



Aerin Lauder on feminism, dressing in her 50s and what her grandmother Estee would think of today's 'alien faces'

The granddaughter of Estee Lauder talks worth ethic and her eponymous range

By Lisa Armstrong, HEAD OF FASHION
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Hamptons style: Aerin Lauder at home. The wallpaper is from Graciestudio.com | CREDIT: Simon Upton

Aerin Lauder is, no question, American royalty, which is testament to the power of the American Dream. Her grandmother, Estee, was sometimes accused of playing fast and loose with the truth about her humble origins.

Estee Lauder, born Josephine Esther Mentzer in 1906 in Queens, New York, the daughter of Hungarian-Jewish immigrants, is one of those still-dazzling early 20th-century women (think Coco Chanel, Helena Rubinstein, Elizabeth Arden) who hoisted themselves up by their perilously fraying bootstraps to become not just hugely wealthy, but through their work and actions, champions of other women. She gravitated towards that genre of East Coast patrician taste that draws on English houses. Her friends included Prince Charles and Princess Diana.

“We were brought up from the word go to make the best of ourselves. Discipline was important”. So was a work ethic. Beautifying the home was an almost sacred act of love for the family hearth. “Estee – we never called her grandma – believed that anything and anyone could be beautiful if you took the time”.

Aged 17, Aerin moved with her family from New York to Washington when her father, Ronald Lauder, took up a post with President Reagan. As recompense for leaving all her friends behind, Aerin, the elder of two daughters, was allowed to decorate her own bedroom. “It was all pink and green with a canopy bed and Colefax and Fowler wallpaper... it still is”.

That’s why her latest project, a small collection of cosmetic cases and a luggage stand, all in Colefax fabrics, is so right.

The Hamptons weekend home she shares with Eric Zinterhofer, her husband of 25 years, their two sons, aged 20 and 21 and two dogs, is peak Lauder: delicately patterned wallpapers, sconces, pale shagreen photograph frames, immaculately set tables, big comfortable sofas and lots of family photographs. In an era obsessed with mid-century decor, hers is profoundly traditional – and people love it.



Aerin's cosmetics bag with Colefax & Fowler, £65, Net-a-porter.com; Luggage stand, Aerin.com

"The main reason I launched furniture is because I was blown away by how people respond to photographs of my own home," she says. "I mean, I was known for beauty products, but the idea that people would trust me on decoration, that took a while to process."

The Aerin approach to decorating is to start with one focal piece and work from there, and do it gradually, "so everything is there for a reason".

"I like places that look lived in. Memories are what make a room when it comes down to it."