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CLOCKWISE FROM BELOW Katie and Emma's design and colour palette for The AllBright club in London's Fitzrovia took inspiration from the Bloomsbury set; in the club's bar, the pair used this bar stool, £348, from Out There Interiors, reupholstering its seat in grey velvet; and they add texture to rooms using rugs, such as this Pasta design by Holland & Sherry, £1,627sq m



A Life In Design

NO.12

The design duo on finding luxury in space and light and breaking the rules on creating interiors for women

Since starting design studio No.12 in 2015, Katie Earl and Emma Rayner have worked on everything from small apartments to vast penthouses, female-only member's club The AllBright in London's Fitzrovia to prominent new residential developments such as The Gasholders in King's Cross. Here, they share their design inspirations...

How did you get started?

Emma: I have a background in furniture design – after studying a BA at Kingston University, I went to work for a furniture designer and upholsterer in Bath, learning the ins and outs of both the craft and trade. Katie: I studied interior architecture at Manchester University. I'd wanted to be an interior designer since I was 12 – every month, I made my mum take me to B&Q, so I could repaint and restyle my bedroom. On holiday, I used to take graph paper with me, so I could reorganise the places we stayed in. I was obsessed.

Where did you meet?

Emma: We both went from working in a team of 70 at the design studio 1508 London to a small practice of just eight, including us. It's where our mutual style was really cemented





CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT The duo designed this simple, elegant master bedroom for an apartment in London's Fitzrovia; they like to hang strips of wallpaper as pieces of art – Kelly Wearstler's Jubilee wallpaper in Shell/Gold for Lee Jofa at GP&J Baker, £290 for 9m; Emma and Katie created this bold bathroom scheme for a house in St John's Wood; they often use pendant shades, hung low, such as these Formakami lights, from £160, by Jaime Hayon for &Tradition at SCP, to create balance in rooms with high ceilings; the AllBright club's glamorous cocktail bar; sculptural shapes bring an eclectic feel to this sophisticated No.12-designed reception room; and Espasso's Dinemaquesa armchair by Jorge Zalsupin, from £6,050, is one of the duo's favourite designs

together, but we were working so hard, it made us wonder why we shouldn't do it for ourselves instead.

What was your first big break?
 Emma: Joining forces with Wilkinson Eyre to design the interiors of apartments at The Gasholders really kick-started the practice. The AllBright club put us on the map.

Describe your style?
 Emma: As female designers, it's inherently quite masculine. Katie: It's funny because people assume the opposite – super-luxxy, pretty spaces. Instead, it's always very bold, simple and clean. For example, for The AllBright club – just because it's for women, didn't mean it needed to be pink.

What's your starting point?
 Katie: The design for each project starts with the building – we dig into its history, who lived there, or for a new build, what happened around the area before it was built. For The AllBright in Fitzrovia, we drew on the art of Vanessa Bell of the Bloomsbury set as a reference for colour. It's never just about what we like – it needs to have more reason than that.

Describe your design process?
 Emma: We don't believe stylish means more layers, more adornment, more 'show'. We think the biggest luxuries are calm, space, light and beauty. We appreciate when things are made properly. Katie: We like celebrating the detail: the beautiful weave within a fabric, the way joinery interlocks on a piece of cabinetry. We strip it all back – we like proving that simplicity can be as much of a statement as adornment.

What pieces are you drawn to?
 Emma: It isn't about the era or heritage, it's about the feeling one piece gives off when sitting next to another piece. We



[P.S]

Who is on your dream dinner party guest list?
 Both: Iris Apfel, the late Franca Sozzani, Nile Rodgers and Apparatus Studio's Jeremy Anderson and Gabriel Hendifar.

What was the first thing you bought for your home?

Emma: A Tito Agnoli P3 lounge chair, bought for a bargain on eBay when I was 20.

Katie: A cane-backed antique chair with a black leather seat, bought on eBay for £40.

What is your most treasured possession?

Emma: Our artwork. My favourite is by Anders Petersen. I love how romantic it is. Katie: A Christophe Delcourt DUL chair in gunmetal and moss green suede leather, bought from Willer.

What was the last book you read?

Emma: The Dream Colony – A Life in Art by Anne Doran, Deborah Treisman and Walter Hopps. Katie: I read and reread The Godfather by Mario Puzo.

happily mix old and new, but never with too much of the same material – it unbalances the mood of a room.

What's your colour palette?

Emma: We like very rich, desaturated tones in green, blue, mustard, black, white and grey, warm not cold. Katie: We use red quite a lot too, but never in a telephone or post-box red – it would be a claret or burgundy because it's richer, deeper and stronger.

How do you decide on the pieces for a room?

Katie: We print out pictures of every piece we'd like to use and group them together by room – we never look at each piece on its own – and then lay all the rooms out to see how it feels as a whole. You don't want to walk into one room with a mid-century Scandi vibe and then walk into another that's all shabby chic. It helps discern which pieces stay and how to achieve consistency throughout.

What about lighting?

Emma: Warm white bulbs make a space feel comfortable and make people look good. For bedrooms, we alternate lighting to add a point of difference to the hierarchy of rooms – if we use pendants in the master bedroom, we'll use table lamps or wall lights in a guest room. In living rooms, we play with varied heights of multi-drop pendants, like Jaime Hayon's Formakami designs for &Tradition, to connect higher ceilings to furniture at lower levels.

Is texture important?

Emma: We celebrate the quality of materials – seeing the grain of a timber, the weave in a linen, the vein of a stone or marble. We use texture rather than colour to keep things as pure as possible. Katie: We never use faux materials, for example, a printed tile to look like stone or a laminate.



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT Kelly Wearstler's Jubilee wallpaper in Shell/Gold for Lee Jofa at GP&J Baker, £290 for 9m; the pair's sleek kitchen design is given a modern kick with patterned marble; brass roof lanterns lend The AllBright café a contemporary feel, while hanging planters add greenery; and Channels pleated wool flannel fabric in Stone, top, and Winter, £388m, both by Weitzner at Altfield, one of No.12's top fabric sources

Emma: If you love timber, say an exotic wenge, but can't afford it, stain a solid wood like oak dark rather than use a laminate. Rugs are also a great way to bring in added depth – we use Holland & Sherry for the interesting textures and mix of materials like leather, wool and jute.

How else do you lend depth to a room?

Katie: Artwork doesn't have to just be a framed photograph or painting – play with pieces like a tapestry (rodged and hung or box framed), ceramics and glass. We also like hanging strips of wallpaper, like Kelly Wearstler's Jubilee, in place of artwork.

What about if you're on a budget?

Emma: If you can't afford to have lots of one beautiful material, use a small bit well. We transformed Seventies-style gold bar stools from Out There Interiors by reupholstering

the seats in a grey velvet from Northcroft Fabrics.

Where do you source favourite pieces?

Katie: We love eBay – what we don't know about what's on eBay isn't worth knowing. We've recently been looking at pre-mid-century pieces with inlay and marquetry details. Emma: For something modern, Espasso's Dinemaquesa armchair by Jorge Zalsupin never fails to impress.

What does home mean to you?

Emma: It needs to be an extension of yourself – you have to love everything in it, it doesn't matter if anybody else likes it. For more info on No.12, check out No12studio.com

