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Celebrating the essence of English style

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Designs on dining

Whether an open-plan or a self-contained space, a dining room needs to be inviting, comfortable and practical, with layers of texture, lighting and colour of utmost importance when considering the design and decor

Creating a sense of occasion need not necessarily translate to an overly formal environment. Where dining rooms of old may once have played a role in creating a distinct shift between the familiar kitchen supper and elegant dinner parties, today their form responds to the demands of their environment and designs are more flexible. Smart separation of spaces may of course still stand for those wishing to implement a distinct change of mood for special events, yet elsewhere careful encompassing of adjoining areas affords opportunity to create flow and synergy throughout home interiors. Here we speak to experts for their advice and ideas on creating dining rooms with style. ▶

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Case Study One

Dramatic Porta Romana overhead pendants are one of several lights in the room that allow for a multi-layered lighting effect. Underfoot, the overscaled Floor Story rug provides an arresting visual focus, and was specially sized to fit the proprtions of the room.

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Pale-pink upholstered armchairs echo the soft pink velvet curtains and chime with hues used in the rugs by Floor Story. Vibrant accents of colour in the lampshades and scatter cushions create a layered look.

Natalie Stephenson and Juliette Wright, founders of Stephenson Wright

Bold colour and accessories create a dynamic entertaining space that mixes heirlooms with contemporary touches.

The brief

"Our client is a young actress living between London and LA. She had inherited antiques such as some Fornasetti dining chairs, but wanted her strong personality interwoven with these, as she entertains frequently. Our brief was to update her classic London penthouse apartment and inject a feeling of fun whilst adding a soft and feminine edge."

Considered use of colour

"We were delighted that our client embraced colour. We combined soft blush velvet curtains with bolder emerald and cerulean blues on the rug, and warmer tones of peridot greens and cream around the room. The colours made the monochrome Fornasetti chairs stand out, and tonally pulled everything together. We loved how her taste in quirky three-dimensional knitted art by Lucy Sparrow (the artwork above the fireplace) added texture."

Creating synergy

"The space has an interesting open-plan set-up: at one end of the dining room in front of an open archway is a comfortable seating area with armchairs, the backs of which can be seen by guests at the table. To avoid the furniture looking too heavy in the line of sight, we used light-coloured upholstery with wide panels down the back of the armchairs in the same brocade from the sofa scatter cushions to add unexpected interest. To replicate the synergy at the front, we used the same brocade on the armchair cushions to tie the look together.

"Two super-large rugs sit in each end of the room – one almost six metres long, in wool and art silk for a subtle lustre. We enlisted Floor Story to rework one of its designs to fit proportionally. We also recoloured parts of the rug, darkening some areas and playing with colour in others. The Floor Story design references the carnival-like atmosphere of Venezuela – to us this just ticked all the colourful boxes even more!

"The furniture styles are quite a mix, which we love as it's a great way to add to the personality of the room. A contemporary perspex and gold cocktail cabinet sits next to an antique brass claw-foot dining table and a reclaimed teal mantelpiece. The lights are modern with colourful shades – everything has a warmth to it.

"The sculptural shapes of the Porta Romana wall and pendant lights are so interesting, and we like how slightly overscaled they felt. Combining overhead lighting with wall sconces and table lamps allows a layered lighting effect and many scene-setting options. When specifying a coloured lampshade we will usually include a reflective lining to help the light to bounce more effectively – although in a dining room its nicer to have a softer less bright light."

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