE PANELS. [WALNUTWALLPAPER.COM](http://WALNUTWALLPAPER.COM)

GRENADES WALLPAPER; \$134 FOR ONE PANEL. ANTOINETTE [POISSON.COM](http://POISSON.COM)



ZENIA CONSOLE TABLE; \$1,999. [SIXPENNY.COM](http://SIXPENNY.COM)

ROOK MIRROR BY SARAH SHERMAN SAMUEL FOR LULU AND GEORGIA; \$548. [LULUANDGEORGIA.COM](http://LULUANDGEORGIA.COM)

“I love the combination of historic detailing with a more artistic mix of furniture.”  
—Chantal Spanicciati

ABATJOUR LAMP BY DIMORESTUDIO; PRICE UPON REQUEST. [DIMOREMILANO.COM](http://DIMOREMILANO.COM)



THE FLEXI WALL LIGHT WITH RATTAN SHADE; \$2,375. [SOANE.COM](http://SOANE.COM)

HERBARIUM WILDFLOWER WALLPAPER; \$207 PER ROLL. [TESSNEWALL.COM](http://TESSNEWALL.COM)



GLASSY GREEN STRETCH VASE BY MORGAN PECK; \$395. [THETROVE.CO.UK](http://THETROVE.CO.UK)



CAMALEONDA SOFA BY MARIO BELLINI FOR B&B ITALIA; \$21,284 AS SHOWN. [BEBITALIA.COM](http://BEBITALIA.COM)

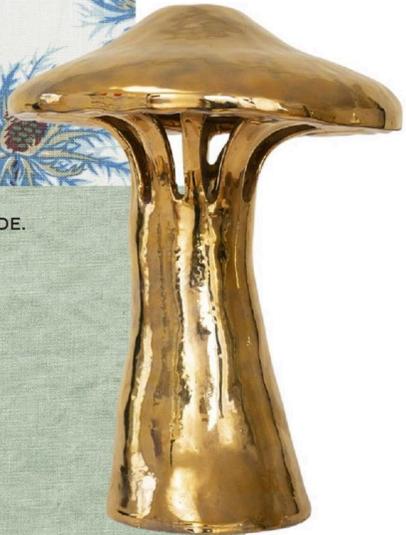


AT THE KITCHEN TABLE, ARTIST'S CHAIRS BY MATTHEW COX ARE CUSHIONED IN GEORGE SPENCER DESIGNS' THISTLE LINEN TO MATCH THE ROMAN SHADES.



THISTLE LINEN; \$205 PER YARD. GEORGESPENCER.COM

22-KARAT-GOLD-GLAZED SHROOM LAMP BY MATTHIAS VRIENS FOR ATELIER MVM; \$4,500. ATELIERMVM.COM



CHIMAY FABRIC; TO THE TRADE. DESIGNERSGUILD.COM



THE ARTIST'S CHAIR; \$2,090 WITH CUSHION. MATTHEWCOX.COM



VICTORIA FOOTED DISH BY ASTIER DE VILLATTE; \$266. JOHNDERIAN.COM

“They live a very modern life in this old house.”  
—Olivia Williams

IN THE KITCHEN, CABINERY BY PLAIN ENGLISH FEATURES BRECCIA CAPRAIA MARBLE WORK TOPS.



JOYCE CABINET; \$10,885. PINCHDESIGN.COM

FRENCH SARRANCOLIN SIDE TABLE; \$10,775. ROSEUNIACKE.COM



INTERIORS: HENRY BOURNE; ATELIER MVM LAMP: DUSAN VUKSANOVIC; DIMORESTUDIO LAMP: SIMONE FIORINI. ALL OTHERS COURTESY OF THE COMPANIES.