



White walls and graceful proportions create the perfect backdrop for Barbara Weiss's Biedermeier pieces

THIS PICTURE "It is amazing how much colour can be added in the form of furniture or textiles," says Barbara, who has furnished her living room with both modern pieces, like the Elan sofa by Jasper Morrison for Cappellini, 0039 031 759111, cappellini.it, and vintage style, such as the black Eileen Gray Bibendum armchair, £688, from Iconic Interiors, 0800 915 5313, iconicinteriors.co.uk. For similar Sant'Elia leather armchairs, try Panik Design, 01908 307020, panik-design.com.

ABOVE RIGHT Finding space for the Steinway in one end of the living room was a challenge, but Barbara likes this spot even though it means the fireplace cannot be used. For a similar Victorian marble fireplace, try The Better Hearth, 020 7609 3245, thebetterhearth.com.



Barbara Weiss fell in love with Biedermeier furniture as a child. "My grandmother owned a lot of Biedermeier pieces and I always loved it and knew that was how I intended to furnish my own home," she says.

Today, her Grade II*-listed, north London house is the perfect backdrop for her collection as well as a beautiful place in which to bring up her teenage children, Benjy, Francesca and Matteo. Architect Barbara and her husband, Alan Leibowitz, bought the house 21 years ago and dramatically altered it. They lifted the roof, installed different fireplaces and knocked down various internal walls. Over the next few years, they snapped up three floors of the house next door and incorporated them into their original home. "We needed planning permission but we managed to make a huge number of alterations that we could not make under Grade II* listings today," admits Barbara.

BIEDERMEIER STARTING POINT

The houses in the north London square were all built between 1830 and 1840, which is significant to Barbara. "It is the right period for Biedermeier," she says, citing the central European style of art, architecture and interior design that spanned the years 1815 to 1848 and correspond broadly with the Regency period in England.

Barbara is not a purist, however, and she lives with an eclectic mix of antique, new and classic pieces, but her furniture has been edited to fit her design philosophy. "I think that good design works alongside good design, whatever the period," she says. "I like Biedermeier furniture because it is beautifully crafted yet also very ordinary. I love the woods used, which are usually golden birch but also rosewood and

The breakfast room has a relaxed feel with stackable Arne Jacobsen butterfly chairs from Aram, 020 7557 7557, aram.co.uk. For a similar table and banquette, try Rupert Cavendish Antiques, 020 7731 7041, rupertcavendish.co.uk.



As an architect – Barbara Weiss Architects, 020 7609 1867, barbaraweissarchitects.com – it was natural that Barbara designed her own kitchen. Similar Alvar Aalto stools can be found at Furniture File, 020 7608 0203, furniturefile.co.uk.



cherry." Conceived as a style for the growing middle classes of the 19th century, the look, in Barbara's words, is akin to "the Habitat or Ikea of its period. When people started furnishing their bourgeois flats, that was the furniture they'd choose. It was never intended to be expensive and I generally like things that you can use without feeling precious about them".

COMBINING STYLES

Successfully juxtaposing the Biedermeier style with later giants of design is one of Barbara's talents. "Furniture by Eileen Gray works well with Biedermeier," she says. "She's much later, the 1930s, but shows the same kind of spirit; her work is unfussy, clever and practical. Many of her pieces have secret drawers; she is the queen of storage." Barbara herself is renowned for ingenious storage ideas and is co-author of the book *Storage* (Dorling Kindersley, now out of print). She has built beautiful bookshelves in her music room, cunningly incorporated a space for suitcases in the ceiling of one landing and her own double-bed design, as well as echoing elements of Biedermeier, is a miracle of clever drawers and shelves.

ANTIQUES OF THE FUTURE

If Barbara cannot find what she wants, she commissions it. "I had a striped rug made by Kate Blee for my husband's birthday," she says. "I showed her some Bauhaus fabric that I loved and, even though Kate's style is quite different, she took inspiration from the image and produced a perfect, unique pattern in a variety of colourways. We chose a lovely combination of red, yellow, beige, grey and black." The rug lies under a 1946 Charles Eames coffee table and in front of an early-20th century Josef Hoffmann leather sofa: ample demonstration of how classic designs can relate to each other, whatever the period. ►



The bespoke rug by Kate Blee, kateblee.com, kate@kateblee.co.uk, is a perfect complement for straight furniture legs and the 1920s sofa. Try JMC Furniture, 020 7993 6228, jmc-furniture.co.uk, for similar sofas.



ABOVE Barbara designed her bed with its golden wood and ingenious storage features on Biedermeier lines. The Bestlite bedside light that stands above the bed is from Utility Design, 0151 708 4192, utilitydesign.co.uk. **BELOW LEFT** The twin basins are made from Brazilian seafoam granite with storage discreetly concealed behind the mirrors. For similar carved marble and stone basins, try The Limestone Gallery, 020 7735 8555, limestonegallery.com. **BELOW CENTRE** A bust of Barbara's grandmother sits on a marble-topped chest. **BELOW RIGHT** Silver accessories adorn an antique chest in the bedroom.