

HEART OF DARKNESS



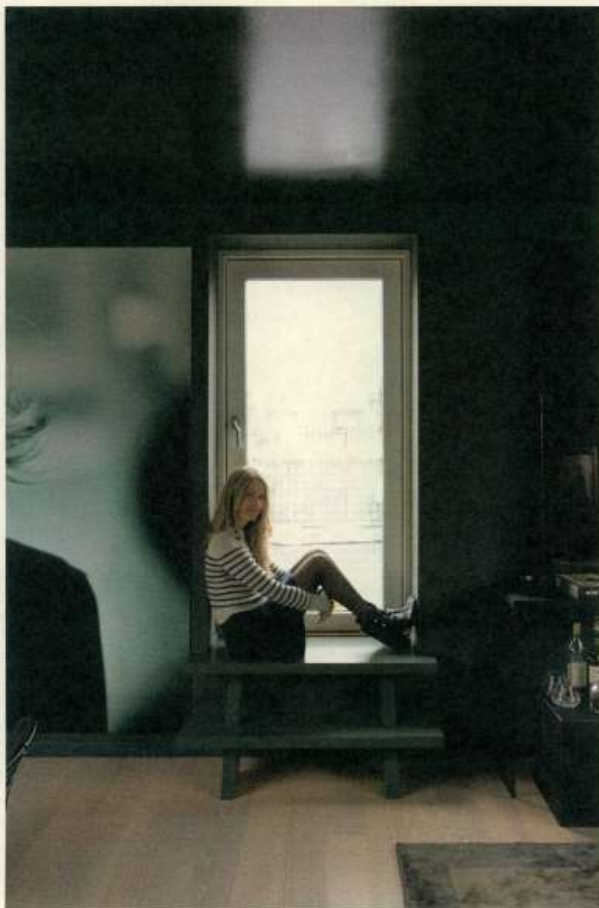
A little black magic has been used to conjure up a luxurious cosmopolitan look in this Copenhagen apartment

Words: ALI MORRIS Photography BIRGITTA WOLFGANG/SISTERS AGENCY Styling PERNILLE VEST

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efore I painted this apartment it was white and light-drenched, like so many Danish homes, but I felt like I was living in a greenhouse. I went with my instinct and decided to go for a dark, dramatic scheme instead,' says interior designer Michala Jessen of her Copenhagen home's striking interior.

Perched on the fifth floor of an apartment block in the heart of the city, it is the flat's penthouse location that affords it so much natural light. The space is wrapped by a 120-square-metre terrace, with sweeping views of the city skyline, including the glittering dome of Frederik's Church (right). Michala, who lives here with her 11-year-old son, Elton, painted the entire apartment in two shades of black – a blue-black for the bedroom, and a green-black elsewhere – using paint from Swedish brand Flügger. She chose matt walls and added coats of lacquer to the ceiling to achieve its reflective finish. 'The colours are almost black, rather than true black. They are much softer and warmer – an all-black space would have been too much,' she says. The inky palette is reversed underfoot, with a light oak floor in the living area. A block of floorboards at the far end of the open-plan space is painted black, visually dividing the kitchen from the rest of the room.



Michala, who has run her interiors store and design studio Rue Verte for 22 years, has a refined aesthetic. 'I like to layer textures – soft fabrics, rugs and curtains – and add something colder or clinical against it,' she explains. For instance, her kitchen includes stainless-steel cabinetry that gleams against the home's charcoal backdrop – 'Copper and brass are very in fashion at the moment, but stainless steel is timeless,' she says. 'I always choose shades that combine easily – there has to be a linking thread, and for me that's the colour palette rather than the materials.' The emerald velvet Meridiani sofa in the living room echoes the undertone of green in the nearly black walls, but also reflects the hues of the rooftop vista.

Throughout the apartment, curated displays of cherished objects twinkle like jewels in the darkness. 'I choose pieces that I think I will keep for many years,' says Michala. rueverte.dk

Details, from top The dome of Frederik's Church in Copenhagen. Homeowner Michala Jessen sits beside a large fashion poster taken from a shop window – 'I just walked in and asked what they were going to do with it, and they said I could have it,' she says.

Living room The velvet sofa is by Meridiani (available from Staffan Tollgard in the UK). The cushions and 'Cubistic' table lamps by Gauxs (on the windowsill) are from Michala's shop, Rue Verte, in Copenhagen. **Stockist details on p135 >**



INSIDER GUIDE **DECORATING WITH BLACK**

Homeowner Michala shares her tips for making dark look dreamy

Don't use pure black! Pick shades of black that are softer and warmer. Where sunlight floods the apartment, I chose a green-black to enhance the warm light. In the bedroom, where there is no light, I selected a deeper blue-black.

Paint the woodwork either glossy or very matt to create layers of texture within a scheme. It's often worth embracing a lack of light in smaller, cramped rooms – taking them even darker transforms a problem area into a feature.

Place black furniture against a dark wall: the contrast is too stark against white.

Add shiny surfaces to lift the darkness. I'm a magpie – I love anything reflective.

Think carefully about lighting. A layered approach, with different types of lights (both direct and indirect sources), will make a dark room appear cosy. Choose hidden spotlights that wash light up and down the walls.

Add layers of fabrics. I used rugs and curtains to soften the space, while my sofa injects luxury and a vibrant shot of colour. The emerald shade works because it is unexpected. ►

