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WILDLY ELEGANT

Designer Celerie Kemble finds the playful side of sophisticated colors in a Manhattan apartment that's refined enough for the urbane parents but rambunctious enough for high-energy kids.



Designer Celerie Kemble painted the dining room of a Manhattan apartment in a Fine Paints of Europe lacquer matched to a Shantone color. Kemble's Yves dining table and Cassandre chairs in a George Spencer Designs velvet are from Herbolson. Venini chandelier, Cragg Van Olin Brulle, opposite: Red wineglasses echo the color of the walls.

Interior Design CELERIE KEMBLE Interview KATHLEEN HACKETT
Photography CHRISTOPHER STURMAN Producers SENG MORTIMER & DAYLE WOOD

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KATHLEEN HACKETT: Four school-age children live in this New York City apartment. Who would have thought?
CELERIE KEMBLE: They have wonderfully stylish parents, whose aesthetic is an ideal combination of assured and devil-may-care. They want their kids to live in a home that telegraphs what's important to them: art, humor, playfulness, beauty, comfort, confidence. The intention is for this house to last a lifetime—and to get better with age. My colleague Caroline Irvin and I chose colors, textiles, and furnishings with a high degree of detail and patina. It all sustains wear and tear in such a way that scuffs, dings, and smudges don't look like flaws, they look like they've been there all along. "Crisp and new" is difficult to maintain, even if there are only grown-ups living in a house.
So it wouldn't faze the owners if a toddler left handprints on the dining room walls? Ah, the dining room. It does have a gravitational pull. The walls have seven or more coats of lacquer on them—I lost count. They're like mirrors, and what child isn't fascinated with his or her reflection? We landed on that classic shade after trying several other colors, from a Billy Baldwin-esque egg yolk to a stuffed-animal brown. The red wine walls are flattering, warm, and lively. You're meant to feel like all of the best conversations happen here. But so do children's chess games and homework. I wish I had been in the room during the color discussion with your clients.



Kemble treats rugs as works of art and chooses them at the end as a finishing touch, as she did with the living room's antique Tabriz. The pair of Serpentine sofas, by Kemble for Herbolson, is covered in Duke mohair velvet by Pierre Frey. A vintage rope mirror from John Rosselli Antiques houses light into the room. The curtains are in Scalmandra's Savanna silk blend, and the plaster walls were custom tinted to resemble the inside of a seashell.

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In the entry hall, custom-colored Florida-blossom wallpaper by Kemble for Fromental incorporates some of the client's favorite flowers. The ceiling pendant is a Morris Large lantern from Visual Comfort. A winged pillow from Madeline Weston is a striking contrast to a tufted cushion in Fermine's Poulton Scribe on the Emery & Cie Eclairés bench.



ABOVE: In the master bedroom, tufted armchairs upholstered in Holland & Sherry's Kensington wool felt are oriented to watch the TV that slides out from under the bed. **RIGHT:** The Shelly chandelier by Curry & Company in the dressing room illuminates the gold marbling of Calico's Walk wallcovering opposite. A hand-painted tea-paper wallcovering by Kemble for Fromental gives the master bedroom a soft warmth. The exterior canopy and bed skirt are in Marnot Carovos's Sallange fabric, and Lantime Linens' bedding has a curvaceous border that helps visually anchor the bed in the ethereal space.

The wife wanted the spaces to be pretty but not fussy, good-looking but not arrogant. She loves an ambience that has flair as well as soul. The color schemes reflect that.

The entry hall certainly announces that this home is anything but stuffy. The wallpaper is blooming with the clients' favorite plants—royal poinciana, acacia, orchids, geraniums, kamquats—hand-painted on faint sky-blue tea paper. It's as if a mad botanist lives here! It's a sophisticated yet playful solution for an interior room. Every day begins and ends with a stroll through a lovely garden.

Some rooms feel breezy, others cocooned. How did you work out the transitions? I usually steer toward light colors and use bold ones as accents. But this time, several rooms—the study, the dining and family rooms, and a boy's bedroom—called out for deeper shades to project a feeling of warmth and envelopment. That said, all of the rooms are designed around comfort and graciousness. There are shared colors throughout, but the real connection is an ethos: spaces that are casual and generous.

The living room sofas look relaxed, but they're what are they really kid-friendly? They are covered in a mohair velvet the color of vapor. The fabric is easy to spot-clean and can stand up to tons of abuse, which was key because so much entertaining happens here. It's a wonderfully welcoming room, not least because the walls look like the inside of a conch shell and give off a pretty glow. Warm coconas and cream—the buttery shade of mashed potatoes—are so deeply satisfying that everyone feels at home.

There's no shortage of seating choices. Why so many chairs? The house is full of people all the time! The wife has that enviable mix of humor and grace that makes it easy to stop by. She had a real desire for the space to seem pretty without veering toward the saccharine, which is why most of the seating—and the other furnishings in the room—is rounded or even serpentine. There's not a chair you'd be afraid to sit in for fear of ruining it or being uncomfortable. In this home, you are at ease setting your drink down and eating out of your hand, or a napkin, or off a great plate. It's all acceptable.



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Kemble conjured a dapper mens suit for the study and executed it by covering the walls in Country Tweed, a checked wool by Holland & Sherry. The Michael Cole's 800-Williams sofa is covered in Moore & Giles' Strampitt leather, and the custom armchairs are in a word of Behn's silk velvet. The Ralph Lauren Home pendant light is from Visual Comfort. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE PAGE 104.

CELERIE KEMBLE on color



grapefruit in a custom glaze, ratiavine just thinking about it. Can't live without nail polish and lipstick. Color is my biggest distract me, so I only buff my nails. As for cosmetics, I used MAC's Sheer Lipstick in Dolce Vita. It's a very human shade of red. Color that makes everyone look amazing: Candied.

Iconic landmark you'd recognize: I'd like to see New York's taxi go on for a few years. It might change the denominator of the city. Black in a room is the salt it's nearly impossible to cook without it—and sad when you're forced to. One rule: Always do a color on the ceiling. If you're not sure about what shade of paint to choose, pick the palest whisp of your favorite accent color in the room.

Color philosophy: There's a reason we don't see the world in black-and-white. Flower of choice: I'm always captured by dark-hearted flowers, like calla-lilies, colored Brugmansia and inky-black Scabiosa—which isn't as scary as it sounds. I swear! Oddest thing you've color matched: The sheer pink and yellow undertones of pink.



Some of Kemble's colorful go-tos, clockwise from top left: A rainbow-hued Italian Spizola style chandelier in a boy's bedroom in the apartment; a trellis-green Phillip Jeffries grass cloth covers the walls. Blooming Brugmansia. A work by Hugo Groszette, one of her favorite artists. NARS Sheer Lipstick in Dolce Vita. The designer loves leathers that display rich color, such as those by Moore & Giles. Pink grapefruit. A floral pillow by D. Porthault.

TO SEE MORE OF THIS HOME, GO TO housebeautiful.com/celerie



RETRO ACTIVE

In the English countryside, a British design pioneer transforms a 1970s bachelor pad into a stylish furniture laboratory.

STYLING: MIA ASH
PHOTOGRAPHY: CLIFFORD WILSON

Headlin Credit: owner of the London-based furniture company and his wife since 1970s home as a living space for his company's owners. In the foreground, a table made of wood by Matthew Wilson & Stuart with a Emma Wilson bench.

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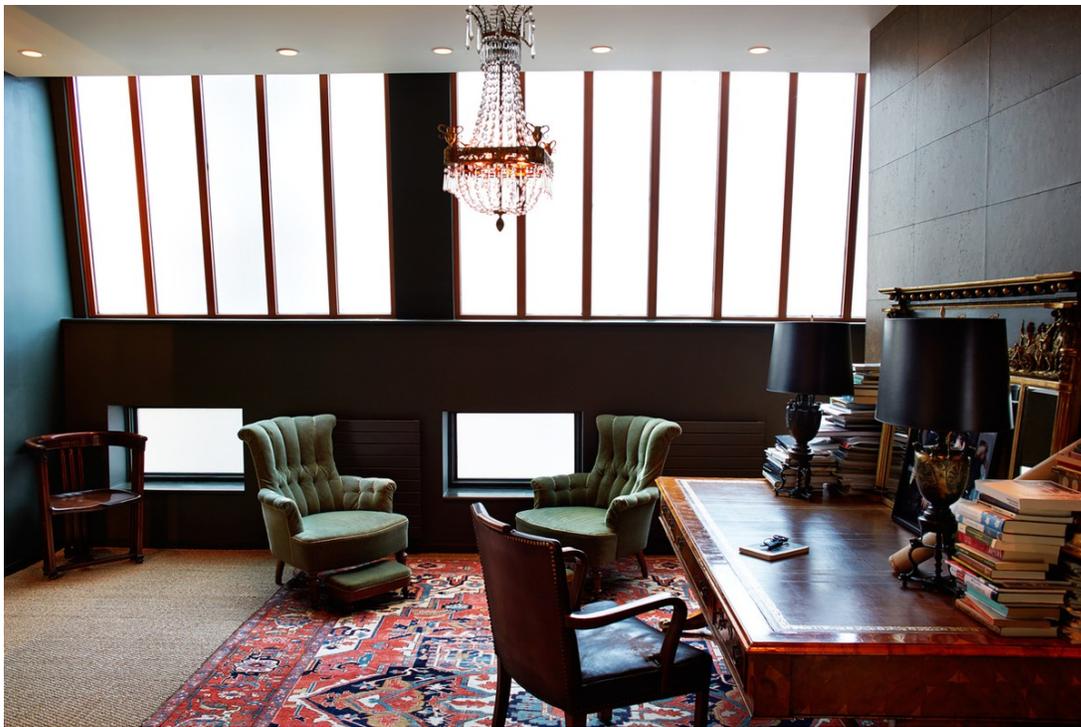
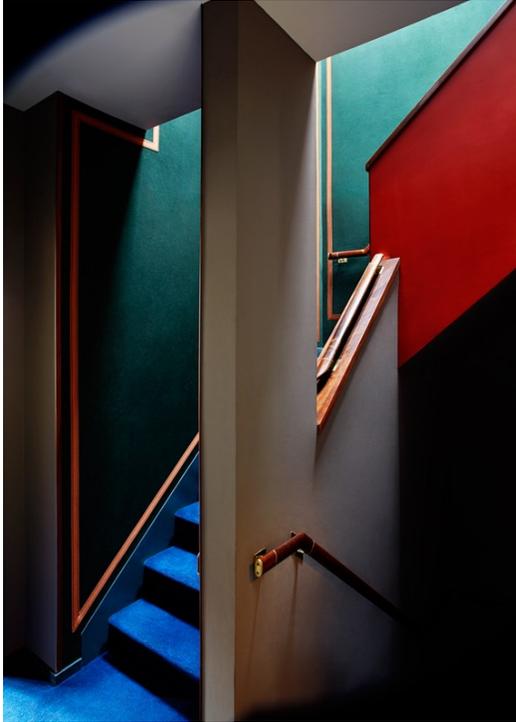
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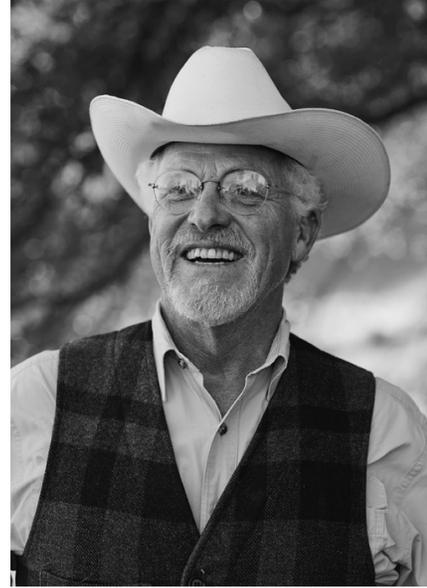
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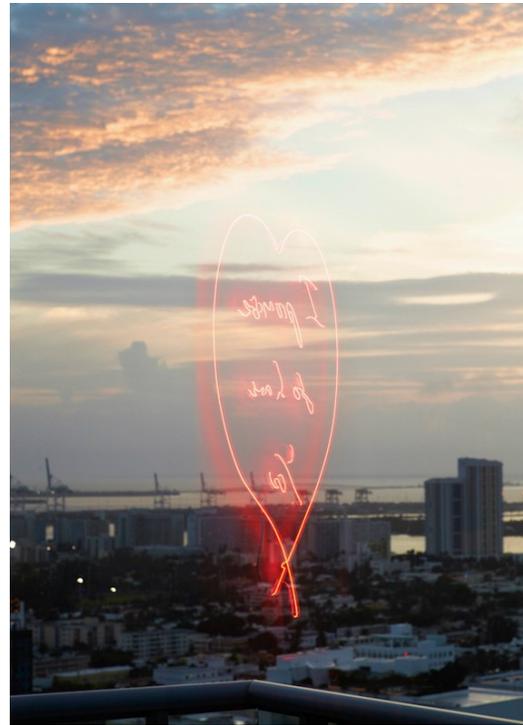
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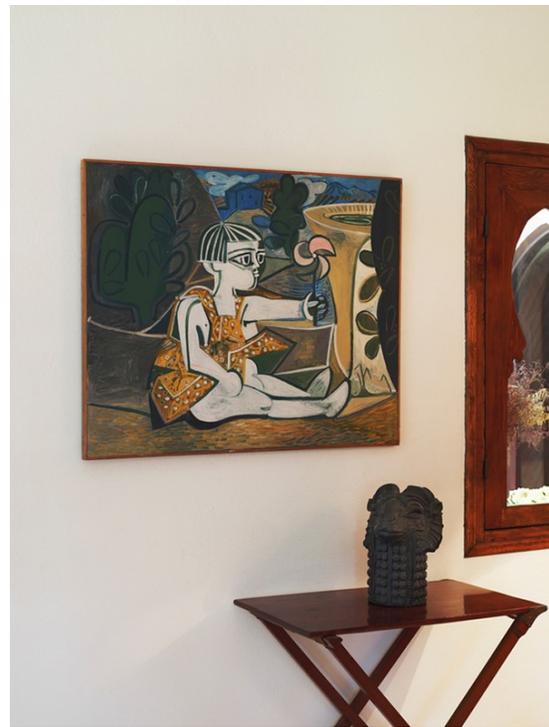
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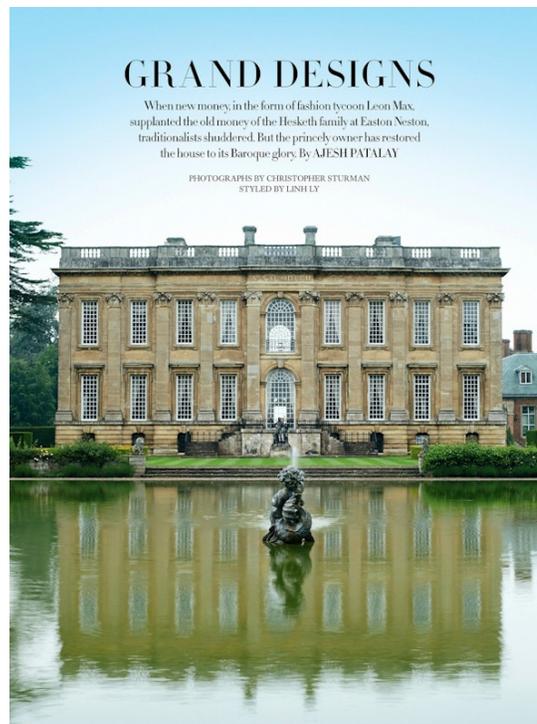
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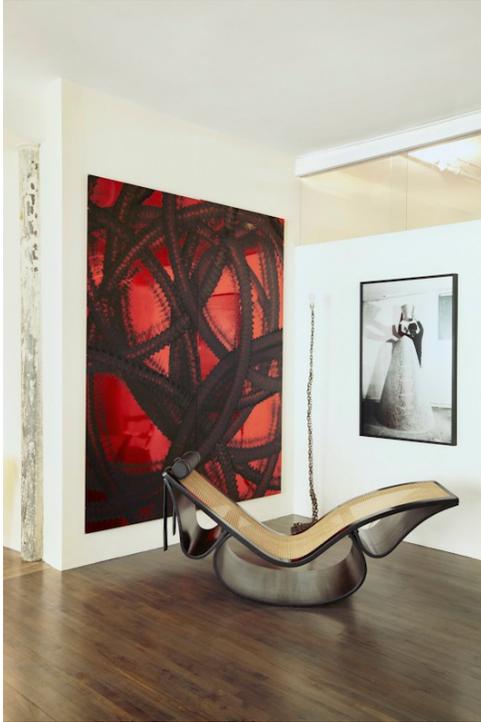
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