



## IT'S WARM INSIDE

Hosting season is here and these convivial spaces are fine examples of how to make everyone feel welcome.

### CLOSE QUARTERS

Keeping a space intimate creates an environment for good conversation, as people feel at ease rather than exposed. Another good idea is to embrace a touch of imperfection and avoid too much symmetry, as shown here with the chair by the fire. Interior designer Nicola Harding believes that design always begins with a personal touch. 'I place myself in the space and think about how I want to feel, crafting comfort and conviviality.' She recommends using pieces from different periods to make a room feel dynamic and not too predictable. 'And don't forget atmospheric lighting - lots of it to evoke cosiness.' →



### BOOK WORM

Above and beyond their obvious strengths as sources of entertainment and education, books crammed on shelves also muffle and absorb sounds, so they help to contribute to a sociable atmosphere. This is the sitting room in Somerset of Philip Hooper, joint managing director, Sibyl Colefax & John Fowler, which houses his books in a bookcase of his own design. The alcove shelves are painted in a rich shade of red chosen to accentuate the colours of the spines. 'And of course,' adds Philip, 'wherever one finds a book, there must also be a comfortable chair, a table and a suitable light by which to read.'



### CREATIVE FREEDOM

Artful decorative expression that leans into the qualities of a room – be that an asymmetric ceiling, a diminutive size or a lack of light – results in something both non-conformist and highly memorable. That's what interior designer Rachel Chudley achieves with her schemes. This living room is in her London home, which she created from a derelict Victorian workshop and described as being a canvas for some of her more 'bonkers ideas'. The oversized fireplace forms a focal point; she arranged the brickwork, painted in silvery blue, to act as a chimney wall installation. Layers of colour and pattern are created through the leopard-print sofa, ikat chair and sunshine yellow ottoman.

### COLOUR DRENCH

Earlier this year, social media lit up with a so-called new theory that the secret to making any space look better was to add a bit of red. It's an idea that's been adopted for decades, but as a colour that promotes energy and social interaction, some challenge whether it can lead to relaxation. Not designer and decorator Flora Soames. 'Using rich primary colours to make this room, by contrast, cocoon-like and enveloping as well as interesting and diverting was key,' she says. 'The Schumacher grasscloth on the walls was just the right tone of ruby red and gives the necessary texture and depth to this room, offsetting the various patterns and textures of the weaves and rugs. The ingredients are simple, unchallenging and effective.' →

PHOTOGRAPH © COLOUR DRENCH/ELLEN CHRISTINE HARRIS/DOCK



"This grasscloth was just the right tone of ruby red and gives the necessary texture and depth to this room"

**FLORA SOAMES**, designer and decorator

“The reclaimed fireplace surround adds a layer of character, resonating with the centuries that have passed”

**CHRIS AND NICOLA COX**, founders, Cox London



#### **CURATED SPACE**

Any room used for entertaining should have a number of conversational pieces included. Not only do they provide talking points, but they also tell the narrative of the people who live there and create that almost intangible distinction between a house and a home. This distinctive space, in the home of Cox London founders Chris and Nicola Cox, was two separate rooms, but now custom doors mean it can be opened up to create a versatile area. It's filled with the couple's finds, including the hessian and jute sofa and cushions made from 1960s Barbara Brown fabric. 'The reclaimed fireplace surround adds a layer of character, resonating with the centuries that have passed,' they say.

#### **COMFORTING GLOW**

Where space is not an issue, deep sofas and lots of colour create a room that's both supremely comfortable and far from fussy. Octavia Dickinson calls this look 'squashy English' – and believes it's something that every home needs. For this drawing room in Gloucestershire, she used a deep historical paint shade on the walls then layered the space with patterns and prints, textures and lamp light (as well as somewhere generous to prop up feet). 'It's all balanced, which lets the eye dot around the space but never jars,' she says. 'Rooms like these are very cosy and comfortable from autumn through to winter. They are spaces that glow and radiate warmth and light through the use of deep colours on the walls.'



PHOTOGRAPH 'COMFORTING GLOW': HELENA GATTICAP



PHOTOGRAPH BY ARIAN WILSON

### GATHER TOGETHER

Furniture placement goes a long way to creating a convivial atmosphere. Think about how family and friends are going to chat to each other in a room – no one really does that sitting side by side on a sofa. 'I'd always recommend moving armchairs and sofas closer together,' says Ed O'Donnell, co-founder and creative director of Angel O'Donnell, who designed this room at The OWO in London. 'It creates intimacy, encourages conversation and noticeably improves comfort.' And don't forget the cushions – piles of plump cushions to nestle into will bring about a wealth of cosiness and contentment. →



### EASY LIVING

Keeping colour contrasts to a minimum results in a space that's easy on the eye. The trick to creating interest is to layer in textures, such as seagrass matting, velvet on the sofa and leather on the stools. Here, the natural wood joinery on the wall sets the tonal pitch for this room for a house in Chelsea designed by Albion Nord. It acts as both a library and a place to watch TV (the screen is revealed by sliding the artwork by William McLure across). 'We used joinery as a nod to the traditional purpose of the space while the artwork allows the room to maintain a contemporary feel,' says the team at Albion Nord.



### GOOD CONNECTION

Formal entertaining rooms used to be hidden away for special occasions only but as the value of space – especially in the capital – has increased, so has the desire to make sure each room in a house is used to its best advantage. Interior designer Anahita Rigby transformed this house in Marylebone by removing the walls between the living room and dining room and replacing them with a wood-and-glass screen broken up by a pair doors with hinges that fold back on themselves to make the most of the space. When they are closed, the sitting room feels cosy. The glazing helps the light to travel between the two rooms and white-painted woodwork retains a sense of airiness.

### SOFTLY DOES IT

Textured or plastered walls and sheer flowing curtains are a clever way of introducing a gentle warmth to a space without turning up the dial on colour or pattern. This living room, designed by Murudé, uses a pale neutral colour palette, natural fabrics and elegant finishes to create a serene and welcoming space. Founder Murude Katipoglu says she chose the George Smith armchairs for their timeless design. 'There's something so familiar and inviting about the form of a simple and classic armchair,' she says. 'The antique mirror finish and brass detailing on the joinery layered with the opulent yet refined crystal chandelier from Fiona McDonald add beauty and provide a soft golden glow in the room at night.' →



"Differing and antique lamps with beautiful bespoke silk shades help create even more of a layered effect"

**PHOEBE HOLLOND**, creative director, Studio Hollond



#### FOCAL POINT

The key to creating a cosy feeling in a living room is to use a mixture of textiles and patterns with varying provenance – so believes Phoebe Hollond, creative director of Studio Hollond. 'This living room, with its oversized fireplace, meant we had to work very hard to make the fireplace the focal point without having the furniture facing it.' The solution was to design a pair of fireside chairs that seemed wild in scale and proportion. These were then married with a playful specialist paint effect inside the fireplace, which is based on a marbled design. 'The pair of sofas were bespoke and they sit opposite each other with a Robert Kime ottoman in between. Differing and antique lamps with beautiful bespoke silk shades help to create even more of a layered effect.'

#### MIX AND MATCH

Having a hierarchy of interesting elements against lots of neutrals will go a long way to creating a tranquil scheme. In this sitting room by Studio Vero, the eye is drawn to the upholstered ottoman and custom-made rug while the sofas and chairs are in textured plains. 'Large rugs look brilliant in a room and are an easy way to add extra comfort and warmth,' says co-founder Romanos Brihi. 'For us it's all about variety; choosing different seating options and styles then layering them with cushions in contrasting prints, fabrics and colours. And candles really make the sofas and chairs pop and create a relaxed, cosier feel.'



PHOTOGRAPH: MIX AND MATCH / SIMON BROWN