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# ELLE DECOR

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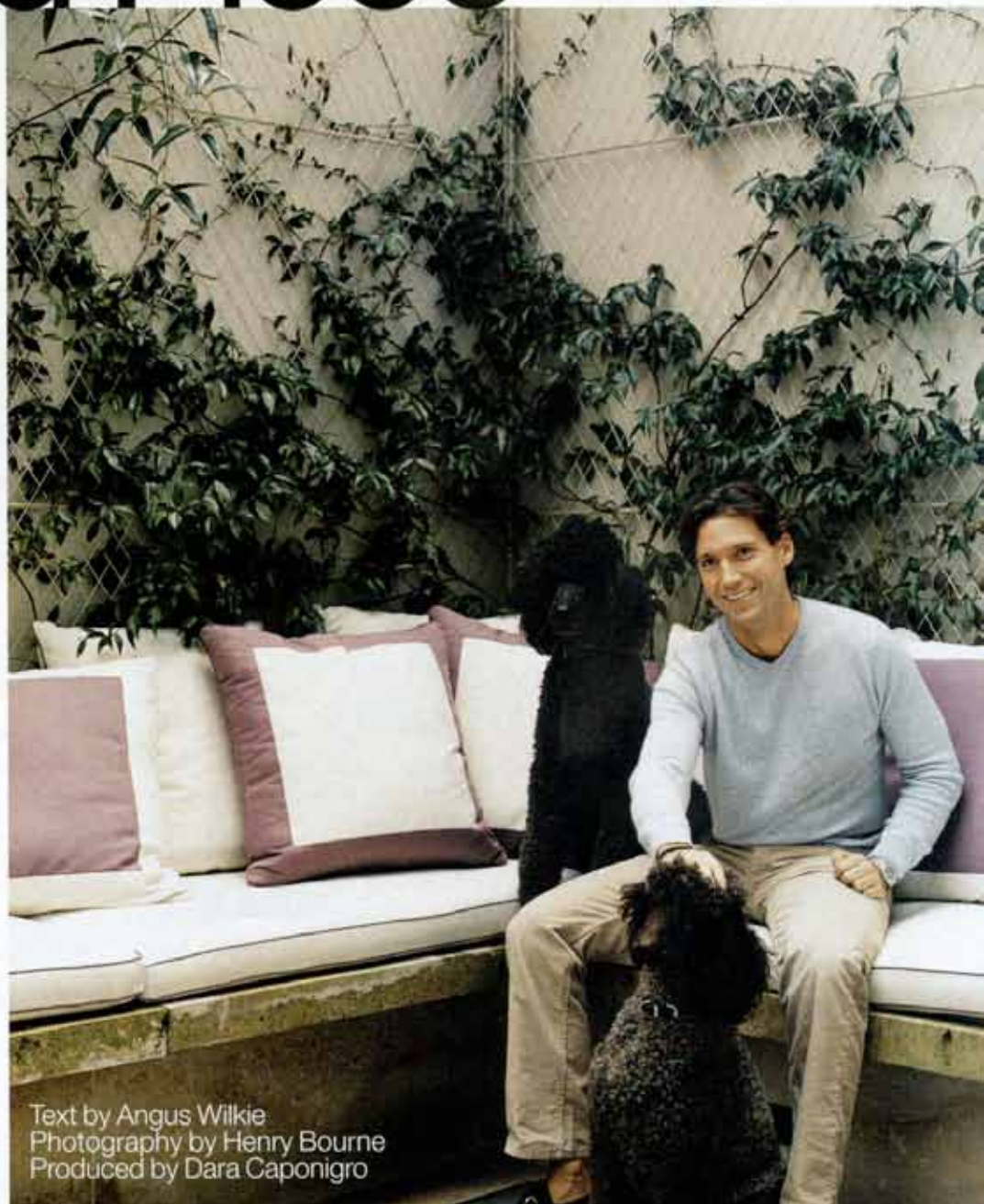




Facing page: Designer Timothy Whealon in the interior courtyard of his client's townhouse. This page: In the drawing room, a pair of Louis XVI-style armchairs by Jansen; the curtains are made of Manuel Canovas raw silk. See Resources.

For a client in London,  
designer Timothy Whealon relied on  
history for inspiration, mixing  
decorative details from eras past  
with a sophisticated  
21st-century hand

# Period Piece



Text by Angus Wilkie  
Photography by Henry Bourne  
Produced by Dara Caponigro



When **Timothy Whealon** first peered beyond the Regency façade of his client's townhouse on London's fashionable **Montagu Square**,

things looked seriously off-kilter. Alterations to the 1807 interior had run wild like weeds in a garden: an Edwardian loo stood where a window had been, French boiserie paneling cluttered the walls, and a massive 18th-century foliate carved marble mantelpiece overpowered the drawing room. "It was a hodgepodge," he says, "a real architectural nightmare."

Whealon, who trained as a works-of-art expert at Sotheby's, spent months poring over plans, researching fittings and fixtures, and interviewing no less than 14 architects for the job (he eventually settled on Jamie Fobert to help him redefine an appropriate architectural shell). The challenge included remodeling a 1970s converted basement flat as a new kitchen, eliminating skylights above an underground extension in favor of an outdoor terrace, matching fragments of an original Portland-



This page: Whealon and architect Jamie Fobert designed the library's John Soane-inspired bookcases. Facing page: In the garden room, a suite of Sean Scully prints and a sofa and cushions designed by Whealon. The 18th-century Chinese table is from William Lipton; the brass-studded velvet-framed mirror is 19th-century French. See Resources.



**Facing page:** The elaborate Fonthill Splendens chimneypiece in the dining room is matched up with a George III gilt-wood mirror, a George III mahogany dining table, and Regency-style chairs. **This page, clockwise from left:** The bleached-sycamore kitchen table and chairs are by Christian Liaigre. A George II gilt-wood console on the second-floor landing. The interior courtyard set up for outdoor dining. See Resources.



stone staircase, and sourcing reclaimed oak to create parquet de Versailles floors in the primary rooms.

While the team was ultimately able to restore the interior's integrity, the process wasn't easy. All renovations required approval from both the city council and English Heritage, which ensures that historical continuity is maintained in England's grade-listed properties. One restriction that could not be negotiated was the removal of the 1750s Fonthill Splendens chimneypiece, which originally stood in Alderman Beckford's Palladian mansion in Wiltshire and was only moved to Montagu Square circa 1970. "We were forced to deal with it even though it's inappropriate," says Whealon. "At least we persuaded a sensible swap with an existing mantel in the dining room."

As core architectural lines were revamped, the house's true character began to emerge. The living room's awkward L-shaped plan was redrawn as a rectangular room with an adjacent library. Whealon and Fobert visited Sir John Soane's Museum for inspiration, borrowing several ideas such as the famous architect's innovative bookcase designs. The new reading room now bears all the hallmarks of a well-proportioned Regency



This page: Bold stripes and color accentuate an antique French campaign bed in a guest room; the paisley throw dates from about 1870. Facing page, top left and right: Fobert used French limestone in both a guest bath and the master bath; the fittings are by Czech & Speake. Bottom right: In another guest room, a chair and ottoman designed by Whealon. See Resources.







library, with mahogany shelves and crisp brass details. The rear-facing picture window overlooks another Soane-ism: the peaked glass roofline of a conservatory that runs parallel to an interior courtyard open to the sky, an unexpected garden oasis protected by verdant trellised walls.

Whealon is a purist at heart, but he's well versed in the balance of old and new. For instance, the dining room's formal character, dictated by the impressive chimneypiece, is further elaborated by a pair of 18th-century Queen Anne gilt-gesso rectangular side tables attributed to James Moore, a Regency mahogany twin-pedestal dining table, and six early-19th-century ebonized inlaid mahogany dining chairs. But eight of 14 chairs in the room are modern copies, as is the chandelier and one of a pair of gilt-wood torchères. "There's definitely something to be said for skilled craftsmen who are able to make furniture to match period antiques," he says.

The garden room adjacent to the patio is hung with colorful Sean Scully





All of the upholstered furniture in the master bedroom was designed by Whealon. The mirrored side table is vintage Jacques Adnet; the 1930s French mirror is from Hemisphere. See Resources.

prints, mid-20th-century lighting fixtures by Jean Royère and Marc du Plantier, and a claret-red velvet-framed wall mirror; parchment-covered cupboards, neutral walls, and neatly tailored upholstery make for a clean backdrop. In the sun-filled drawing room upstairs, fine 18th- and 19th-century French and English furniture are mixed in with a pair of Louis XVI-style gray-velvet-upholstered bergères by Jansen, Chinese lacquered furniture and porcelain, and an 18th-century Chinese ink drawing of a recumbent melancholy horse.

Smoothly honed French limestone and sandblasted glass in the master bathroom are smartly matched with a Jenny Holzer white marble stool. In the adjoining bedroom, cream leather chests, faux-tortoiseshell stools, limed-oak bedside tables, polished-steel wall lights, Lucite obelisks, and a late-Louis XVI white-painted klismos chair give off a Vogue Regency aesthetic that playfully recalls 1930s Hollywood glamour—a pointed antidote to the more serious decor downstairs. The minimalist sensibility suggests the hand of a different decorator, but the effect is deliberate. "Decoration," Whealon emphasizes, "is not all for show." ■



"There's **definitely** something to be said for **skilled** craftsmen who are able to make furniture to match period **antiques**"