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Make an entrance

ENSURE A WOW-FACTOR WELCOME HOME WITH A CAREFULLY CONSIDERED HALLWAY, WRITES ALEXANDRA GOSS



INTERIORS

WALL TO WALL Opening page: Designed by Gunter & Co. Interiors, this modern Chelsea townhouse's hall is full of light and interest, with mirrored walls and statement art **Right:** With chic lighting, a period fireplace and fresh flowers, this Belgrave Square hallway (designed by SHH) is visitor friendly **Below right:** Painted in Downpipe by Farrow & Ball, these dark grey walls make a great backdrop for masterpieces

Forget the kitchen, the hallway is the hardest-working part of the home. Yet creating an entrance hall that's both inviting and practical requires careful consideration – especially in city homes where space is often tight.

"More is more when it comes to an entrance," says Noor Charchafchi, founder of Celine Interior Design (celineinteriordesign.com). "I add panelling, colour, dramatic lighting and artwork to create a sense of immediate drama and a directional focus that draws the eye down the hallway and into the rest of the house."

An impressive hall can even make your home more appealing to buyers. "First impressions matter and your entrance sets the tone for the rest of the property," says Stephen Holmes, director of Savills' Kensington Office. "Of course, the principal rooms need to be able to 'wow' you but, when the balance is right, a beautiful, grand entrance hall is a must."

Here are the interiors experts' top tips for making an entrance...

COLOUR

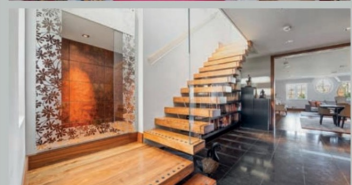
Go darker than you dare. "Most people panic over how to decorate their hallways, often due to the limitations of natural light," says Patrick O'Donnell, brand ambassador for Farrow & Ball (farrow-ball.com). "Dark hallways are not as enclosing as they first appear and dark colours are a wonderful backdrop for pictures."

David Harris, design director at Andrew Martin (andrewmartin.co.uk), suggests choosing dark colours under a dado rail with white woodwork and light colours above. "This adds lots of light and works well to hide any scuffs and marks," he explains. "Hallways are the busiest thoroughfares of your house with people passing each other like the M25."

Henriette von Stockhausen, creative director of VSP Interiors (vspinteriors.com), often puts wallpaper in hallways. "It adds interest to an otherwise bland area, but be sure to choose something that lends itself to hanging artwork on top," >>



PHOTOGRAPHS: FARROW & BALL



HOMES FOR SALE WITH STUNNING HALLWAYS

- The Lygon Place mansion is one of Belgravia's finest homes, so it's no surprise that the hallway is suitably grand. Designed by David Collins Studio, the seven-bedroom pile has a health and leisure complex with a swimming pool and spa. £45m through Beauchamp Estates.
- Statement lighting. Vast mirror. Impactful black and white tiles. The hallway of this five-bedroom Grade I listed Nash house overlooking Regent's Park has it all. £14m through Knight Frank.
- The hallway of this modernist duplex penthouse at 1 Palace Gate has bespoke cabinetry for discreet storage. The luxurious apartment has three bedrooms, a home study and uninterrupted views across Kensington Gardens. £7.25m via Beauchamp Estates.
- On Hampstead's Church Row, this early 18th century Grade II* listed house with a beautifully panelled hallway and five bedrooms counts architect George Gilbert Scott Jr as one of its former residents. £6.75m through Savills.



WARM WELCOME Centre: Upon entering Richard Angel of Angel O'Donnell's Streatham home, house guests are greeted by a roaring fire, inviting Edwardian fireplace and cosy toffee tones

she advises. "You can also make a feature of architectural details such as arches, corbels and cornicing by painting them a different colour, or even choosing a different shade for the ceiling."

LIGHTING

Getting the lighting right is absolutely crucial, especially if you have a dark space. "Strong colours must be compensated with atmosphere – for instance, with mirrors that bounce light around or table lamps," von Stockhausen says.

And don't be afraid to make a statement. "A great way to level up your hallway is with a grand chandelier, whether that's an ornate gilt piece or a contemporary sputnik globe," says Owen Pacey, founder of Renaissance London (renaissancelondon.com). "In smaller hallways, you can create a real impact by using an oversized chandelier, or perhaps a flush-style ceiling lamp if ceilings are lower."

FLOORING

All that traffic calls for durable materials underfoot, such as stone, wood or tiles. "Interesting patterns and colour will make an impression, although do consider the style as it's not something that can be changed often," says Susie McLaren, creative head of residential interiors at SHH (shh.co.uk).

A long runner is an easy way to add colour and texture, advises Rosie Ward, creative director at Ward & Co (wardandco.com). "As stylish as they are practical, runners work as a stand-out feature, while adding some warmth underfoot during the colder months," she explains.

Tiles don't need to be confined to the floor, either. In the entrance hall of his own home in south London, Richard Angel, co-founder of Angel O'Donnell (angelodonnell.com), has given an original Edwardian fireplace a whole new lease of life, with vibrant green finger tiles and a large stone hearth, which beautifully offset the toffee-coloured walls and white decorative mouldings. "This is an entrance designed to meet, greet and delight," O'Donnell says. >>>

INTERIORS

THE EYES HAVE IT Right: A stunning bespoke staircase by Bisca, such as this classically elegant design commissioned by a client with useful storage underneath and a cloakroom, adds instant wow factor to an entrance hall **Below right:** With its rich, Persian-inspired pattern, this runner adds warmth and a colourful flourish to the narrow landing of this Georgian home in Suffolk, transformed by Ward & Co. Interiors

STATEMENT FURNITURE AND STORAGE

Key to creating interest is adding a focal piece, says Tala Fustok, founder of Tala Fustok Studio (talafustok.studio). "This could be a striking light feature, a vintage chaise longue to elongate the hallway, a painting to add interest and personality, or a potted plant to drive a sense of calm. These features can detract the eyes from the size of the hallway."

However, don't forget about practicalities and storage, whether that be a console table or low cabinet with drawers for handy storage, and a chair or bench for sitting on when removing shoes.

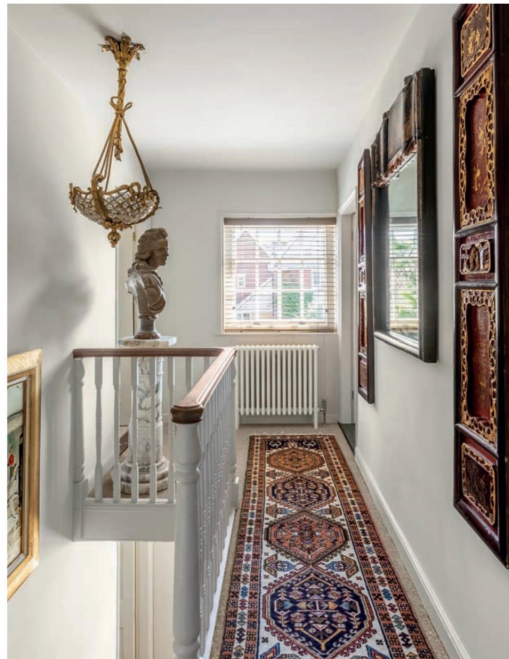
If the space is narrow, Stephanie Dunning, founder of Dunning & Everard (dunningandeverard.com), favours a scalloped shelf. "You can sit it over a radiator, hang a mirror over it and you instantly have a place for keys and post," she explains. "It only requires a depth of 100 to 150mm and can be a way of adding a bit of colour."

THE WOW FACTOR

Although functional, staircases can become things of beauty – especially if they're designed bespoke. "A feature staircase is the first thing you'll see when you enter a property and it can add an instant 'wow' factor," says Richard McLane, founder of Bisca Staircases (bisca.co.uk).

Art is the perfect way to make a lasting impression. "A large-scale piece that spans the full height of the wall will feel bold and impactful," says Camilla Clarke, creative director at Albion Nord (albion-nord.com). "If you have a long hallway, another interesting way to make a statement is to create an art wall, lined with framed pieces."

Scent is also an important way to set the tone for your home, says Charlotte Hodges-Peck, senior consultant at Savills Interior Services. "Adding a room diffuser to the sideboard in your hallway so the house or flat smells beautiful as soon as you come in helps create a first impression that involves more than one sense." ■



PHOTOGRAPHS: KATHY BOND