

Three dimensional wallflower by designer Lorna Syson



Ceramic bowl from Dial House Gallery



Images show how a rug should be displayed - all furniture on the rug.

Stand Out Style

Choosing the right accessories to complement a home can be a minefield. Emma Rees gives advice on how to enhance a property's style.



A well-designed home is not solely about the structure and framework of a house. So many times fabulously-designed houses are spoilt by poorly selected furniture, pictures, rugs, ironmongery and general accessories. Often finances dictate that furniture from previous homes should be re-used, but sometimes they don't suit their new surroundings, creating a divide between the property and its feel.

Whilst sourcing furniture and accessories is partly instinctive, there are some pointers that can help make a home stylish while reflecting the owner's personality and lifestyle. Let's start with furniture selection.

Don't feel that you have to fill every space in a room with furniture. A family I recently came into contact with added a large kitchen on to their house. It looked superb, with a large island unit, an extensive dining area for lavish

entertaining and alternative area for relaxation, decked out with comfortable sofas. Their instinct was to fill the space with side tables and shelving, but the overall result was cluttered, giving less space for the children to play freely. The easy fix was to remove the additional furniture and restore the clean lines of the room.

Clutter can make a large room seem small, and conversely, in a small room a large piece of furniture can dominate an area affecting the use of the space. Think of storage – it is a key criterion for a small room. I recently advised property developers on a 10-bedroom apartment block. Sliding wardrobes were installed in every room to provide extensive storage and the pristine, white wardrobes integrated well in to the room, making the space appear larger.

Another challenge when choosing furniture is whether to



Iron Lady Round Dining Table

choose wood, veneer or MDF. The major considerations here are the age of the property, a traditional versus contemporary look, practicality and cost. In older Edwardian or Georgian properties, choose quality wooden antique pieces of furniture. By contrast, in a more modern apartment consider a veneer or ply to achieve a contemporary look. Mixing different woods rarely works. All woods have different colour variations. A pine, for example, takes on an orange hue, while oak can be slightly grey to yellow. A mahogany chest of drawers will not sit well with an oak wardrobe in a bedroom.

For dining rooms, if there is enough room, purchase a round table to facilitate more inclusive discussions and informality. My favourite round table is the Iron Lady (perhaps named after Margaret Thatcher) made by Yask, a young vibrant Swiss based company. Rectangular dining



tables are best if space and dimensions dictate. For an environmentally-friendly look, the railway dining table from Mobias Living may be ideal.

Accessorising with rugs offers contrasting possibilities, but one option is to choose a rug large enough so that the sofas, chairs and coffee table all sit on it, as this balances the overall look. The second approach is to opt for no legs on the rug – perfect in front of a fire place or in a room which requires a small rug. Always try to avoid legs half on or half off. This gives an untidy feel and can make furniture unstable.

The addition of a rug adds warmth and visual texture to a room. John Lewis has a fantastic range of rugs or for a more bespoke, luxurious look without breaking the bank, consider Amy Kent's hand knotted rugs. They are fantastic pieces.

Vases, mirrors, paintings, artifacts and flowers refine the look of a room. Accessorising in this way introduces personal expression into the scheme – but every item still needs to be introduced carefully. We all accumulate a litany of possessions over the years, so it is important to de-clutter wherever possible. Accessorising doesn't mean putting all of your belongings on display. Bear in mind they are dust-collectors.

Where do you buy your paintings, ceramics and decorative accessories? My advice is simple – if you buy from the regular high street shops you run the risk of visiting friends or neighbours and seeing the same vase or artwork. Your home should be as individual as you are.

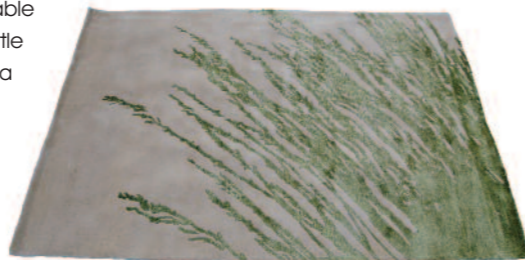
That said, you can sometimes source unusual items economically in HomeSense, but when possible do try and support local artists and craft-makers. The recently launched

Dial House Gallery may be a good place to start. It offers a fantastic selection of art, jewellery, ceramics and gifts direct from the creators – they are pieces of art in their own right.

Lorna Syson is a small business designer best known for her three dimensional wallflowers. Lorna launched her first collection in 2009 with the help of the Princes Trust. She also sells unusual fabric rolls, lamp-shades and cushions using sustainable materials such as wool and nettle fabrics; ideal items to spice up a design scheme.

Pictures, paintings and mirrors are essential additions to a room. Paintings are personal but bear in mind the complexity of colour, style and texture when selecting their suitability for a room. The use and positioning of mirrors is also critical in a design scheme as mirrors make a room look larger and more opulent, particularly used in conjunction with candles. From a practical perspective, a mirror over a fireplace and in a hallway can be useful – so you can do a final check on your appearance before leaving for your social engagement.

Pick a style and stick with it, without generating clutter, and it's hard to go wrong. Make your home distinctive. Just like you. ■



Beach grass – hand knotted bespoke rugs from Amy Kent



Emma Rees, proprietor of Mistletoe Interiors, can be contacted on **07885 135478**; www.mistletoeinteriors.co.uk or email info@mistletoeinteriors.co.uk.