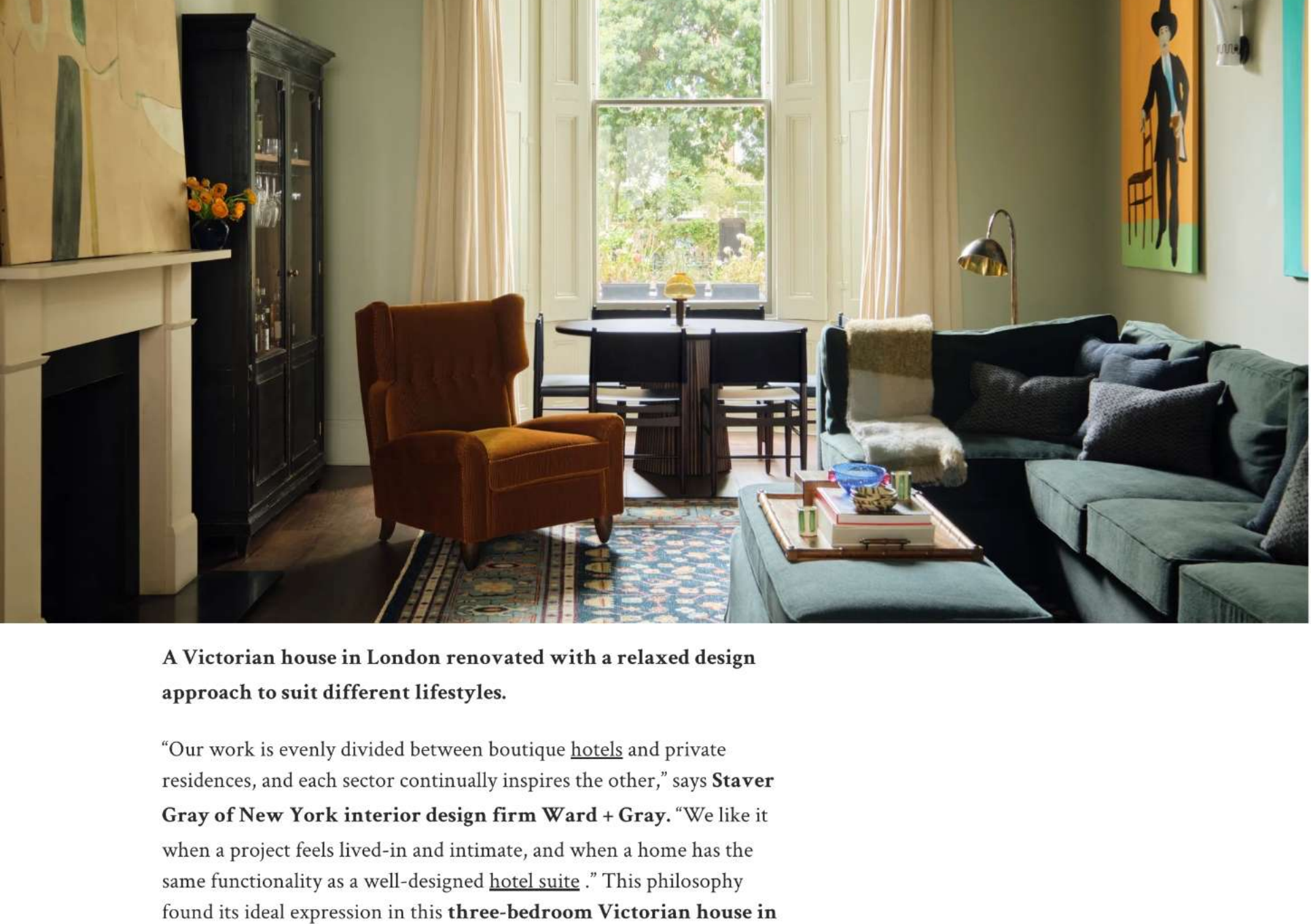


HOUSES

This Victorian house in London has been renovated to fit the lives of two students

With adaptable rooms and furnishings, the cozy pied-à-terre offers a new design perspective for small spaces.

by Amy Bradford
Photo by Oille Tomlinson
January 3, 2026



A Victorian house in London renovated with a relaxed design approach to suit different lifestyles.

"Our work is evenly divided between boutique [hotels](#) and private residences, and each sector continually inspires the other," says **Staver Gray** of New York interior design firm **Ward + Gray**. "We like it when a project feels lived-in and intimate, and when a home has the same functionality as a well-designed [hotel suite](#)." This philosophy found its ideal expression in this **three-bedroom Victorian house in South Kensington**, whose modest proportions took on a new luster and versatility in the firm's hands. Designed for a **Jordanian lawyer and his two student daughters**, who frequently travel between [London](#) and their primary home in [Dubai](#), the property was imagined as a welcoming [pied-à-terre](#), both a private retreat and a space to welcome [guests](#).



Despite boasting grand proportions and original plaster moldings, the Victorian house in its original state **lacked a dedicated [dining room](#)**, which prompted the studio to focus on adaptability. "The size of the living room allowed us to create a generous and open layout, ideal for guests," explains Gray. **She and her colleague Christie Ward** installed a dining area directly opposite the large bay window, with a dark wood table and chairs that, like much of the furniture, **were custom-made for maximum functionality**. "We designed the dining pieces to feel somewhat freestanding, as if they could be brought into the living area and used as occasional chairs," says Ward. "The table was made in a color similar to the dark-stained wood flooring, so as not to stand out too much in the room."



To give the dining area a more refined feel, the studio commissioned two matching shelves to flank the fireplace, **one for books and the other as a bar**, with an antique [mirror](#) inside that bounces daylight into the room (both were produced by Arcadia Antiques). The dark green corner [sofa](#) and upholstered ottoman are also custom pieces, the latter serving as a coffee table. The home's warm, dark furnishings draw inspiration from English design traditions. "The family wanted the decor to be distinctly British, with a color palette appropriate for [London](#) year-round," explains Gray. "We focused on rich textures and inviting shapes: the upholstered pieces, such as the *wingback* chairs that hark back to 1960s silhouettes, evoke a relaxed yet tailored sensibility."

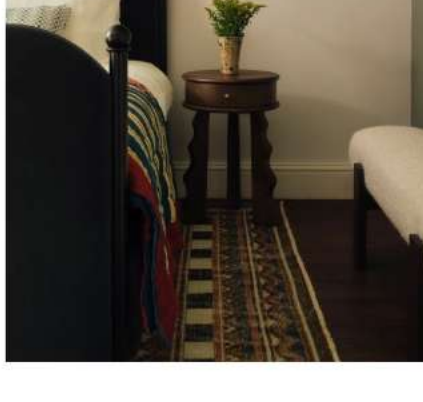
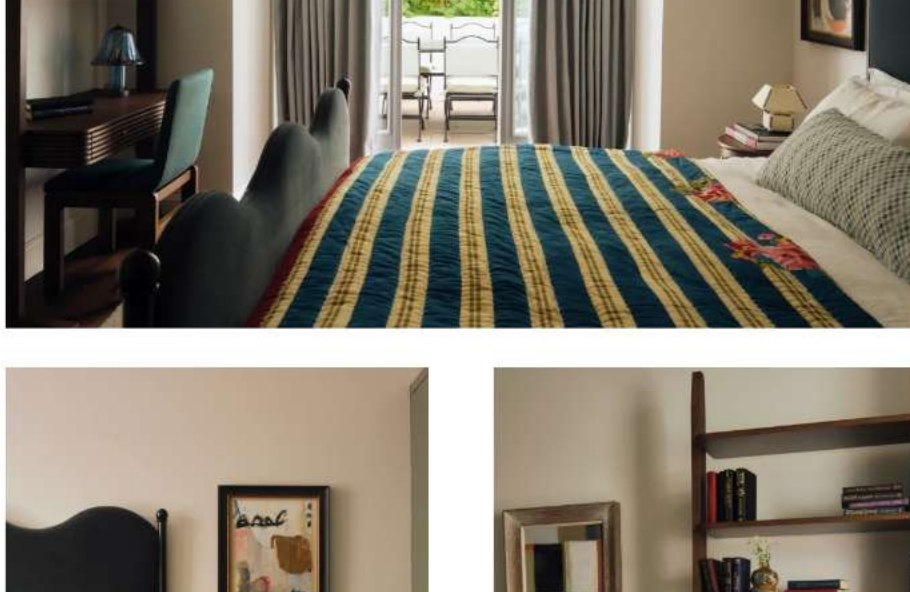


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The project was also inspired by the client's heritage. "The **Middle Eastern approach to hospitality**—warm, generous, and centered on togetherness—inspired the way we designed the furniture layout, ensuring that each room invites conversation and connection," Gray reflects. "The biggest challenge was **ensuring functional spaces for the family**. We achieved this by creating plenty of nooks and crannies: we added a breakfast nook to the kitchen, for example, and treated the outdoor area as an additional room." The tranquil courtyard, now home to a custom-built dining room in Belgian bluestone and wrought iron that seats up to ten, is both an outdoor entertaining space and a refuge from the city, with high walls and lush plants.



To give the home character, the designers **layered colors, patterns, and artisanal elements**. "We tend to shy away from anything too perfect. Instead, we aim for effortless harmony, where the mix feels natural and lived-in," says Ward. "Paint played a key role in the design, setting the tone for the entire palette of fabrics and materials." While the bedrooms feature **ivory and duck blue tones**, the living room was painted in the **green hue** *Tracery II* by Little Greene—all choices intended to convey a sense of timeless *Britishness*. *Patterns from Ward + Gray's* rug collection bring the rooms to life, alongside vintage finds from Alfies Antique Market and the dramatic glass chandelier in the living room, custom-made in [Murano](#).



Artwork is the final ingredient in this dynamic mix. Ward + Gray collaborated with art consultant Anna Kirrage to curate a collection of "exceptional British artists," including a trio of contemporary canvases by Kate Boxer above the sofa. "Anna has a wonderful eye and is incredibly good at connecting the colors of each space with the art that will fit there," says Gray. "We love creating something completely unique for each client, pieces that no one else will have." [@wardandgray](#)