



Swedish CHIC

Graceful Gustavian designs and pale hues bring Scandinavian style to a Brighton home, creating the perfect showcase for the owners furniture business

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COUNTRY LIVING
COUNTRY WORKING



OPPOSITE In the drawing room, elegant, white-painted furniture reflects light from the sea. THIS PAGE, CENTRE Jo and Madeleine. BELOW The antique bureau is one of their favourite pieces

Teatime is a traditional Swedish affair at the home of Madeleine and Jo Lee. In the unlikely setting of a mansion apartment on Brighton's seafront, they have created their own piece of rural Scandinavia. "I think you can take your country with you wherever you live," says Madeleine, whose mother is Swedish and who spent childhood holidays at her grandparents' lakeside home in central Sweden. Memories of long summer evenings, roaring fires against the winter storms and the magical presence of snow have remained with Madeleine, and she has a passion for typical Swedish colours: "I particularly love all the shades of white and the silvery blues."

They moved from London to their first-floor flat in 2006. "The sea, when it's still, reminds me of a Swedish lake in the winter – grey with the light bouncing off it," Madeleine says. But although it had belonged to a Scandinavian couple, it felt very dark inside and the heavy-handed painting obscured many of the beautiful, late-Victorian features.

Restoration work uncovered intricate cornicing and plaster work, solid wooden doors and the palest of oak parquet. "We stripped everything down by hand to the original surface, then painted it again using non-toxic organic paint and materials," Jo says. They even mixed their own Swedish colour palette to maximise the reflected light from the sea, and today the property is a seamless succession of whites, birch greys and soft, lichen greens.

Madeleine had strong ideas of how the flat should look. "I wanted to achieve what I'd seen in Swedish manor houses – high ceilings, huge pieces of furniture and lots of light. But I also wanted the flipside: the dark, warm cottagey style you see in the houses in the woods." The end result is a different feel in every room: the sitting room with its long, antique Swedish country table and vintage sleigh seat in the corner ▷



CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT
Sheba the Norwegian
Forest cat; clever
design makes the
most of space in the
office; rolls of
antique hemp linen;
a large armoire is
filled with dress-
making fabrics the
hand-carved bed
complements the
original plasterwork



They mixed their own *SWEDISH* colours to make the most of *LIGHT* from the sea



is in the style of a grand manorial drawing room, as is the bedroom, bathroom and office room. The hall is more informal, while the kitchen is warm and homely.

However, finding the right pieces of furniture in the UK proved a problem. "With big, high-ceilinged rooms you need large, light coloured furniture," Madeleine says, "but pieces like that can be quite hard to find over here." During a visit to Sweden, however, they discovered the beautiful antique sleigh. "My father bought it for us as a present and, as we had to ship it back, we decided we would also bring over some other pieces that we'd found."

Soon their home was graced with Gustavian chairs and tables, as well as individual pieces such as the bureau in the drawing room, with a traditional Mora clock set into the side. Throughout the apartment, the flickering light from candelabras and chandeliers bounces light off the collection of pale-hued furniture.

"Our friends started asking us if we could source the same sort of styles for them and the business just took off from there," Jo says. Their company, Swedish Interior Design was born and now imports Swedish antique furniture and Mora clocks, while also offering bespoke pieces handmade from antique wood.

In the meantime, Madeleine found the dress that she had made for her wedding to Jo in Sweden last year so much admired that she started taking commissions for her clothing, too. Now their home has taken on a further guise, rather like a French atelier, with clients visiting to view antique pieces, discuss commissions for bespoke commissions or have their wedding dresses designed by Madeleine and her co-designer Jess Langton.

Creating new traditions while honouring the old comes naturally to Madeleine and Jo, and their serene home is the perfect testament to their philosophy.

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