



CONTINENTAL BLEND

Artistic skill, a love of traditional interiors and a passion for textiles have led to a successful fusion of French, Swiss and English style in Antoinette Engel's Geneva apartment



RICH, RED-PAPERED WALLS, a 19th-century Russian samovar and a collection of landscape paintings in the entrance hall of Antoinette Engel's Geneva apartment set the scene for what is to come. "You won't find any grey, beige or taupe here," she says, "I adore what I call English colours, especially different reds." Sure enough, her large, left bank (of Lake Geneva) apartment, on the fourth floor of a 1920s building, is light, bright and unusually English in style. She counts herself very lucky to have found it with the original parquet floors, mouldings, doors and fireplace intact. "It is almost impossible to find such a place here. Usually all the architectural details have been removed and made more 'efficient', in the Swiss way."

Antoinette was brought up in Geneva but her French family (her surname is pronounced with a soft G, as in angel) has been in the textile business for generations. A love of art and design and, of course, fabrics, is in her genes. She studied bookbinding in Milan

and one customer was so impressed by her stylish photograph albums and frames he asked for her help with designing his shop. Next came the decoration of her golf club and the word spread rapidly. "As friends and acquaintances visited the apartment, it became a showcase for my work, as it is completely different from the formal French style that most people know."

The interiors that Antoinette encountered in England really appealed to her. Broad, down-filled sofas upholstered in cotton or linen; beautifully made interlined curtains, and fabrics and papers from Colefax and Fowler made a deep impression. "Its Brook Street showroom is one of my favourite places," she says. "Even the most formal drawing room is relaxed – rooms never look over-designed. English style is all about mixing periods, pattern and colour."

All the rooms in Antoinette's apartment lead off the central hall. By turning the smaller of the two bedrooms into her office,

PREVIOUS PAGE The sitting room epitomises Antoinette's love of English style, with comfortable sofas from Kingcome Sofas covered in ticking from Bernard Thorp, and a richly patterned rug and cushions from Vaughan. The table lamp is from Peter Jones. **ABOVE** Rich reds fill the dining room, where the walls are covered in a bespoke Chinese patterned fabric from Bernard Thorp and the chair seats are upholstered in Lamorna linen from Osborne & Little. **RIGHT** A collection of landscapes by Antoinette's grandfather hang above an antique chest in the hall. The lamps and shades are from Vaughan.



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she has created the perfect environment for life and work. There are large windows at both the back and front of the apartment, with the drawing and dining rooms looking out to the Alps beyond, while the kitchen at the back, created by opening up three small rooms, is the perfect place for informal work lunches, or a relaxing coffee. The dining room, sitting room and library are all connected by doors that slide into the walls. "I panelled the set between the drawing room and dining room with mirror, which at night, with candles lit, creates a wonderful reflective ambience."

Antoinette favours paper and fabric wall finishes and has lined the dining room in a bespoke Chinese fabric from Bernard Thorp in London, which she has also used for the curtains, lining these with a large red and cream check by Harris Fabrics. Family china and silver, 19th-century cranberry coloured glass, toleware lamp

CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT A collection of family seals and a golfing cup won by Antoinette take pride of place on the sitting room desk; Metallica roses and parrot tulips are surrounded by family photographs; Antoinette's favourite room is the library, where a collection of gouache studies of



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bases with bespoke ciaret-coloured lampshades and deep red chair seats are vibrant highlights in this elegant room. The red and cream needlepoint rug and red trimming on the silk and linen blinds in the drawing room link the colour scheme to both the dining room and Antoinette's favourite room, the library. Here, she has picked up red again by using an old toile fabric on the sofa and by binding the edges of the rug in red linen. A linen and silk mix fabric for the curtains and the walls creates a soothing background, which is ideal for the display of Italian gouache studies of Naples hung symmetrically above the sofa. The striped buttoned chair next to it used to belong to Antoinette's grandfather, who was just one of a number of accomplished artists in the family.

In the bedroom, Melbury Rose fabric by Colefax and Fowler and contrasting blue silk curtains create a convincing country house

Naples hang above a sofa by Peter Dudgeon, covered in a fabric from Pierre Frey; the kitchen has a comfortable, old-fashioned feel, with antique Provençal chairs and original shelving; Antoinette's impressive collection of blue-and-white stoneware is a mixture of collected antiques and family pieces.





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feel. The room is feminine and extremely comfortable, filled with mementoes and fresh flowers. Determinedly un-Swiss in style, Antoinette's bathroom continues the country-house theme. A local carpenter made all the joinery, painted in Farrow & Ball's Stone White, to her design. Above the marble vanity unit hangs a pair of Wedgwood blue plaques, found in Bermondsey Market, lit by brass wall lights from Peter Jones.

If a large, friendly kitchen is the heart of the modern home, Antoinette has created a model space. “The workmen wanted to throw out the old

shelves – can you imagine?” she says. “I knew exactly how I wanted to use them, and simply asked them to centre the shelves on the wall.” Containing all the essential appliances, the room is nevertheless old-fashioned and comforting. Antique Provençal chairs and a chest flank the table, which is laid with part of a 1,000-piece set of family china. It's not surprising that Antoinette's interior design work has a loyal following. Her home is a sophisticated combination of family pieces, personal collections and classic English furnishings, all laid out with immaculate style. ■

FEATURE JOHANNA THORNYCROFT • PHOTOGRAPHS ANDREAS VON EINSIEDEL

ABOVE LEFT Melbury Rose fabric by Colefax and Fowler features prominently in the comfortable bedroom, giving it a quintessentially English country-house look.

ABOVE RIGHT Wall lights from Peter Jones brighten the bathroom, which has been painted in Stone White by Farrow & Ball, a good foil for the marble basin surround.

ANTOINETTE'S SOURCEBOOK

ACCESSORIES Vaughan, (020) 7349 4600. **FABRICS** Bernard Thorp, (020) 7352 5457. Colefax and Fowler, (020) 8877 6400. Harris Fabrics, (020) 7795 0414. Osborne & Little, (020) 7352 1456. Pierre Frey (020) 7376 5599. **LIGHTING** Peter Jones, (020) 7730 3434. **PAINT** Farrow & Ball, (01202) 876141. **PLAQUES** Bermondsey Market, Fridays 5 am-noon, Bermondsey Square, London SE1. **SOFAS** Kingcome Sofas, (020) 7352 1005. Peter Dudgeon, (020) 7589 0322.

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