

MERRY, JOYFUL & LIGHT

The Georgian townhouse owned and restored by interior designer Laura Butler-Madden is the perfect setting for a sparkling Christmas

WORDS AND STYLING MARY WEAVER PHOTOGRAPHY PAUL RAESIDE

KITCHEN

'Not only is banquette seating space-saving but here it adds lovely texture, too,' says Laura.

Banquette, bespoke in velvet from Designers Guild. Table by Laura Butler-Madden. **Artwork** by Kristin Gaudio Endsley. **Wall lights**, Bert Frank. **Pink candlesticks; place mats**, all Ollie & Co. **Clear candlesticks**, Issy Granger



Christmas is a time to relax for interior designer Laura Butler-Madden, husband Patrick and their three-year-old daughter Lily. 'It can be hugely stressful if you put too much pressure on the day, so we allow ourselves to take it slowly with early morning stockings, followed by a leisurely breakfast then a sociable stroll with both families – Patrick's visit from Madrid each year. Lunch comes late, around 4pm or 5pm, with an Anglo-Spanish meal combining traditional British turkey with Iberian delicacies like aged hams and piquant olives.

The couple had completed work on their Georgian townhouse in Bath just before last Christmas, so this year they're more settled and able to fully enjoy it. 'We fell for the house because of its architectural history and saw the scope to breathe new life into it without fundamentally changing its bones,' says Laura. 'No extensions, nor knocking down walls, just a considered update to enhance its beauty and make it comfortable and practical for modern living.'

Also part of the house's appeal was its unusual layout, with two levels below the ground floor kitchen and sitting rooms, and two more above. 'We didn't want the kitchen in the basement with Lily's room miles away at the top of the house,' says Laura. 'In this home we live in the middle, sleep above and have spaces for guests and a cinema room below.'

Tucked away in a hidden row of period properties, just off the centre of the city, the house had been converted into two flats when they bought it. 'We had to get planning permission to turn it back into a single dwelling, then, during lockdown, working around the availability of builders and supplies was a challenge, but the total revamp, including the new

kitchen and three bathrooms plus plumbing, wiring and redecoration throughout took an impressive six months. 'We spent time on advance planning to avoid hold-ups but stayed flexible, as you need to, finessing the details as work progressed,' she says.

The couple – Patrick is a co-director of their interior design business, as well as a property renovation company they run together – have been working in tandem for 11 years. They have remodelled ten houses in the last decade, so they are constantly refining what works for them and clients alike. 'We installed a 'butler's pantry', with extra elements like a dishwasher, oven, sink and fridge, in a room off the kitchen for the first time,' says Laura, 'which allowed the kitchen itself to be more elegant in design terms and more of a room to enjoy. It works so well I think this idea will become a zeitgeist of our time, in the way that dressing rooms have.'

How is it for them being both client and designer? 'We try to take each new project to the next level, and this definitely involves coming out of our comfort zone,' she says. 'I'm still nervous until the last minute, waiting to see if my vision works in reality!'

The bywords for Laura's designs are elegance, comfort and calm, which are perfectly reflected in this home where Georgian curves and period features are allowed to be the heroes, enhanced by magnificent yet understated materials and a soft colour palette. Pale woods, aged brass and exquisite marbles happily co-exist with 18th-century design sensibilities – it's as if the house has given its approval. 'This is a home that excites us and feels like a calm haven at same time – the dream,' says Laura. 🏡

■ Laura Butler-Madden, laurabuttermadden.com

“WE HAVE ALWAYS LOVED GEORGIAN STYLE AND THIS HOUSE WAS THE DREAM – STUNNING ARCHITECTURE COMBINED WITH A LAYOUT THAT COULD WORK WELL FOR OUR FAMILY”

KITCHEN

'We spend a lot of time here, so I wanted the space to have an elegant look rather than that of a full-on functional kitchen,' says Laura.

Marble surfaces, La Dolce Vita from Porter Bathroom.

Cabinets and ladder,

Blakes London. Gebrüder

Thonet Vienna bar stool,

Matter of Stuff. Walls in

Kensington Rose, Mylands.

Four-wick candle,

Heloise O'Hagan



BUTLER'S PANTRY

This was previously an unnecessary ground floor bathroom. The dishwasher, fridge and oven are in here, which lets the kitchen be more elegant in design terms.

Carnival wallpaper,

Christopher Farr Cloth.

Sink, Shaws of Darwin.

Tap, Perrin & Rowe. Light,

Pooky. Flowers, FLOWERBX





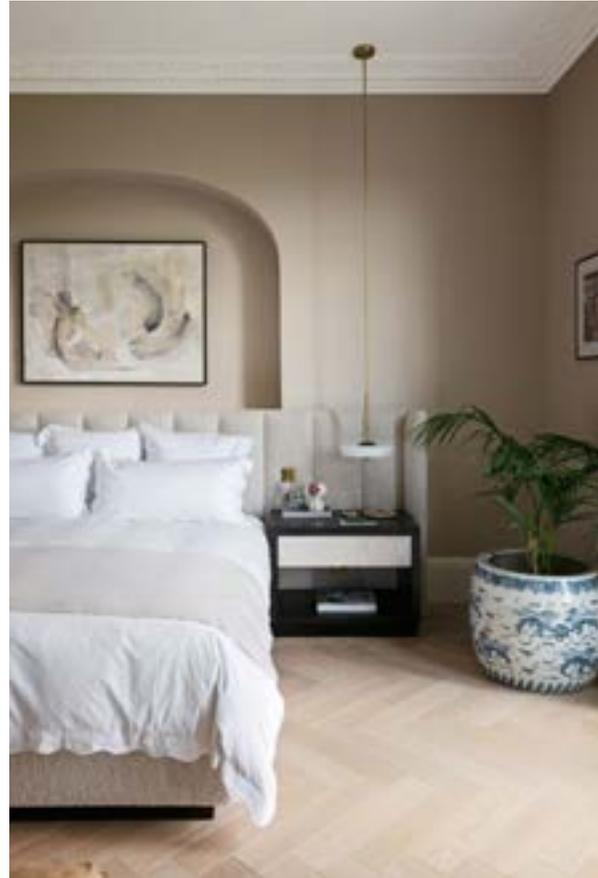
SITTING ROOM

'We deliberately kept this room, which is adjacent to the kitchen, small and made it cosy in an elegant way – cosy doesn't have to mean dark and moody,' says Laura. 'We also added elements of fun to make the space playful and not too serious.'

Walls in Sloane Square, Mylands. **Marble fire**

surround, Marmorea Battersea. **Mansion Weave flooring** in Mineral 3 by Trunk Floor. **Frieda rug** in bespoke colours, The Rug Company. **Christmas tree, skirt and baubles,** The White Company. **Side table,** Soho Home. **Frame TV** by Samsung. **Gubi Pacha chair;** covered in La Maison Pierre Frey fabric. **Lamp,** Jonathan Adler. **Art,** Marcela Butler-Madden

HOUSES



MEET THE DESIGNER-OWNER

Laura Butler-Madden shares her style vision and loves **MOST SUCCESSFUL PART OF THE PROJECT** The main bathroom – I am obsessed with the marble shower!

BIGGEST INDULGENCE The marble in the house – we found some beautiful natural stones to use in this project and they make a statement.

SMALL CHANGE, BIG IMPACT

Re-opening the original Georgian doorway between the sitting room and the kitchen.

GO-TO BRAND La Maison Pierre Frey for stunning fabrics and fun/bold wallpapers. My schemes are quite calm and pared back and these elements make such a difference to the overall feel.

DESCRIBE YOUR STYLE IN THREE WORDS Elegant, calm and fresh.

DESIGN HEROES Architect Joseph Dirand and designer Kelly Wearstler.

MAIN BATHROOM

‘Creating a fully marble shower pushed us out of our comfort zone but now I feel so much joy whenever I look at it,’ says Laura.

Walls in Holland Park by Mylands. **Shower** in Rosa Antico marble; **brassware**, all Porter Bathroom

MAIN BEDROOM

This is a combination of feminine curves and masculine lines.

Walls in Hoxton Grey no 72, Mylands. **Bedhead** and **bedside table**, bespoke by The Sofa & Chair Company. **Art** (over bed), Kristin Gaudio Endsley. **Hanging light**, Bert Frank



MAIN BATHROOM
Laura's aim was to create a modern vanity unit, focusing on marble, that would complement the period features. Vanity unit in Rosa Antico marble; mirrored cabinets; wall lights, all Porter Bathroom, designed with Laura Butler-Madden