

# Casting a glow

*Lighting can make or break a design scheme. Interior designer Emma Rees provides practical tips on lighting for the home*

Too often lighting is considered as an afterthought, or in a rush. The electrician is waiting for decisions to be made on the location of sockets and the position of spotlights and there's no time to plan. Or a general assumption is made that all that is required is a central single down-light in a room. The result can be less than impressive.

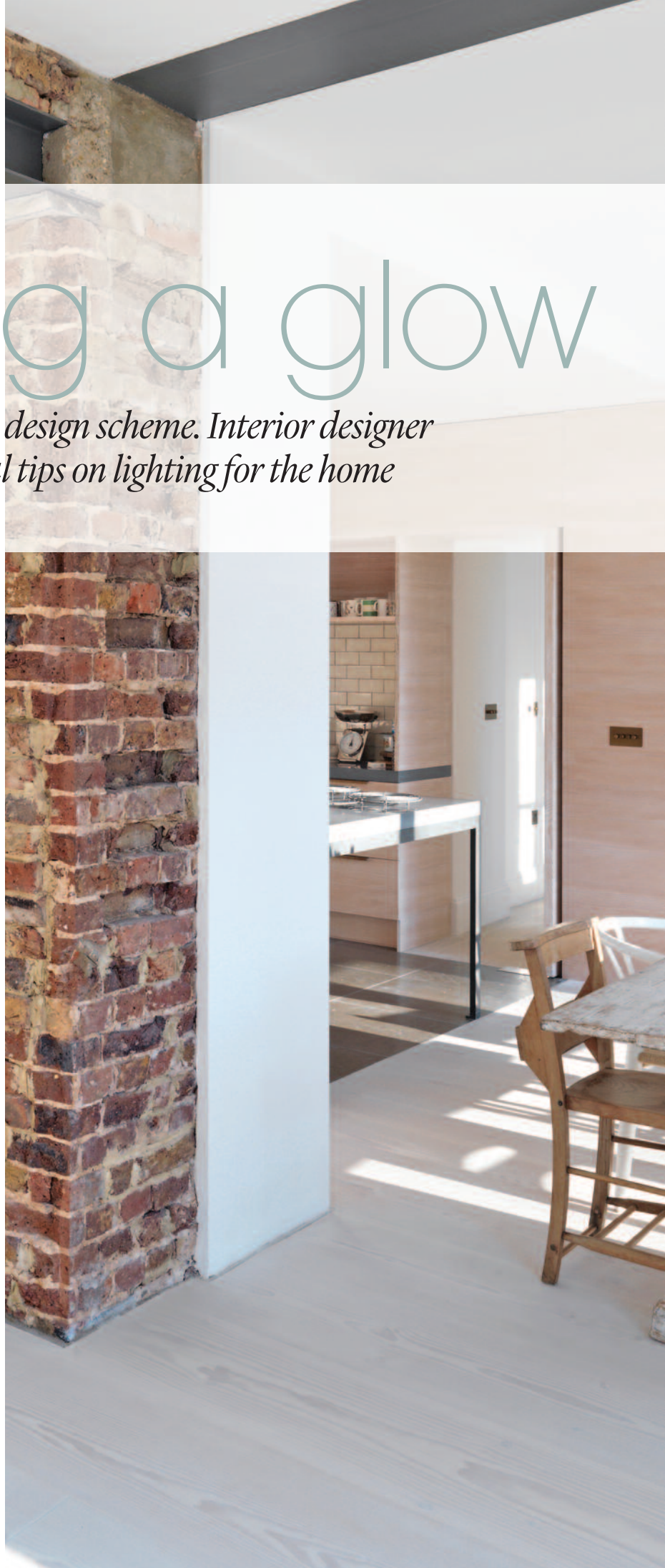
Illuminating the home takes thought and consideration in practical terms – after all, being left with no light over the kitchen island unit, or leaving a dining table lit by candle only is not ideal, no matter how lovely the effect can be. But the focus here is not on practicalities alone. The notable development in both the technology and choice has been phenomenal with some extraordinary lighting bordering on artwork.

There are three main forms of lighting – background lighting, designed to achieve a good all round level of light; general lighting, which can include table and standard lamps, pendants, wall lights, wall-mounted up and down-lighters; and task lighting - lighting which targets specific functions such as reading, or preparing food.

## **A few lighting tips to get started with:**

When building your own home or undertaking major renovation work, lighting should be a priority. Getting lighting requirements right the first time will save money and costly repairs in the long run. Ensure there are enough sockets – the rule of thumb is to put more in than it is thought will be needed and position them discreetly – long cables can be unsightly.

Consideration needs to be given to the use of the room so the amount of light required can be determined. The kitchen will have more stringent lighting requirements than the lounge. Use dimmers wherever possible so that the amount of light in the room can be altered. At night you may want to dim the light in a lounge area to create a cosy, warm ambience in the room. A word of warning – bear in mind that not all dimmers operate with energy-efficient bulbs.







Symmetry in design can create an interesting effect. Display lamps in pairs – either positioned as stand-alone lights either side of a console table, or ideally in a hallway if the size of a room allows. Stepping into a home and being greeted by a decorated table with lamps either side of a picture or mirror can be appealing as the lamps cast a warm, welcoming feel across the room. Equally, floor lamps can look great either side of a sofa, while also providing options for softer lighting at night.

**Images**

Retro-feel lamps from Humblesticks of Monmouthshire and original reclaimed and salvaged lighting from Skinflint Design in Helston, Cornwall.



A task light should be considered for reading - a light where you can angle the head is preferable. The selection of floor lights is extensive and can be overwhelming. Try to choose lighting that suits the age and style of the house. A free-standing industrial floor light would be ideal positioned next to a contemporary chair, but not suitable in a traditionally-designed cottage. Similarly, a brass or gilt-edged chandelier does not always look good in a contemporary home.

In the last few years the pendant light has made a comeback. Pendant lights can bring a design focus to the room, as many are works of art in their own right. A massive lantern or chandelier in an entrance porch can provide the wow factor. Similarly, a large industrial pendant light over a kitchen table looks good in a contemporary home. Ensure it is hung at a height that will not cause visual disruption to guests at the table. An adjustable-height pendant solves this problem. The use of a dimmer helps avoid glare and provides an atmospheric glow to the table.

Technological developments have had a massive effect on the style, trends and choice of lighting on the market.

LED, energy efficient and fibre optic lighting has made huge differences. I am currently re-fitting a bathroom where the client wanted the effect of a ceiling of sparkling stars. These are created by miniature fibre optics piercing the ceiling in a random pattern, like stars in the sky. The wattage they emit is small and they are used in conjunction with recessed lights, but they add interest to the room. Similarly there are new trends in designer bulbs. These are becoming attractive and are less costly than a traditional light fitting.

The final tip is to do your utmost to hide wires and cables from the base of floor lights. This is not easy to achieve but cable fasteners can at least tie the cables together and they can be tucked out of sight. Lastly, be experimental in lighting choices and consider lights as interior design objects in their own right. Let the light shine in. ■



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