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The All-In-One Room

A London apartment joins sleep and living quarters with a modern English-country look

By **RITA KONIG**



Simon Upton/Interior Archive

Veere Grenney's apartment in London

This room is fondly referred to as "the bedsitter" by its owner, Veere Grenney, the New Zealand-born, London-based designer known for his elegant, pared-down traditional interiors. Over the years, Mr. Grenney has lived in many small quarters. "Every apartment I have had before this one has only been one space," he said. "So that is how I have always had to live: in one fantastic space rather than a few spaces that don't work so well." Combining several functions in a single room is something Mr. Grenney is very comfortable with and his "bedsit" years have influenced the way he lives and decorates. He is a fan of grand English houses, where it is not unusual to find a writing desk and an abundance of books in a bedroom, and he emulates the very best of their style in his designs, preserving what he feels is fresh and avoiding the stodgy. Here, we break down the strategies at play in Mr. Grenney's London bedroom (the bed can be seen opposite the armchair in the photo, far right) and suggest some items to get the look.

—Ms. Konig is a decorator and journalist in New York and London.

Make It Multifunctional

In very grand houses it is quite common to give bedrooms multiple uses. You'll often find a writing desk and bookcases in them. It's fabulous to remain in one's boudoir until midday, reading and answering a ream of letters. In small spaces, the same can be true. Considering how seldom busy people who live in small apartments actually entertain, it makes sense to take the "living room" and make it a wonderful bedroom with a huge bed, desk, bookshelves and television, and to make the



Jeff Selser

Having a writing desk in bedrooms is quite common in

very grand houses.

home starts to work in a much more glamorous and self-indulgent way. For a similar desk to Mr. Grenney's—an ormolu-detailed Jansen antique—try judyfrankelantiques.com (shown: Napoleon desk, circa 1850).



Simon Upton / Interior Archive

The 1950s floor lamp lives harmoniously alongside a traditional club chair.



If you consistently buy good things, over time you build a collection that moves with you through life.



"bedroom" into a little study/TV room or, better still, a dressing room. Suddenly a space-constrained

Think About Flow

Rather than have the furniture skirt the edge of the room, which it so often does, Mr. Grenney arranged from the center out. Notice how the armchair is in the middle of the room with its back to us. The desk is at a right angle to the wall, giving it a greater presence than if it was against the wall, and allowing its user to look out the window and also see who is coming in the room. The eye is drawn through the space in a much more interesting way than if all the furniture were against the walls. Large rooms are daunting to lay out; if you have one, consider beginning your plan from its center.

Mix Old and New

It is a mistake to start a room from scratch and allow a decorator to buy every piece of furniture for you. If you consistently buy good things, over time you will build a collection that moves with you through life. Here Mr. Grenney used furniture that he purchased over the years, with many periods represented. The 1950s floor lamp, for example, lives harmoniously alongside a traditional club chair. (For a similar chair, try the Loose Pillow Back Bridgewater Chair, anthonylawrence-belfair.com, or shop the interiors sales at Christie's, which is where Mr. Grenney found his.) The chair's skirt is a couple of inches off the ground, "so it looks like it had come from an old English country house," Mr. Grenney said.

Mismatch Casually

One thing I really like here is the use of two chintzes that seem like they wouldn't go together at all. The deliciously soft armchair is slipcovered in one of my favorite fabrics, Jardinières Cotton by Robert Kime (available through johnrosselliassociates.com). It happily coexists with the 18th-century chair by the fireplace, which Mr. Grenney bought at a sale years ago, upholstered in the rose chintz it came with (Bowood by Colefax and Fowler, available through cowtan.com). "History of decoration in England is different because one isn't so worried about everything going together," Mr. Grenney said. "It makes a huge difference if something is put in there just because you like it—it's more relaxed."