



Finely TUNED

Interior designer Sean Symington balances and blends traditional and youthful, colour and calm, the influences of two cultures, and a country feel in a Georgian townhouse

FEATURE KATY MCLEAN PHOTOGRAPHY CHRIS WAKEFIELD

TOP The impressive drawing room combines classic country-house style with a few lighter, playful touches.

ABOVE Interior designer Sean Symington worked closely with the owners to balance their differing tastes, and tackle the challenges of decorating a vast period townhouse.

Set in a prominent location in Bath, this impressive Georgian townhouse presented interior designer Sean Symington with an interesting brief to fulfill. His clients were a young couple – an English husband with decidedly traditional taste, and a Mediterranean wife who wanted a more youthful approach. ‘He really wanted that very classic English country house look, whereas she was drawn to pretty colours and a softer look, as well wanting it to be practical for the demands of a young family,’ Symington explains.

The couple have a home in London too, but the house in Bath gives them the best of both worlds by combining city life with proximity to the Cotswolds, so the overall interior aesthetic straddles both town and country. When the couple bought the house, it

was already ‘very well done by the previous owners in a very traditional way, which spoke to the husband, so we tried to keep some of it intact,’ Symington reveals. Of course, original period features such as the cornicing and detailing are beautiful, ‘but the grand proportions of the rooms can be challenging. It can be difficult to make the rooms feel cosy. Another challenge of listed properties is getting building consents,’ he notes, adding that a building historian was consulted to check which pieces were original and what could be altered.

Here, Symington takes us through some key rooms in the house and describes how he satisfied the brief, combining the different cultures and styles of the owners to create a balanced home, full of colour and interesting details. ▶



The Drawing Room

'The drawing room is huge – the house is actually one of the best on the square, with four windows in the drawing room, where most usually have only three.

'We got a quote for changing the wallpaper, and it was astronomical, so we decided the budget would be better spent elsewhere. And as the wallpaper was in great condition and in a pretty yellow, we could build the scheme around it. The client was drawn to lots of pastel colours such as robin's egg blue, apricot, pinks and lots of green. Those colours are all used in this room, and run throughout the house.

'As there was a lot of brown furniture in terms of inherited antiques, and several oil paintings of the husband's ancestors, we used a few modern touches to offset this. The sofas and chairs from Kingcome are in a classic style, but the ottoman by Isabelle Baldwin, covered with a leopard print from Manuel Canovas, is a much more contemporary touch.

'The curtains also give an unexpected feel as they are in a simple linen from Romo, which helped save some money, too. Another challenge of furnishing a townhouse like this, with big windows, is the cost of curtains can be prohibitive. So we kept the fabric plain and spent money on the silk fringe trim from Turnell & Gigon. Passementerie is so important – details make the design. I always say if it's not nailed down, it's getting fringed!

'The dining room is part of the vast drawing room, and, again, we were working with antique furniture, so we gave it a fresher feel by placing colourful, glossy lamps on the console. The chairs are in a Colefax and Fowler terracotta plain, a colour that runs throughout the home. On first appearances, it is a very colourful house, but we have a core palette that maintains harmony – terracotta, apricot, green and blue. The same terracotta is found in the study downstairs and on a runner that is used up the staircase, and there are

ABOVE LEFT A plain linen, trimmed with a silk tassel fringe from Turnell & Gigon, was used to make the curtains for the four tall windows in the drawing room.

ABOVE CENTRE An ottoman by Isabelle Baldwin, upholstered in a leopard print, Tobago in Celeste from Manuel Canovas, adds a modern note.

'Passementerie is so important – details make the design. I always say if it's not nailed down, it's getting fringed!'

elements of it in nearly every room. We wanted to be able to move furniture around if need be, to be used in different rooms, so there is a good flow and continuity.

'The rug in the sitting area of the drawing room was actually the last thing we bought. As we had used a thick-pile cream carpet, the owners didn't see a need for a rug, but I explained it helps to hold the furniture and bring a scheme together. I borrowed this one from Lorfor's Antiques, for the photo shoot, and they could see how it completed the room, so they bought it. It's amazing that it perfectly brings all the elements together but it was the final piece we found.'

ABOVE The spacious drawing room allows for a dining room area. Large lamp bases from Vaughan Designs, with shades from Penny Morrison, are used to add colour and contrast to the antique furniture and oil paintings.

RIGHT Sang de Bœuf by Edward Bulmer Natural Paint drenches the walls and woodwork of the study.

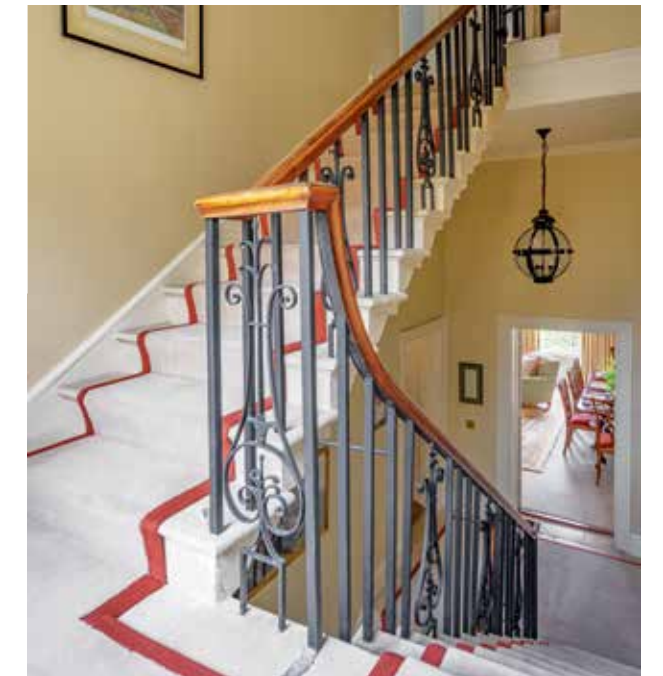
BELOW Faux books disguise hidden storage to create a cloakroom.

BELOW RIGHT The staircase has been used effectively to create cohesion with the terracotta-edged runner linking to a hue found in most of the rooms.



The Study

'The study is on the ground floor, off the entrance hall. There wasn't a cloakroom, so the carpenter changed the existing bookshelves into hidden doors that opened up, creating a secret storage for coats. We lined the shelves with fake books you can buy by the yard from DecBooks, so it still had that library feel. Edward Bulmer's Sang de Bœuf coats the walls and gives that first glimpse of the terracotta red we use through the house. Though this is the husband's space and features a lot of his antique pieces, we've added some softness with fabrics – floral Chatterpie by Ian Sanderson, a paisley from GP & J Baker...it's all setting the scene for what we find upstairs.'



ADVICE FOR TOWNHOUSE LIVING:

- Townhouses are often linear in layout, so hallways are useful for creating cohesion and flow.
- Linking colours floor-to-floor is key to making the home feel continuous. We used terracottas and greens throughout, balancing the naturally disjointed layouts that townhouse living brings.
- A runner on the stairs with a terracotta border brings a thread through the home.

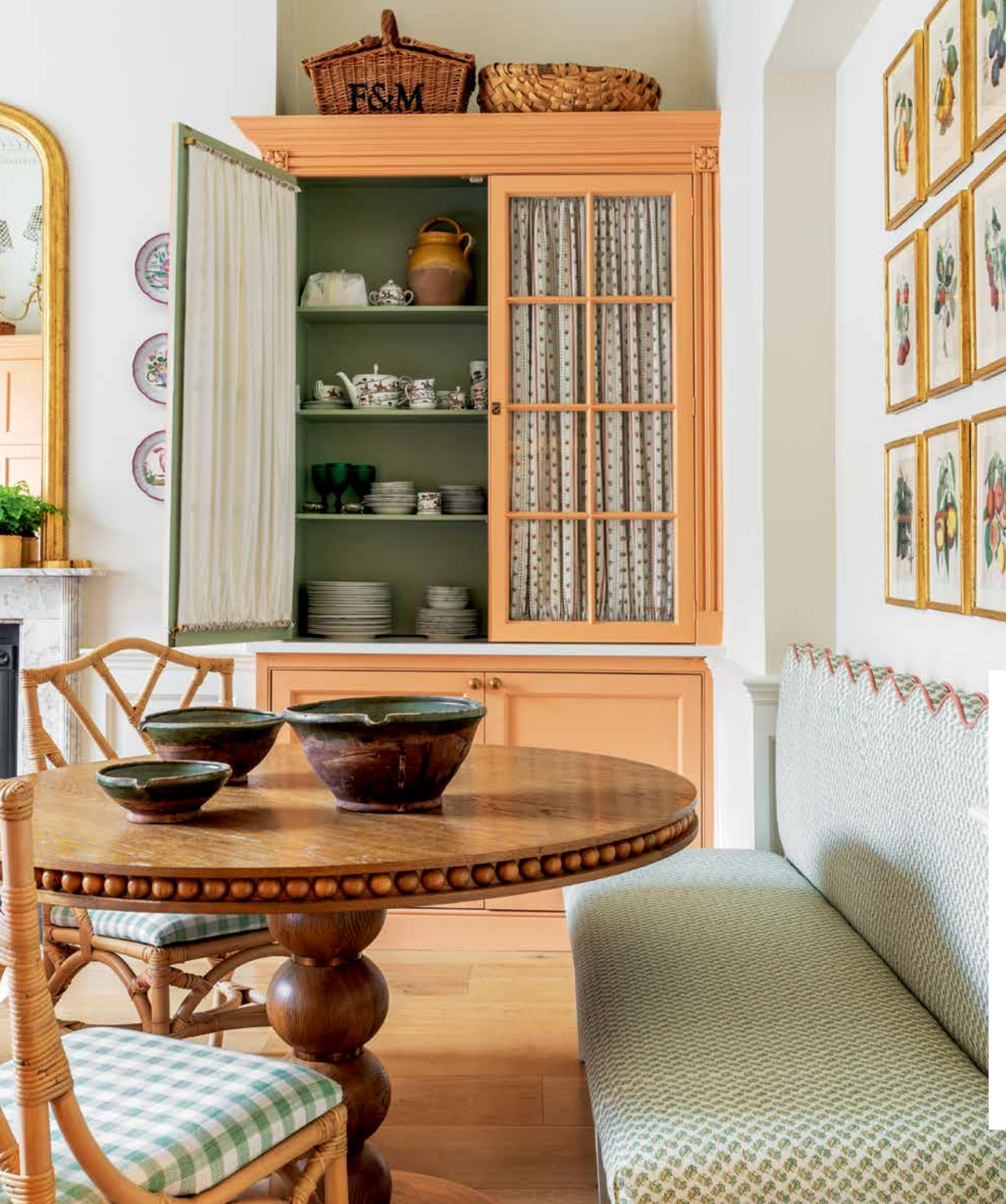
The Kitchen

‘The kitchen was already stunning when they bought the house, so we didn’t want to completely tear it down. It needed to be made more appropriate and practical for a young family, so we added the large island to house a dishwasher, large sink and pull-out bin. We kept the glass-fronted cupboards but added fabric from Braquenié at Pierre Frey and painted the insides a pretty green, which adds that soft, country feel. You could go for a very contemporary kitchen in a Georgian townhouse and just contrast period features with a sleek, modern finish, but we wanted to lean into that more traditional look here.

‘In the run of cupboards, we changed some of the doors and added a breakfast pantry – things that made it much more useable. The colour, of course, is the most striking aspect, and it took us a long time to find just the right one. The client was inspired by an apricot hallway and I thought it was really fun and unexpected to use that in the kitchen. This is an archive Farrow & Ball colour, Fowler Pink, perfectly pitched between coral, orange and pink.’ ▶

LEFT The scalloped banquette, upholstered in Oleander by Schumacher, adds a contemporary twist to this classic ‘country-style’ kitchen.

BELOW Fowler Pink is an archive colour from Farrow & Ball and perfectly balances pink and orange tones for a fresh, unexpected kitchen colour.



ABOVE A large island was added to create a more practical space and to house modern appliances. The existing chandelier was updated with lampshades from Birdie Fortescue.

LEFT Udaipur Bouquet, from Braquenié at Pierre Frey, is used for the blind. Other pieces from this collection are used throughout the house to maintain cohesion.



‘The twin room, a child’s bedroom, also works well for when guests come to stay for a party’



The Bedrooms

‘The main bedroom is so pretty and restful. It uses a red-pink colour, bringing that tone of terracotta through again. Curtains in a Lee Jofa fabric are elegant and add an oriental influence. We’ve balanced the use of the inherited antique drawers, used as side tables, with large ceramic lamps. The fresh green headboard with pink trim makes it feel young. The cushion fabrics are from the same Braquenié collection from Pierre Frey we’ve used in the kitchen and on a blind in the bathroom, so we have that thread that runs through the house.

‘The house was so full of beautiful things when they bought it, but perhaps a bit dated. If you’d seen it in 1982, as though decorated by Colefax & Fowler ... just perfection. I truly believe what goes around comes around and some of it is now very much back in demand. The guest bedroom had these amazing Bowood curtains and we asked the previous owners to leave them. It’s a discontinued colour of this incredible pattern – I’d have loved to have done the whole room

in it! But we had them cleaned and relined and used them here.’

‘Rather than create a children’s bedroom, as it is not their main house, there is a ‘boys’ bedroom’. It’s a twin bedroom and it would work well if they had guests staying at a party and wouldn’t want them to feel like they are sleeping in a children’s room.’ ▶

ABOVE LEFT GP & J Baker’s Chifu covers the headboards.

ABOVE Curtains in Bowood by Colefax & Fowler were a happy find, left by the previous owners.

ADVICE FOR TOWNHOUSE LIVING:

- One of the advantages of vertical layouts is that bedrooms naturally feel like retreats – private, quiet spaces that foster a sense of ownership and comfort.
- The top floor was designed for children, with a kitchenette for independence and convenience, and a benefit when it is used as a guest suite, too.



ABOVE The principal bedroom brings together colours and patterns found throughout the house, as well as combining old and new in using antique chests of drawers as bedside tables.

FAR LEFT Clisson, Amande, another fabric from Braquenié at Pierre Frey, is used for the cushions.

LEFT Indus Flower wallpaper by GP & J Baker in a soft red complements the curtains in Lee Jofa’s Luzon Print.



LEFT The principal en-suite bathroom was reconfigured using existing plumbing positions. Blinds in Clisson by Braquenié at Pierre Frey unite the scheme with the bedroom.

BELOW A bobbin mirror made by The Little Framing Company adds a playful finish.
BOTTOM The family bathroom features a similar scheme for a harmonious feel.



The Bathrooms

'The principal bathroom needed the biggest overhaul. Luckily, however, we were able to utilise the existing plumbing positions, which meant we didn't need planning permission. A single pedestal sink was once where we have now put the bath, and we used the previous bath position for a modern shower. Again, we still wanted a classic look, but with the modern amenities of a contemporary bathroom. We have panelling in Slipper Satin from Farrow & Ball, with Edward Bulmer's Lilac Pink on the walls and Granite Green on the bespoke vanity. We had a large bobbin mirror made, which gave a trendier feel – we've echoed this use of bobbin in all the bathrooms to create further cohesion.

'The wall panelling gives the family bathroom a similar aesthetic treatment as the principal bathroom. Edward Bulmer's Tea Green is matched with Squiggle, a paper from Sibyl Colefax & John Fowler. Fortunately, the existing plumbing could be used here too. In fact, we kept the bath where it was and just painted it. I love the Bennison fabric used for the blind, again bringing through some of the colours we've used throughout the house.' ■

