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MOODY BLUES

How a small flat in Mayfair became a theater for Faye Toogood's expansive imagination and a reinvention of the idea of Englishness.



BY ALEXA BRAZILIAN PHOTOGRAPHS BY TOBIAS HARVEY

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THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK
The drawing room of a flat in London's Mayfair feels both Victorian and contemporary: overcast sage-hued walls, aluminum shelves of Toopgood's own design and a painting by the British artist Ivon Hitchens. Opposite, bespoke chair and bronze cylinder containers by Michael Verheyden in the study.

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GREAT EXPECTATIONS Opposite: in the study, a custom steel curiosity cabinet containing classic British ceramics and busts. Below left: polished plaster walls in a bespoke indigo provide a backdrop for a chintz-effect rubber bench. Below right: an LED tubelight puts a futuristic spin on a cage shower from Catchpole & Rye, and a pair of 18th-century giltwood mirrors.



IN HER WILDEST DREAMS, the interior designer Faye Toogood wouldn't be hired just to decorate a house but to conceive a complete universe, from the art on the walls to the teaspoons in the cupboards. Last year, she was given the opportunity to do just that for an American couple with a small place in London's Mayfair neighborhood. "It was like creating a living work of art," says Toogood, who reveled in the artistic freedom — and had nearly everything custom-made. The result is a Victorian flat that provides an unadulterated view of Toogood's theatrical aesthetic: a moody and stylized juxtaposition of Modernist and traditional furniture, country and urban references and a transporting use of color.

Toogood, who began her career as a prop stylist at *The World of Interiors* before branching out on her own in 2008, wanted the flat to feel thoroughly English, but without leaning on familiar totems like club chairs and wood paneling. ("That's my nature," she says. "If there's a path to the front door, I'll find the side road to

Toogood drenched the walls in petrol blue and thunderstorm-gray to conjure the low natural light of London.

the back.") After stripping the flat of its pseudo-Victorian moldings, she drenched the walls in polished plaster tinted in bespoke shades of petrol blue and thunderstorm-gray to conjure the low natural light of London. "It's almost like walking into a painting," she explains. "Northern Europe is always so gray, there's no point in trying to brighten a space by painting it white." Toogood also chose to work exclusively with British materials and craftspeople for the project. A made-to-order wall hanging in the master bedroom — entitled "Storm" and woven in shades of sapphire — was created by the traditional West Dean tapestry studio in North Chichester, one of the few of its kind left in England. The alluring cave of a kitchen — from cabinet facings to countertops — is constructed entirely of inky slate found in Wales, and the master bath is covered in honey-colored floor-to-ceiling English silver stone. These more traditional touches, Toogood says, reflect her time at *The World of Interiors*, when it was helmed by its eccentric founder, Min Hogg. "There was no sense of trend or fashion at the magazine," she says. "It was

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'I envisioned the flat as less of a vacation home and more like the most personal and private of hotels.'

about the wealth and history of an object or room, whether it was made yesterday or 500 years ago."

Juxtaposing the flat's romantic version of Englishness are contemporary pieces, such as colored LED rod lights and subversive custom furniture from of-the-moment London designers like Max Lamb and Martino Gamper, which give rooms the sense of disruption and tension that is ever-present in Toogood's work. (Along with residences, she's done provocative store installations for brands like Hermès and Comme des Garçons.) Toogood began designing furniture in 2010, and pieces from her own line are scattered about like rustic sculptures, including an iridescent green-and-blue jewelry stand and the cream-colored egglike fiberglass chairs she designed when she was pregnant with her daughter, Indigo, now 3.

"I envisioned the flat as less of a vacation home and more like the most personal and private of hotels," she said. True to her word, she commissioned bespoke cards from Mount Street Printers for the residence, hung robes from the line of unisex clothing she designs with her sister in the closets and, to complete the illusion of escape, created a custom room fragrance with a French perfumery that smells of old leather and mud. "I'm very greedy as a designer," she says with a laugh. "I want to orchestrate a whole world." ■



INDIGO GIRL Clockwise from top: above the master bed, a custom tapestry that took six months to complete; a George III sofa covered in raw hessian cloth; a Toogood-designed jewelry stand on an 18th-century walnut cabinet. Opposite: in the gallery, British antiques and reclaimed oak parquet floors set off a polished Toogood Fern light inspired by English woodlands and Roly-Poly chairs.





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