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Quietly confident

A Mayfair home that takes pleasure in pared-back design

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Interior architect Katie Earl describes her latest project as “a serene space in the heart of the city.” She and Emma Rayner, co-founders of No12 Studio, worked together on the two-bedroom Mayfair apartment, which features “a lot of muted and desaturated colours. Calmness was a key directive in terms of the palette we chose. The mood is very peaceful.”

The apartment is located within a Grade II-listed Georgian building, and the property was formerly an office space before being sectioned in to 17 unique apartments by architects Darling Associates. It was then that No12 Studio was brought in to oversee the interiors. “We christened the job Project Verde as the building was once owned by a legal company called DS Green Limited, and the plaque is still on the front of the building today,” says Earl. “The facade had been modified around 1900, but thankfully many of the original interior features were retained, including amazing fireplaces and mouldings, which have since been beautifully restored.”

Working with these elements, they dressed the space with a carefully curated mix of antique pieces, design classics and bespoke furniture, as well as rich fabrics and original art. The aim,

as with all of their projects, was to create a luxurious but low-key atmosphere.

This kind of simplicity has always been key for the pair, who met at Westminster-based design studio 1508 back in 2010. “When we started, there were 25 people,” says Rayner, “then that grew to about 70 and it became a bit of a powerhouse. We never actually worked on any projects together at the time, but we definitely had a mutual respect for each other’s design style.” In 2014, Earl left to take up a role as the creative director of Hudson & Mercer, a small design studio in west London, and a couple of months later, Rayner followed suit. “We ended up moving to a team of just eight, including ourselves, but during our time there we created a really nice synergy,” she says. That synergy eventually led to them setting up on their own in 2015.

“By then we understood what was required from high-end interiors in terms of quality, craftsmanship and sophistication,” explains Rayner. “We’d worked on prime projects with all the trims, silks and pattern, but we wanted to take a more pared-back approach. There can sometimes be an assumption that if something is heavily designed it becomes luxurious, but

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Strong sculptural shapes, such as Desalto’s finely balanced Clay table, are set against the decorative period features of the Georgian building

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A play of surface textures – rather than colour or pattern – creates the rhythm and interest, including a bespoke rug by Colbourns



for us, contemporary and minimalist can be equally luxurious because of its simplicity.”

It’s a way of thinking that is evident throughout this project, where many of the pieces have been made to order by London-based upholstery company Northbrook Furniture, including the dark blue velvet sofa, a low-level bench and a set of dining chairs that sit around a Clay table by Desalto. “We wanted everything to work perfectly within the space, and this was an opportunity for us to design key pieces to exact dimensions, and to match our vision for the project,” says Earl. “The curved back of the sofa is a subtle detail that continues through the bench base, for example, and reflects the curves of the vintage armchairs, which were sourced from a local antique dealer. It’s details like these that have always made us tick.”

The armchairs, by Czech designer Jindřich Halabala, were reupholstered in a pale grey corduroy sourced from Howe at 36 Bourne Street, meticulously chosen to contrast with the hide on the custom-made bench, as well as the plush velvet. “Combining textures helps to create interest and depth without using lots of pattern. It lets the fabrics speak for themselves,” says Rayner. “We added another

layer with a bespoke rug, which was made for us by luxury carpet manufacturer Colbourns. This adds some real comfort to the living room and creates a soft and homely feel.”

Lighting comes courtesy of Scandinavian brands including a collaboration between 101 Copenhagen and Norr11, as well as Danish design house Gubi, while art was sourced from an array of galleries and antique markets, and chosen to include a range of mediums from photograph to sculpture and illustration. They particularly champion new, emerging artists.

Since completing the project, the studio has also worked on Gasholders, a luxury development housed within a trio of gasholder frames in London’s redeveloped Kings Cross, which joins offices on Old Park Lane and one of London’s first all-women’s members’ clubs, AllBright, in their burgeoning portfolio. Next up there is talk of a boutique hotel, a five-bedroom property outside Dublin and a penthouse apartment near High Street Kensington. “For that project we’ve created an entirely bespoke collection of furniture,” says Earl. “It’s been really exciting, and a great opportunity to showcase what we can do in that area of design, too.”

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Contrasting geometric forms are rhythmically repeated, such as the bench with its U-shaped and cuboid abutting sections, and the blue velvet sofa, with its curved cushions sat against a squared-off back. Both are custom-made pieces designed for the space by No12 Studio and made by Northbrook Furniture

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Clockwise from top left: creatively displayed curiosities; historic contrasts with modern over the fireplace; a vintage Halabala chair, reupholstered in pale grey corduroy

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In the bedroom, a pared-back design approach creates a restful mood



