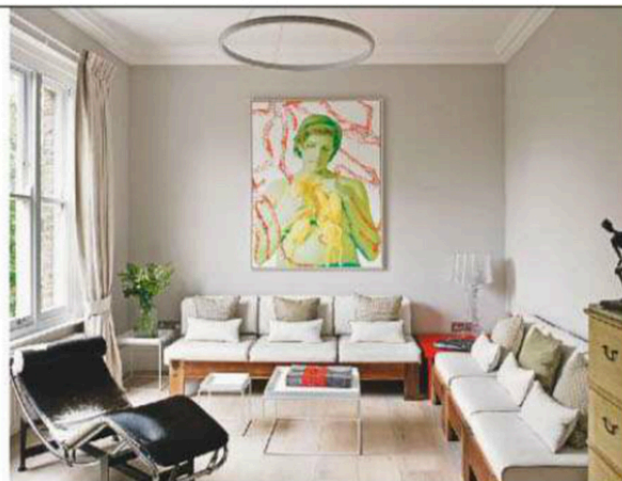


INSIGHT

Multifunctional furniture

If space is at a premium try using smart multitasking furniture as Sidika Owen D'Hauteville has done



With compact spaces, hard-working furniture and fittings are a must. Fortunately, there are plenty of options available that combine practicality with aesthetic appeal, from concealed kitchen storage to streamlined shelving.

WORK IT

Don't shy away from making a big statement in a small space. Striking furniture will make an impact and multitasking pieces that conceal storage or double up on function will maximise your home's efficiency. Natalia Miyar, design director at Helen Green, suggests a bold approach. 'Proportion is so important; I like to use large-scale furniture as it makes a space seem bigger and more luxurious,' she says. 'The key is to choose carefully. Buy a few large, impactful pieces rather than lots of small items.' Bespoke or standalone shelving is a simple way of creating storage, as well as acting as a room divider. Open shelves can also inject a sense of spaciousness. Anna Richmond of Conley & Co, who designed Sidika's apartment, suggests installing banquettes in kitchen or living areas, which double as handy bench seating, with drawer and cupboard storage underneath. She also advises adding practical lighting inside deeper kitchen cupboards and mirrored cabinetry, operating on push-latch systems. This design bounces light around, and helps cupboards disappear into a bathroom, bedroom or hallway.

BRIGHT IDEAS

Plan your furniture, while also considering the functions you need. Bespoke will allow for a totally tailored finish, but you'll also find stylish options at Ikea, Heal's, Habitat and The Conran Shop. In living spaces, opt for items that can double up as a discreet study area with a pull-out desk, while in the bedroom, choose a divan with large storage drawers. Mila Podiablonska

of Absolute Interior Decor suggests opting for coffee tables and ottomans with storage beneath or inside, while sofa beds are great space savers. Choose extendable dining tables, too. 'Glass and mirrors in small rooms reduce obstructions and enhance the feeling of space,' says Mila. 'Glass tables create an open feel while maintaining their function.'

PROFESSIONAL ADVICE...



● 'Fitted cabinetry helps maximise space. Consider a full wall of large units in your living room. A TV in the middle can be surrounded by storage and softened with books.'

● In smaller spaces, concealing study areas and desks behind bifolding doors is a great option. Ask a reputable joiner for designs.

● In kitchen-diners or open-plan kitchen/sitting rooms, tuck the dining table against a wall and add bench or banquette seating along one side with built-in cupboards underneath.

● In bedrooms, a storage bed is useful for stowing pieces you don't need everyday access to. Bespoke floor-to-ceiling, wall-to-wall wardrobes can really help maximise space, too. If made with beautiful doors, they'll become very much part of the design of the room.'

ALMAS SHAMSEE, MAISHA DESIGNS

EXPERT EYE

'Space-efficient design is sought after by young families and professionals in areas where the price per square foot is high. While a spatial challenge can be tricky to resolve, it also often creates a unique home, tailored to the person living in it'

DOROTHEE JUNKIN, DOROTHEE JUNKIN DESIGN STUDIO

ADDRESS BOOK

● **NOBODY&CO.**
00 39 02 780460, nobodyandco.it
This Italian supplier offers modern storage solutions, including shelving plus chairs and pouffes, incorporating clever book storage.

● **WEST ELM**
020 7637 9150, westelm.co.uk
Find affordable pieces, including handy storage coffee tables.

● **BOXETTI**
00 371 2245 1323, boxetti.com
This Italian brand specialises in multiuse furniture.

INSIGHT

Add character to a rental

Keen to inject personality and style into a rented home as Fanny Moizant has done? Consider these points before making a start

If you are a tenant, it doesn't necessarily mean you can't make your home your own. While structural improvements may not be an option, you can still enhance a property's best features with a host of decorative touches.

GET CREATIVE

Rentals, whether houses or flats, almost always come with restrictive covenants regarding structural changes. But there are still ways to decorate a rental home to add flair, colour and character. A clever means of injecting new life is to paint the walls – if you plan to rent long-term, most landlords will permit a fresh colour scheme as long as you agree to revert to the original decor. But if that isn't an option, enliven the walls with artwork. If wallpaper appeals, try framing a favourite design as a large-scale piece. Decals can be easily removed when necessary – try Notonthehighstreet.com for some witty options. Consider investing in good-quality curtains or blinds to inject colour and pattern. Smartening up kitchens and bathrooms with new handles is an affordable way to add a chic touch, but remember to keep existing accessories so that they can easily be replaced if you move. Take the opportunity to invest in heirloom furniture you can keep forever. Look for sleek freestanding storage pieces such as statement consoles and comfortable seating.

LIGHT IT RIGHT

Lighting is an important mood setter, and one of the best ways to add character to your home is to banish harsh overhead lamps. If you can, consider replacing existing centre lights with a striking pendant, and if you plan to rent long-term, upgrading light switches and plug sockets is a good way to create a cohesive, more personal look. Almas Shamsee of Maisha Design suggests creating a sophisticated ambience by layering table lamps, floor lamps and shelving units with built-in lights – these can be used in different combinations to suit the mood. Interesting sculptural table lamps will add character – try Porta Romana for beautiful and striking pieces, while Heathfield & Co offer a number of two-tone pendant shades. Finally, think about adding dimmers to help create a subtle scheme.



EXPERT EYE

'Make a statement by changing curtains, throws and rugs to reflect your own style, keeping a common thread in every room. It's easier and more cost-effective to update soft furnishings such as these'

VERONIQUE PIEDELEU, CARAVANE

PROFESSIONAL ADVICE...



- 'Upscaling mirrors in narrow corridors can enhance spaces, making them appear larger. This is especially important in small, dark flats.'
- "Less is more" is my motto. Buy a few large, high-impact bespoke pieces rather than cluttering the room with lots of furniture. For additional storage, I like to choose coffee tables and ottomans that have plenty of space beneath or inside.
- Freestanding open shelving will create different zones and provide storage for objects, books, etc, that can be accessed from both sides. I recently used a 6ft high-wine rack to act as a room divider as well as being a decorative and functional piece.
- Fresh flowers and plants placed around the house are one of the best ways to make the place feel alive. Don't forget the little things – candles add fragrance and softer light, while seashells and corals in the bathroom and fresh white towels inject a comfortable touch.'

MILA PODIABLONSKA, ABSOLUTE INTERIOR DECOR

ADDRESS BOOK

● **BRITISH INSTITUTE OF INTERIOR DESIGN**
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Professional organisation for interiors designers in the UK. Find suppliers and designers.

● **ABSOLUTE INTERIOR DECOR**
07711 285788,
absoluteinteriordecor.com
Interior design company specialising in decorating rentals.