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HOUSE & GARDEN

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Fired Earth's *Chinolserie* range includes these handmade 'Chelsworthy' wall tiles. They come in panels of 4, 6, 12 or 36 tiles, and can be used as small, decorative motifs or, as here, as a complete design. They cost from £115 for a four-tile panel, 20.6cm square. The bath, 'Le Bain de Bateau', is painted in 'Tundra', and costs £3,450. The 'Avebury' bath-and-shower mixer, a new design with a thermostat control, costs £1,720, complete. For further details, contact *Fired Earth* (tel: 0845-366 0400; www.firedearth.com)

▼ This year's *House & Garden Award for Best Merchandise at Decorex International 2007* was given to O Ecotextiles for its Emily Todhunter collection of organic fabrics. These luxurious materials are made from natural yarns such as hemp, bamboo, abaca, linen and silk, all responsibly produced and grown without pesticides. *House & Garden* editor Susan Crewe, decoration editor Wendy Harrop and associate editor Leonie Highton judged the award, and it was presented by Her Royal Highness Princess Alexandra. For more details on the range, visit www.oecotextiles.com



▼ Krug, the premium Champagne house, has commissioned *David Linley* to create a special tray to reflect the quality and exclusivity of its prestige cuvée Champagnes. Inspired by the traditional oak casks used for the first fermentation, the tray combines English oak and Bombay rosewood marquetry. It measures 45cm in diameter - a perfect size for a bottle of Krug and 10 Champagne flutes. The tray costs £895. To order, call *Krug* on 020-7245 4233



An artist's studio in Long Island is the inspiration for the colours and textures of the new spring *ABC Carpets* by Lexington. Bedlinen costs from £85 and comes in single, double, king and super-king sizes; bedcovers (240 x 160cm and 260 x 240cm) cost from £160; throws (170 x 130cm) cost from £89. All are available from *Lexington* (tel: 01494-52468; www.lexingtoncompany.com)

ABC Carpets in Harrods will hold its largest-ever end-of-year sale from December 28 to January 26, 2008. There will be over 3,000 carpets on offer, with discounts of up to 75 per cent on handmade carpets from Nepal, and up to 60 per cent off selected Persian, Chinese and Aubusson rugs. *Harrods, SW1* (tel: 020-7893 8548; www.harrods.com)

Negotiated settlement

Known for her glamorous, modern schemes, Kate Earle agreed with her husband that she would temper her style for their Suffolk house - scarcely touched since 1947 - nevertheless creating a supremely stylish home, suited to comfortable family life in the country

TEXT JOHANNA THORNYCROFT | PHOTOGRAPHS ANDREAS VON EINSIEDEL



Designer Kate Earle transformed this dining room with a customised de Gournay scenic wallpaper, 'Askew', which sets off features of the room such as the Delft-tiled chimneypiece and original mouldings



It is always intriguing and sometimes surprising to photograph interior designers in their own homes. If that home is in the city, it may well be a combination of showcase and fashion statement; but when Kate Earle opens the doors of her imposing, red-brick and stone Suffolk country house, there is no shock in store. 'While my taste has become a lot more modern, this is very much a country house and a family home,' she explains. 'I wanted to respect the architecture, the location and our lifestyle here.'

Kate – who began her decorating career at 17 – and her business partner Emily Todhunter together own Todhunter Earle Interiors, one of London's most successful interiors businesses. Often described as the creators of 'quiet glamour' and 'timeless modern comfort', they have set a benchmark that others follow. Signs of that quiet glamour can be found throughout this traditional and supremely comfortable house.

Once owned by the Tollemache family, it has evolved in three stages. It started out as a smallish Georgian house, built about 1780. In the 1890s, Frank Brown of Ipswich – a pupil of George Street, who designed the Royal Courts of Justice in the Strand – carried out a major expansion and added a pair of circular twin towers to the front. Lesser interior adjustments to the staircase hall were later undertaken to suit the prevailing Edwardian taste for a more open-plan reception space.

Kate and her husband, barrister Tom Hill – who had bought the house before they were



THIS PAGE Kate and her children, Orlando and Lily, come into the house (above), where the yellow entrance hall's wooden floor is covered with antique Persian rugs (top). OPPOSITE From the dining room (top left) there is a view across the hall to the library (top right), where Gillows bookcases line two walls. The room is also Tom's study (below); pieces from his collection of art decorate the room



elegant Gillows bookcases bought at Christie's. Painted 'Ball Green' from Farrow & Ball, the room is also used as a sitting room.

To the right of the staircase is a further sitting area, or saloon, lit by deep bay windows with armorial glass. A pair of old wing chairs are upholstered in a 'Groundworks' fabric from G P & J Baker, and the curtains are 'Zebra' by Neisha Crosland. Beyond this cosy space is an empty, ballroom-size drawing room facing east towards the ha-ha and boundary 'walls' of mature, topiary yew hedging. 'I am working on plans to restore this amazing room,' says Kate. 'The space above it will be our new bedroom suite.'

A corridor behind the dining room leads to the children's playroom and Kate's pretty office and sitting room. Opposite, she opened up several small rooms to create a large, glossy white kitchen and dining area, keeping the Fifties Aga and black-and-cream tiles, as well as a wall of beautifully made Thirties, glazed pantry cupboards. A square, limed-oak table and chairs by Philippe Hurel face the picket-fenced garden at the rear, which is reached via a new set of french windows. Typically, there are utility rooms and pantries, plus a lovely, old-fashioned cloak- and boot room behind the hall.

The principal bedrooms lead off the broad first-floor landing. Kate and Tom's four-poster bed is dressed in Todhunter Earle silks, while the leafy wallpaper and matching curtain fabric is 'Victoire', also by Todhunter Earle. 'Most of the furniture in our bedroom was

bought at the Ickworth sale in 1996,' Kate says. She describes her bathroom as previously having looked like an abattoir – 'Imagine peachy pink tiles and black vinyl.' Now lined with Cole & Son's 'Humming Birds' wallpaper, with fittings from Sitting Pretty Bathrooms, it is a classic, pampering space.

The spare room, with its wonderful views, is inspired by Nancy Lancaster's white bedroom at Kelmarsh – 'She had a real zebra skin, while this is printed cowhide,' says Kate, referring to the rug. With shimmering wallpaper, a painted French bed, and silk eiderdown, pillows and hangings, this room is the epitome of that famed 'quiet glamour'. The curtains are made of organic linen, part of a range of textiles developed by Emily and Kate with O Ecotextiles and launched last September. In what is known as the children's wing is a further spare room, with walls covered in Cole & Son's 'Madras Violet', and beds dressed in antique paisley eiderdowns and checked blankets.

With both their families close by, a beach hut at Felixstowe, sailing trips off the Shotley peninsula and holidays on the beaches of Norfolk, you can understand why Kate and Tom relish their weekends in the country. 'We see our old friends and our children meet their children,' says Kate. 'We both love our work, and with a base in London, we truly have the best of both worlds.' Nobody could argue with that □
Todhunter Earle Interiors (tel: 020-7349 9999; www.todhunterearle.com)



THIS PAGE The 'quiet glamour' of this spare room is based on a Nancy Lancaster interior, with a French bed and zebra-print rug. **OPPOSITE** Another spare room is papered in 'Madras Violet' by Cole & Son (above left); the beds have Paisley eiderdowns and Melin Tregwynt checked blankets. The main bedroom (below) is decorated with Todhunter Earle's silks and matching 'Victoire' wallpaper, and has views of the gardens (above right)