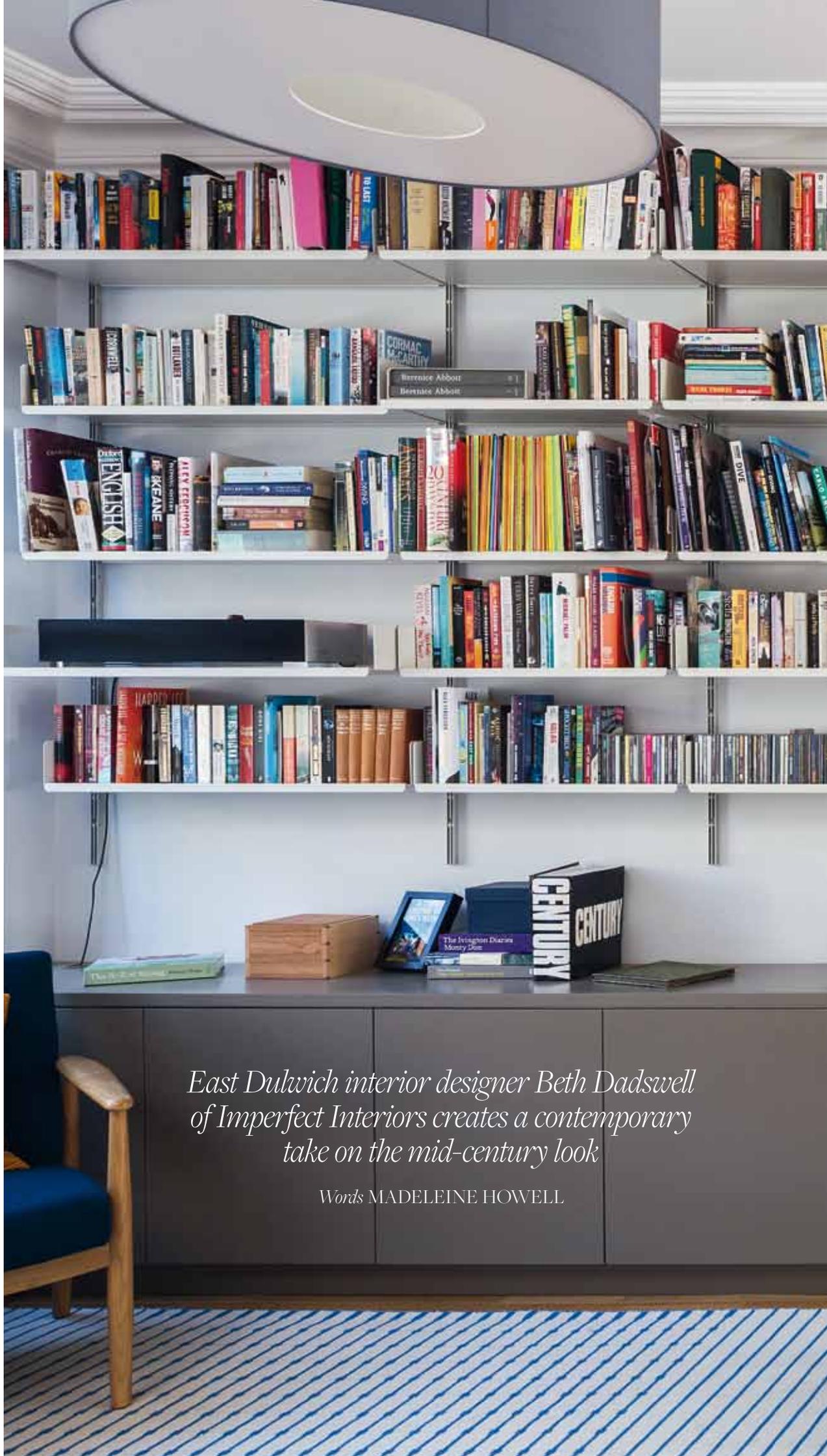


PRACTICALLY PERFECT



East Dulwich interior designer Beth Dadswell of Imperfect Interiors creates a contemporary take on the mid-century look

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Beth Dadswell of Imperfect Interiors lives in East Dulwich, in a converted Victorian dairy. But she's also been busy inspiring other residents nearby to make the most of their homes with her stylish, covetable interior designs. Her lived-in look is far from soulless showroom, and she strives to create personalised spaces that are both welcoming and comfortable, as well as suited to entertaining friends and family.

Often, she nods to the mid-century look – a style which gathered attention from the Thirties to the Seventies, and which is known for reflecting the laid-back lifestyle of the post-war years. The movement was immortalised by Cara Greenberg in her book *Mid-Century Modern: Furniture of the 1950s*, and by timeless, iconic pieces such as the Eames chair by Charles and Ray Eames and the Egg chair by Arne Jacobsen, which never seem to date.

Dadswell's most recent project on Barry Road is a case in point. Although not typical of properties in the area – it's double fronted, with a huge garden – it exemplifies her preference for a mid-century vibe. 'It's quite an unusual house for East Dulwich,' she admits. 'Most of them are terraced or

semi-detached, so it was a real treat. It's got a big driveway and when you open the front door you step into a big, beautiful, light-filled hallway. We made a feature of that with wooden panelling and a big statement glass and metal lighting. It's just from John Lewis, and it has a contemporary edge, but in a really traditional space with elegant period details.'

The way that Dadswell sources items is an important part of her personal approach, and the Crystal Palace Antiques Market is one of her favourite haunts. 'I try to mix in some vintage pieces,' she says. 'When you're starting a house from scratch, and literally ripping everything out and putting it back in new, you need to put some old stuff and some antiques into the mix too. Otherwise, it tends to look a bit too perfect and shiny.'

So, at what point did Dadswell get involved in this project? 'The owners had lifted the roof to create a master loft bedroom and to add height to the property,' she



tells me. 'They'd also built a glass extension at the back. When they got in touch with me, they had finished all the messy, structural stuff – but they were absolutely terrified about how to put it together. It's quite a big house, with five bedrooms, and they wanted someone to guide them.'

With Dadswell's help, the couple opted for splashes of bold colour, which adds character and depth. 'They really liked the idea of moody greys, greens and blues, and I also encouraged them to go for some pops of brighter colour and a bit of pattern.' The parquet flooring and the chevron rug in the upstairs hallway add interest, too. 'It was all about injecting a bit of fun into it,' explains Dadswell. The stunning green drapes in the front room are made from Designer's Guild linen, and have proved to be a real focal point, adding a tangible burst of energy. They contrast beautifully with the dark blue walls. It's a room that has been designed as a cosy retreat for the adults, which the cocktail area in one corner makes clear. It's a world apart from the other living room, which houses a children's play area opening out onto the dining area and kitchen.

Another notable feature of the house is the clever shelving and attractively presented storage space. Does she have any tips for re-creating the look, I ask her hopefully? 'Obviously you want it

to look neat, and not chaotic,' she laughs. 'There's a bit of an art to it. That huge wall of shelving in the living room is by Vitsoe. It's modular, so you can choose the structure and add and take away drawers and units to suit. The key tip is not to display anything ugly, like work files or tatty old DVDs – which sounds really obvious! It's also important to put items into blocks, some upright and some on their side perhaps, to break up the monotony. Then you can play around with adding ceramics, plants and pictures.'

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Finally, when it came to the garden, Dadswell had another blank canvas to play with. 'I encouraged the owners to paint the new fencing black, which makes the plants look incredibly green and lush. It's quite contemporary and cool.' I'd have to agree. I came away feeling that I'd learnt a lot from Dadswell's approach, which emphasises the beauty in imperfection – while simultaneously being perfectly laid-back, and effortlessly stylish. **R**

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