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Rustically Refined

A RESCUED FISHING LODGE ON A FORMER
ENGLISH ESTATE IS AN
UNDERSTATED AND ELEGANT ESCAPE.

INTERIOR AND LANDSCAPE DESIGN BY VEERE GRENNEY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SIMON UPTON WRITTEN BY ROSLYN SULCAS



THE TEMPLE, A FORMER FISHING LODGE AND GARDEN FOLLY, IS NESTLED IN THE DEDHAM VALE, IN PASTORAL SUFFOLK, ONLY SIXTY MILES NORTHEAST OF LONDON. BUT THE TALL WHITE GATES THAT DEMARCATÉ THE ENTRANCE TO

the Temple and its bloom-filled plots are portals to another world: an Arcadian vision of a perfectly proportioned house set against fields and water, a paradise of order and symmetry, beauty and calm.

That paradise was first glimpsed by designer Veere Grenney when he was a young teenager in New Zealand, perusing a book by the legendary David Hicks. The British decorator had saved the villa from demolition in the 1950s, then used it as a country home and staging ground, devising some of his first decors and landscapes there. Today, Grenney, who worked for Hicks and Mary Fox Linton after moving to the U.K. in his twenties, is himself in possession of the property.

"It's a nice story," he says. "And somehow suited to the romantic, theatrical atmosphere of the Temple."

The house was built in 1745 on the grounds of Tendring Hall, and it's all that remains today of the greater estate, which included a manor and stables, both demolished in the 1950s. Like a miniature Palladian villa in the Veneto, it is perfectly scaled and well-balanced, with two wings flanking a central structure set squarely across a tree-lined canal and a small, tailored garden.

When Grenney bought the property in 1985, it was "charming but rather primitive," with only one lavatory, no heating, and a basic kitchen. "I've been upgrading ever since," he says. "Now it's incredibly comfortable."

It's also quietly grand. As Grenney's partner, David



A midcentury modern floor lamp is a counterpoint to sumptuous balloon shades. Shades in Mary Fox Linton satin and Tissus d'Hélène taffeta. Custom sofa in Prella toile. Wing chair, Veere Grenney Collection, and custom pillows in Veere Grenney linens. Vintage floor lamp. Rug, Waveney Rush Industry. Walls in Temple, Paint and Paper Library. Trim in Slate I, Stark Paint, Colours by David Oliver. OPENING PAGES: The Temple's 18th-c. facade.



Rio, a whippet-terrier mix, stands at an original double-hung sash window overlooking the canal. Queen Anne chair in antique Jane Sacchi linen. Armchair, Veere Grenney Collection, in Claremont faille. Antique chandelier, opposite: Directoire bergère and custom settees in Claremont fabrics. Custom ottoman in Décor de Paris velvet. Chinese side tables, Veere Grenney Collection. Original busts.



A substantial four-poster bed makes a small bedroom cozy. Antique Swedish bed in Slate I, Stark Paint, Colours by David Oliver. Curtains in Veere Grenney fabric. Linens, The White Company. Antique English hall chair. Antique Swedish demilune table. Sconces, Soane. Art (left), Teddy Millington-Drake. OPPOSITE, FAR LEFT: Custom bed in Veere Grenney linen. NEAR LEFT: Custom vanity in Truffle, Stark Paint, Colours by David Oliver. Sconces, Vaughn

“BECAUSE THE MAIN ROOM IS VERY FORMAL, YOU HAVE TO DOWNPLAY IT WITH FURNITURE AND FABRIC.”

Oliver, points out, the villa consists principally of one magnificent room, the salon. It looks both east at the canal and west at a Constable-like panorama of landscape and sky, and boasts an ornate plaster ceiling, lofty height, and mounted busts depicting the four seasons.

In the left wing sits just one tiny bedroom and bathroom, and below the salon is a petite kitchen and dining room. But a guesthouse in the garden provides additional accommodation, including a spare but charming chamber almost entirely occupied by a demure Swedish four-poster bed, as well as a room for Oliver’s teenage sons.

The theatrical expanse of the salon and the small, restrained proportions of the other rooms presented their own unique challenges for Grenney. “I think because the main room is very formal, you have to downplay it with the furniture and fabric choices,” he says. “There’s an eclectic mix of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century antiques, along with other pieces that I designed and upholstered in my own fabrics, because it’s more about

comfort than anything else.”

The room is now painted a dusty pink formulated by Oliver, who is the design director of the Paint and Paper Library in London. Woodwork was covered in a contrasting shade of soft gray. “I think pink is so flattering against different skin tones,” says Oliver. “I also like that there is a traditional element to a pink and gray drawing room.” For the cozy dining room, Oliver counterintuitively chose a deeper cast of gray. “A dark color in a small space becomes a punctuation mark.”

Grenney has also transformed the gardens, which were virtually nonexistent when he arrived. He’s created a formal landscape of hedges, lawns, and vegetable beds, with geraniums in terra-cotta pots providing vivid splashes of color around the villa and guesthouse. “The Temple really sits in the landscape like the Palladian ideal,” he says. “It’s the best of both worlds: a palace and a cottage at the same time.” □

FOR DAVID OLIVER’S PAINT COLOR TIPS, SEE VERANDA.COM

“IT’S THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS: A PALACE AND A COTTAGE AT THE SAME TIME.”



A screen and shutters extend to conceal the kitchen from the dining room when the couple entertains. Custom screen in Veere Grenney linen. Klismos chair, Veere Grenney Collection, in Veere Grenney linen. Walls and cabinets in Tarlatan and shutters in Slate II, Stark Paint, Colours by David Oliver. OPPOSITE, TOP: Antique French table, Custom bench and chairs in Veere Grenney linen. Shutters, American Shutters. BOTTOM: Dahlias in the garden.

