

# HOUSE & GARDEN®

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## THE INSIDE TRACK

A DESIGNER'S GUIDE TO  
BARCELONA / HOW TO  
CHOOSE CONTEMPORARY  
CURTAINS / THE COOLEST  
FREESTANDING STORAGE

*Plus*  
BEN PENTREATH'S  
LATEST PROJECT:  
A REVAMPED  
GEORGIAN HOUSE  
IN THE HEART  
OF LONDON

*The*  
City issue

SPECTACULAR INTERIORS FROM NEW YORK TO TOKYO VIA MILAN



# MANHATTAN PROJECT

Dramatic hues are a theme of this academic's apartment in New York, decorated by Alexander Doherty, who has used them as a backdrop for a modish mix of mid-century furniture and lighting from Italy and Scandinavia

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PHOTOGRAPHS MARIUS CHIRA

**LIVING SPACE** Views over Madison Square Park are seen through **window frames** painted in Farrow & Ball's 'Terre d'Egypte' full gloss. These were built out to conceal lighting, which casts a warm glow on **walls** in 'Biddulph Bronze' – another Farrow & Ball archive colour. A bespoke **table** by Brooklyn-based plaster artist Stephen Antonson anchors the scheme, which includes **sofas** designed by Alexander and made by local specialists Jonas, a Fifties **daybed** by TH Robsjohn-Gibbings and a pair of vintage table lamps in polished nickel







For the decoration of a pied-à-terre in an imposing prewar neo-Gothic building in the NoMad (north of Madison Square Park) neighbourhood of Manhattan, the interior designer Alexander Doherty was given a precise, if slightly unusual, brief. The owner, a Cambridge scholar with a doctorate in the philosophy of colour, was inspired by the strikingly off-hued enfilade of rooms at the museum in Copenhagen that houses the work of the Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen. ‘The colours there are all slightly quirky,’ says Alexander. ‘And they aren’t matchy matchy.’

Nor is the palette he chose for the apartment, which benefits from high ceilings and generously proportioned rooms. The entrance is painted a warm, enveloping shade of red (‘Terre d’Egypte’ from Farrow & Ball’s archive collection), step crown mouldings characteristic of the building’s period were reinstated and the marble floors were honed to a soft, matt finish. In contrast to the walls, Farrow & Ball’s ‘Pitch Black’ in a gloss finish covers the woodwork and doors of the apartment. ‘Black gloss is the unifying element throughout and emphasises the massive door jambs,’ Alexander explains. Here, even the Italian Forties mahogany hexagonal centre table was ebonised at his request, and thick black velvet curtains swag the doorway to the rest of the apartment. The effect is cloistering and cossetting, and provides an unexpected transition into the hallway in Farrow & Ball’s ‘Berrington Blue’.

A long, loft-like room houses the main living space: the sitting and dining areas are butted up to each other, albeit with ample breathing room, while the kitchen is set back in a niche. It does not feel like a typical open-plan space, perhaps due to the series of large windows



THE CHOICE OF COLOURS WAS INSPIRED BY THE QUIRKY, OFF-HUED PALETTE AT THE MUSEUM IN COPENHAGEN THAT HOUSES THE WORK OF THE DANISH SCULPTOR BERTEL THORVALDSEN

HALL (*top left*) A Poul Henningsen floor lamp stands out against walls in Farrow & Ball’s ‘Berrington Blue’. OFFICE (*this page*) Phillip Jeffries’ grey flannel ‘Savile Suiting’ wallcovering provides a backdrop for vintage pieces by Frits Henningsen, including a mahogany cabinet and writing desk, and a Giò Ponti daybed. The 19th-century Grand Tour obelisk collection was purchased from a dealer in Paris



encircling it, with views that skim the treetops of Madison Square Park. ‘The owner looked at three apartments in this building – he would run between the sixth, seventh, and eighth floors at various times of day to best discern which light he preferred,’ says Alexander. The walls are painted in another of Farrow & Ball’s archive colours, ‘Biddulph Bronze’. The designer suggested the room should have a shade of contrast, so a red gloss was used on the windowframes: these were built out so he could install lighting around the edges, which casts a warm glow.

The sitting room sofas were designed by Alexander and made by the Manhattan-based specialists Jonas, while a well-preserved daybed by TH Robsjohn-Gibbings and a dramatically fringed Italian bench complete the seating area. An Emile-Jacques Ruhlmann design was copied for the rug, which was made by Stark Carpet in colours chosen by Alexander, on top of which floats a coffee table custom made by the Brooklyn-based plaster artist Stephen Antonson. ‘I told him that I wanted it to resemble an iceberg coming out of the water,’ remembers Alexander. ‘After several prototypes, we settled on this one.’ Period light fixtures – by Poul Henningsen and FontanaArte – were from the client’s existing collection.

The owner purchased an Italian Thirties art deco maple burlwood table and chairs from Christie’s, which Alexander had upholstered in horsehair fabric. In the corner of the room, a restored Frits Henningsen wingback chair and stool are covered in two tones of a blue Colefax and Fowler wool, creating an inviting reading nook with a splendid view of the park and its surrounding buildings. Wool and men’s suiting fabrics are a hallmark of the apartment’s decoration, together with Italian lighting and Scandinavian mid-century furniture. The dining area leads into the office, the walls of which are lined handsomely in flannel from Phillip Jeffries, the same firm that supplied the wool for the upholstery in the sitting area and bedrooms. More Frits Henningsen designs mingle with pieces Alexander found in Paris, including a masculine and refined leather-covered desk chair.

‘We created a really calm main bedroom, as we have strong colours everywhere else,’ he explains, although the serenity is certainly pierced when you shut the door, the back of which is painted a sanguine ‘Rectory Red’ – also by Farrow & Ball. Curtains in a pinkish houndstooth wool and a bedframe upholstered in pale boiled wool bring a tactile layer to the room. An abstract by Danish artist Edvard Weie, with effusive brushstrokes and earthy colours, faces the bed, another counterpoint to the tranquillity established by the neutral walls.

In the spare room, by contrast, rich, moody ‘Drawing Room Blue’ by Farrow & Ball creates a den-like retreat. Decadent Holland & Sherry cashmere curtains, a Frits Henningsen table and chair, Scandinavian bedside tables and a FontanaArte mirror furnish this haven, in step with the rest of the apartment.

Exiting the guest room to a hallway in Farrow & Ball’s ‘India Yellow’, we stand there and ponder the hue. ‘It’s like a mustard, but isn’t,’ remarks Alexander. ‘The owner and I didn’t reach a conclusion on how to label this shade, but it certainly made us stop and think.’ In fact, I’m still thinking about it now □

Alexander Doherty Design: alexanderdohertydesign.com



KITCHEN (*above*) A **light** by Poul Henningsen adds period character to bespoke maple-wood cabinets and Statuary marble countertops. ENTRANCE HALL (*below*) **Walls** in Farrow & Ball’s ‘Terre d’Egypte’ provide a backdrop for a **painting** by Danish artist William Scharff. A Poul Henningsen **chandelier** hangs above an ebonised Forties table, with a **vase** by Fulvio Bianconi. The upholstered **stool** is by Giò Ponti



MAIN BEDROOM (*this picture*) **Curtains** in a houndstooth wool by Holland & Sherry pick up on a **painting** by Danish artist Edvard Weie. A Pietro Chiesa **lamp** illuminates an Ejner Larsen **desk** and **chair**. SPARE ROOM (*below*) **Walls** in Farrow & Ball’s ‘Drawing Room Blue’ set off an Italian Forties **mirror** by FontanaArte. The vintage **floor lamp** is by Max Ingrand





## CONTRIBUTORS

### **PHILIP HOOPER** | *Interior designer*

After studying architecture at Canterbury College of Art, Philip Hooper found his calling while working for interior designer John Stefanidis for 15 years before he opened his own practice. In 2001, Philip joined Sibyl Colefax & John Fowler, to head up a new team specialising in his 'more mannered approach' to design and interior architecture. His architectural



background allows him to walk through projects in his mind, visualising them in 3D and making tweaks. Philip has written about curtains for this month's On Decorating column (on page 115). His general advice is to 'remember that texture is as important as pattern'. *Where do you like to relax?* 'My Somerset garden is one of the few places I can switch off. The house I have lived in for three years continues to bemuse me – designing for yourself is just impossible.'

### **TARAN WILKHU** | *Photographer*

'I enjoy photography because it has caused me to fall in love with light and see the world around me with fresh eyes every single day,' says Taran Wilkhu. He studied architectural photography at London College of Communication and his work has been featured in exhibitions and the book *An Opinionated Guide to London Architecture* (Hoxton Mini Press,



£9.95), published last year. Taran's passion for travel has allowed him to explore the world through his photography – most recently Copenhagen, New York, Shanghai, Milan and the French Riviera. He shot Zoë Zimmer's London flat (from page 168) and says it is his work for *House & Garden* that has inspired his love of mid-century furniture and natural textures.

*How would you describe the style of your photography?* 'Ambient, geometric and tonal.'

### **ALEXANDER DOHERTY** | *Interior designer*

British-born Alexander Doherty cites Copenhagen's Thorvaldsen Museum as the inspiration for the use of strong colour in the Manhattan apartment he designed (from page 144). He likes colour and texture on walls but tends to play down pattern, preferring to draw the eye to art and objects. Alexander's interest in decorating began in the early Eighties



when, influenced by Terence Conran and Habitat, he designed his parents' kitchen. Later that decade, Alexander moved to Paris to study interior architecture. However, it was not until he settled in New York that he set up his own firm in 2007. Alexander loves to travel – his favourite destinations are Egypt, Paris and the South of France.

*What are you working on now?* 'One particularly exciting project is a glass box 64 floors up in the middle of Manhattan' □