

THE GO-BETWEEN

At work, Caroline Shamash brings together artists and clients – and at home, she fuses East and West with elegant opulence

REPORT VINNY LEE PHOTOGRAPHS RAY MAIN



When Caroline Shamash described her West London home as being mostly painted “different shades of white”, I imagined a stark, minimalist space. Walking through the door, though, you realise that it isn’t that at all, but rather an unexpectedly warm and opulent place to be.

The white background is barely seen, because the subtly shaded matt walls are largely concealed. In the living room, two gem-like beaded hangings cover much of the space above the dining table. “The chairs are castoffs; they came from my parents’ flat when they moved,” says Shamash, and the colour of the upholstery is picked up by the red of the embroidered runner that drapes over the table. A feeling of ecclesiastical grandeur comes from the two oversized gilt church candlesticks that take centre stage on the table.

Across the room, over the sofa, an embroidered, tabard-like hanging by Turkish designer Alev Saglam is the focal point. Even the adjacent black and silver Art Deco sideboard is substantial enough to cover a significant amount of white wall. “I saw it in Jenny Lyn’s antique shop in Notting Hill, and it was love at first sight – just what I wanted for this room,” says Shamash.

On the floor, well-stuffed lounging cushions give an impression of Ottoman-style decadence, as do many of the details, from the richly decorated tassels of the bolsters on the plain oatmeal sofa to the embroidered motifs on the back of a pair of upright chairs. A round side table in the corner of the room supports a large flower arrangement, and although there are no paintings on the walls, the room appears colourful and comfortable – an effect achieved by the few pieces of oversized furniture and the decorative accessories.

Walking down the corridor which runs past the galley kitchen, with its french windows opening on to a pot-filled balcony garden, your eye is immediately distracted from the white walls on either side, focusing instead on a gesso panel with a faux bamboo finish, in front of which hangs a multicoloured, teardrop glass light. >>