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DESIGN IDEAS

MATERIAL GAINS

Rooms with great allure often have a plenitude of finishes – from warm wood to sparkling glass

FEATURE ARABELLA YOUNG PHOTOGRAPH CHRISTOPHER MORWOOD

FLUID FORM

Limewash refracts light through millions of crystals, a clever way of turning an otherwise standard material into something special. Angelica Squire, co-founder of Studio Squire, wove colours of autumn into this scheme for a home in London's Chelsea Barracks. 'We wanted this to be a statement dining space, given it would be used mostly at night. By painting the ceiling, too, we achieved a cocooned effect across the room,' says Angelica. The paint is an olive-green limewash by Bauwerk Colour. It has a textured finish that adds movement to walls, resulting in a moody space – perfect for evening meals. →



TEXTURED STORY

Oak panelling and parquet floors add warmth and character to any room, but particularly in the context of a new-build apartment. A white box is transformed into a space that feels settled and interesting. This scheme by Albion Nord was for a penthouse overlooking Lord's cricket ground in northwest London. It enhances the light available through the open-plan living and entertaining space with full-height windows and bespoke joinery. 'A subtle nod to cricket is woven into the design through a tailored approach to upholstery and carpentry and a warm and earthy colour palette, using natural materials,' say the team.



SUBTLE GLAMOUR

Velvet immediately adds a feeling of warmth to a room – particularly when it’s used on the walls, such as in this living room and library designed by Veere Grenney Associates. The rich, mossy green silk velvet creates a cocooning effect, muffling sounds and imbuing the room with a seductive quiet luxury. This sort of wall treatment will act as a grand yet neutral backdrop for artwork, whether traditional or contemporary.

DECORATIVE FLAIR

Arranging a display of ceramics or china plates on a wall in an otherwise white kitchen will always have an unexpectedly significant impact. Joanna Wood bought a collection of Majolica earthenware from a previous owner, which included this collection of strawberry leaf and vine leaf plates, when she bought her house. ‘The colour of the glaze is deep and luxuriously English. I like how it drags the green of the Plain English cabinetry up onto the Cotswold stone.’

LIGHT TOUCH

Rattan light fixtures are available in all shapes and sizes; the fibre acts as a gentle filter for light. Here, Phoebe Hollond, founder of Studio Hollond, took it one step further and a pair of rattan urns was electrified with ‘enchanting’ results. ‘This breakfast room in a Grade-II listed country house needed to function both as an informal space for the family to dine and also as a place for more grown-up dinners,’ says Phoebe. →



PHOTOGRAPHS (TEXTURED STORY): KENSINGTON LEVERNE; (DECORATIVE FLAIR) MARK NICHOLSON; (LIGHT TOUCH) TOM MANNION



“We opted for a full saturation of dark navy on the walls, ceiling and the upholstery of the cinema bed”

GEMMA MCCLOSKEY, Cúpla

PATINA OF AGE

There’s a theory that a well-decorated room should leave no surface unadorned. At least that’s the approach Henriette von Stockhausen, creative director of VSP Interiors, has taken with this bedroom. The focal point of a cosy reading space opposite the bed is the beautiful antique Italian painted cupboard that she found at Robert Kime. The natural wood details create a contrast to the blue and red textiles and wallpaper.

SHINE ON

The glazed surface of ceramic floor tiles acts as a clever way to reflect light, which is perfect for dark rooms. The corridor and library floor in this scheme by interior designer Nicola Harding are laid with Moroccan bejmat tiles, the brick-shaped version of zellige that are made for use on floors. These ones were from Emery & Cie. ‘The tactile black tiles work in harmony with the aubergine walls of the corridor,’ says Nicola.

HEAVY METAL

After the layout and architecture, it’s the finishes that enhance a property. With older homes, many want to be faithful to period-correct materials, but using something out of context will add drama. Gemma McCloskey of Cúpla wanted to create a cosy space with a mid-century feel for this Victorian house. She used metal trims to achieve this. ‘The brass and bronze portal helped define the cinema zone from the bar area and we had a bespoke runner inspired by vintage fabric,’ she says.



PHOTOGRAPHS (PATINA OF AGE AND SHINE ON) PAUL MASSEY; (HEAVY METAL) MEGAN TAYLOR; (MIRROR IMAGE) DEAN HEARNE

MIRROR IMAGE

Hallways, bathrooms and dark sitting rooms can all be improved with mirrors. They bounce the light around a room, creating the illusion of a bigger, brighter space, particularly at night. Even the lightest touch approach, involving a slip of unframed glass, can have a transformative effect. Tiffany Duggan, founder of Studio Duggan, clad the reveal between a double reception room in smoked mirror. 'It adds drama and blurs the separation lines a little – such a cool trick,' she says. She then carries the theme on with the ceiling pendant in smoked glass, lending the room a dash of Roaring Twenties glamour. →



HIGH CONTRAST

One of the principles when working with reclaimed materials is to introduce contrast. 'It creates a layered, cocooning effect, softening the raw edges and balancing the elements,' says interior designer Lauren Gilberthorpe, who decorated this barn for clients who were keen to celebrate its rustic structure. 'Leather dining chairs added an elegant softness, while oversized lanterns and eclectic art injected personality into the design.'

CARVE UP

Large rooms will often need to be zoned. One way to do this is to use a divider. Here, for a project in London's Centrepoint building, the team at Angel O'Donnell designed a structure made of a frame in bronze with smoked glass panes. It also acts as a display case. They then used pieces in other materials, including coffee tables made from marble, walnut and rattan and a wood dining table with an oxidised steel base. 'Each element adds a unique look and feel to the space,' say the team.

COPPER TONE

Using luxury or unexpected materials such as marble, metallics and fluted glass is one of the best ways to create a standout finish with kitchen design. This one by Roundhouse features an antique copper-wrapped splashback that merges into an elongated shelf. Under lights, it glows against the blue cabinetry. 'A marble-top island will create a visual centrepiece,' says Liane Burrett, senior design consultant at Roundhouse. →





RICH TAPESTRY

How to disguise a TV is a common conundrum for designers. One solution is to encase it in a piece of furniture so that it can be hidden. For this house in Kensington, Alicia Meireles of design-and-build firm OWN London commissioned a tapestry from a specialist embroiderer to cover the sliding panels in front of the screen. 'The brief from the client was to have most of the background plain yet with texture and they wanted vibrancy of colour to punctuate the canvas,' she says. 'She used 18 different embroidery stitches, creating an odyssey of colour, texture and playfulness that suits the clients' personalities.'

PHOTOGRAPH DAREN CHUNG

MIXING MATERIALS EFFECTIVELY

DESIGN THEME A rustic scheme will work well with a blend of wood, copper and natural textiles, while something more industrial would focus more on metallics and glass, where metals, such as brass, are paired with light-coloured wood to create balance. 'We mix materials in all our projects,' says interior designer Lonika Chande. 'It's so important to ground a space and add depth to a room. We like to do it with fabric, upholstery in a mix of linen, cotton and velvet but also bringing in antique textiles on cushions.' Mirrored glass works well across all design styles. 'You must consider what will be reflected in the mirror,' says Henriette von Stockhausen, creative director of VSP Interiors. 'Perhaps opt for an antique mirror as it gives a softer reflection and can be quite forgiving.'

STANDOUT KITCHENS can often be elevated through the introduction of unexpected materials. This is perhaps especially important when a kitchen has been moved from the back of the house into one of the main entertaining rooms in order to meet today's desires for large, light-filled open-plan spaces. Interior designer Flora Soames added metallic accents to a country-house kitchen in Gloucestershire, including a brass mesh on the larder doors, brass wall lights and a characterful brass lantern. In a corner, she introduced a standalone fridge lacquered in cobalt blue. 'Overall, the design needed to have stature to work in the space; often when a kitchen moves into one of the principal rooms, it doesn't have the correct sense of scale and the result is underwhelming,' says Flora.

REUSING MATERIALS With an increasing focus on sustainable design and an awareness of the finite number of natural materials available to us, many

decorators and designers are choosing to reuse elements in their schemes. Leading the charge for some time has been the founder of the London salvage yard Retrouvius. Adam Hills and Maria Speake champion the reuse of materials, including anything from suede (which they've used to cover kitchen cabinets) to reclaimed pine boards originally used by artisan cheese makers for curing rounds of cheese. Tom Cox of HÁM Interiors is also a fan, having used these on a project in Cornwall. 'I like to use reclaimed wood flooring in projects; it immediately removes the newness from a newly built space,' he says.

SUBTLE EFFECTS There are more low-key ways of mixing in other materials rather than making a big statement. 'Layering and mixing materials adds depth and a sense of gradual discovery, creating a more engaging and personal space,' says the Oxford-based interior designer Nicola Mardas. 'By combining found and inherited objects, textiles, patterns of varying scales, rugs and furniture of different styles, you can tell a richer story.' Large pieces such as rugs and wall hangings can quickly set the tone for a space so it is often easier to start with these pieces and build outwards. 'Natural materials such as abaca, sisal, seagrass, tatami, rattan or Indian chik blinds not only bring beautiful texture but also help unify spaces filled with rich patterns or vibrant colours by offering a calming counterbalance,' adds Nicola. 📸

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HENRIETTE VON STOCKHAUSEN, VSP Interiors

The sourcebook: characterful materials

ORIGINAL BTC

This family-owned British lighting manufacturer, founded in 1990, was the first to make lights in delicate bone china – now a much-loved and regularly used material in its new ranges and collections.

ERCOL

Established in 1920, this heritage furniture manufacturer makes iconic pieces of furniture, including ranges made from solid, certified British ash in partnership with Grown in Britain.

PETRA PALUMBO

Homeware designer specialising in colourful, patterned homeware, from classic Delft tiles to modern tartans and tile trims that will add another exciting dimension to walls.

CROFT ARCHITECTURAL HARDWARE

Supplier of a range of door handles and knobs (and other door furniture) in a variety of metallic finishes from Tudor bronze to antique nickel.