



ALIDAD

ALIDAD LTD



With curving cabriole legs, blood-red studded velvet upholstery and a thick slab of snowy marble, Alidad's "Augustus" console table is a microcosm of his visual world. Rich, dramatic and utterly unlike anything else, this piece has captured many an eye, and a heart, since the designer launched it in 2004—and for most people it's the closest they will get to a man whose waiting list is years, rather than weeks.

The table, a collaborative effort with furniture-maker Thomas Messel, is just one more flourish in a long and thriving career. Persian-born Alidad—no surname, it's just easier that way, he says—came to the UK as a child in 1970, and studied statistics at University College London before finding his feet within the more rarified environment of Sotheby's. He rose to become a director in its Islamic art department, before leaving in 1985 to set up his own business: London's interiors were suffocating under a blanket of chintz

at the time, but Alidad's fearless style helped steer them in an altogether more eclectic direction.

With such a background, it's no wonder that he is best-known for a bravura sensibility with textiles, but it would be too easy to pigeonhole him as an exotic, otherworldly decorator. Peel away the opulent layers and there are as many European and Asian influences as there are Middle Eastern ones, and for every show-stopping drawing room or sumptuous master bedroom there is a plainer and more practical kitchen or a child-friendly playroom.

ABOVE:
The drawing room demonstrates eclecticism in its array of antique objects and textiles.
Photograph by Simon Upton

FACING PAGE:
The dining room's stunning design draws attention to the Augustus console table, the inaugural piece in Alidad's Velvet Furniture Collection.
Photograph by Simon Upton



ABOVE:
A faux marquetry dressing room connects the master bedroom and bathroom.
Photograph by Simon Upton

FACING PAGE:
The morning room's calm ambience is set through the confinement of colours to small areas like the ottoman and antique cushions.
Photograph by Simon Upton

Linking them all is what Alidad calls “the unsaid”, the complete dovetailing of a client’s taste with the purpose and function of a room, and the careful balancing of one visual element with another. With a healthy disregard for fashion, each scheme is not just intended to be fit for purpose right now, but also to serve a client’s needs one or two decades into the future.

Although it would be quite exhausting to list all the textures that might make up a single scheme—paintings on top of stamped-leather walls, vertical slivers of mirror abutting lacquered cabinetry, antique furniture meeting Persian carpet—the final effect is anything but draining. Look closer, Alidad says, and there are as many plain surfaces as there are patterned ones. A palette broadly based on the time-worn appearance of faded textiles adds a natural integrity and produces the instant sense of belonging that only the very best designers can achieve.

There is much visual guile involved achieving such effects—not in the sense of creating a two-dimensional space that cannot function as part of a real home, but in the way the eye can be coaxed into thinking somewhere is taller, wider, grander or more harmonious than its dimensions would suggest. It’s particularly relevant in London, where perfectly proportioned Georgian and Victorian houses have often been divided and developed into something more awkward. Here, Alidad





might push the eye upwards with tall screens, or corncicing that cleverly takes up more room on the ceiling than it does on the wall. If a room has a symmetrical skeleton, then the furniture will rarely follow that symmetry: instead, a great deal of thought is put into carefully balancing the volumes of space occupied by individual pieces of furniture.

Alidad maintains that it is precisely because of his lack of formal training that he is able to be so free with his ideas. It is intuition that lets him know, amid the many layers of colour, pattern and texture, when to stop, and when to push for more. Complete immersion in beautiful objects while working at Sotheby's must have helped, of course, and it has certainly made him encyclopaedic about textiles. Two collections of his own designs—one for Pierre Frey based on 13th-15th-century Hispano-Moorish designs, and an embroidered series for Chelsea Textiles with an Ottoman influence—have an authentic feel about them, both in terms of colour and pattern. With dramatic, large-scale master patterns that are complemented by scaled-down companion designs, they are also intended to be as flexible as possible, keeping the modern decorator's needs firmly in mind.

TOP LEFT:

Layered with an old master painting, the ornate mirror balances the chair, which is covered in 19th-century needlework.

Photograph by Simon Upton

BOTTOM LEFT:

Topped with an 18th-century Portuguese textile, the table is flanked by 17th-century Venetian panels.

Photograph by Simon Upton

FACING PAGE:

Faux paneling creates a warm and cozy atmosphere while the oversize bookcase exaggerates the study's volume.

Photograph by Simon Upton





Alidad's work is complex and labour-intensive, and by running a small studio in order to maintain creative coherence, he turns away far more work than he takes on. He has started to take a two-tier approach to his business, completely overseeing the bespoke projects while other members of his studio work on a simpler look for those with a mere couple of rooms in need of decoration. Everyone else, meanwhile, will merely have to look on in envy.

ABOVE:
The specially designed bookcase balances the meticulously restored panelled drawing room.
Photograph by Simon Upton

FACING PAGE:
Myriad colours and textures harmoniously combine with the 17th-century Flemish tapestry.
Photograph by Simon Upton

