BRIGHTER, BIGGER, BETTER

Accentuating and capitalising on light and space creates airy and spacious interiors that improve both lifestyle and ambience

The environment we live in has a direct bearing on our sense of well-being. Spacious, well-ordered interiors promote relaxation and pleasure, as well as creating flexible, easy living, whilst ample daylight instils an uplifting sense of warmth and security. It comes as no surprise, then, to learn that, according to the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), space and light are the two most desirable qualities required of today's homes.

Whether altering a property through the removal of internal walls, the reconfiguration of architectural glazing or the addition of an extension, creating much-needed space, better flow and letting in precious daylight will always prove beneficial

ABOVE Antiqued-mirror panels in a patinated brass frame. Interior design by Philippa Hart. *Antiqued mirrors from £660 a square metre, Rupert Bevan*

LEFT Basement conversions are well suited to urban properties, where extending outwards or upwards is not always an option. *Modernisation and refurbishment works, including installation of basement, by Broseley*

BELOW This extension by Yiangou Architects provides a seamless, light-filled addition to a Grade II listed cottage.

BOTTOM RIGHT Loft conversions often make ideal spaces for additional bathrooms. *Usk freestanding cast-iron bath, £5,340; Lowther double vanity suite with Arabescato marble, £7,140, both Drummonds*

MORE SPACE

As households evolve and grow, adding extra space is often a must for many. A well-conceived and executed extension or conversion will enhance functionality and layout as well as providing additional rooms

EXTENDING LIMITS

Opting to extend the home is an ideal way to make use of available exterior space and create new rooms and a layout tailored to specific needs. Of course, significant improvements may, in the case of external structural changes, require planning permission, whereas lesser invasive internal amendments are often exempt, unless within a listed building. "Planning permission isn't always required, unless the property is listed or within a conservation area," says Jonathan Hey, founder and managing director of Westbury Garden Rooms. It is advisable to contact the local planning authority before any building work commences.

There are a number of options available when considering extending the home. Designer Cherie Lee of Cherie Lee Interiors says, "Siting a single-storey extension at the rear of the home is a popular way to make the transition between indoor and outdoor spaces." Meanwhile Luigi Montefusco, director of LBMV Architects, suggests a side extension to maximise unused space between house and boundary. "Despite being a small intervention, this allows reconfiguration for a much more efficient use of space," he says.

Flow and functionality can also be improved by reconfiguring and unifying disjointed areas via a linking extension. For impact and grandeur, consider

adding extra height. "Double-height spaces often provide potential for a galleried area and the opportunity to enjoy the space from a different perspective," says Andrew Inchley, director of Yiangou Architects. Alternatively, where additional bedrooms are a priority, two-storey structures can prove transformative across all levels. Construction above an existing building is also feasible, where structural considerations allow.

Although the size of any extension depends on what it is to be used for, do not be tempted to encroach too far into the garden, and do ensure an appropriate ratio of living and sleeping areas, or the result may feel awkward and unbalanced. Those looking to minimise external impact might also want to consider an orangery with a flexible combination of solid walls and glazing, or even a garden room or conservatory to provide greater light and space.

Any addition does, of course, need to work effectively with the existing internal layout. "Be prepared to incorporate and repurpose existing adjacent rooms, with the aim of creating a seamless flow into the new extension," advises Hey. Check with the local authority what might be necessary to gain planning permission and consider how natural light is likely to be affected in any rooms beyond. These may well benefit from a roof lantern or skylights in the case of single-storey extensions. Blend decor, fittings and architectural detailing with adjoining pre-existing areas to help create a seamless flow between old and new.

ABOVE Offering flexibility and privacy, the traditional Georgian orangery can prove a more versatile option than an all-glazed structure. A lantern roof allows ample light to be shed into adjoining rooms. *Bespoke orangery, from £45,000, Westbury Garden Rooms*

RIGHT This glazed-roof extension with floor-to-ceiling windows onto the garden floods this kitchen with light. *The Real Shaker kitchen, from £12,000, deVOL*

RIGHT An orangery extension such as this provides a flexible, light-filled area. *Bespoke orangery, from £40,000, Vale Garden Houses*
BELOW This oak-framed extension was designed to connect the kitchen to the garden. *Extension by Woodford Architecture and Interiors*

ABOVE A glass house extension creates a wonderful area for entertaining guests, particularly when fitted with bi-fold doors opened fully to blur the boundaries between home and garden on a sunny day.
Bespoke maintenance-free aluminium glass house, from around £35,000, Marston & Langinger

CHOOSING CONVERSION

Repurposing rooms or making use of redundant spaces within the home allows for expansion without impacting on the external footprint. Do seek guidance from the local planning authority as to whether plans are within permitted development regulations.

Loft conversions tend to be the first port of call for those requiring additional bedrooms and bathrooms, as they offer an enviable amount of light. This makes them ideal for a master suite, welcoming guest room, tranquil office or hobby space. "Provided they are cleverly designed with decent height, they can integrate with the rest of the house very effectively," says John Thursfield, managing director of specialist building and refurbishment company Broseley.

Access to rooms in a loft space will require careful consideration to ensure a seamless and comfortable flow with the rest of the house. The ideal location for a staircase will depend upon the layout of the floor below and where the necessary height is for it to land. Whilst installing stairs over the home's existing staircase is likely to achieve an aesthetically pleasing result, this may not always be practicable. Do also bear in mind that, as Richard McLane, design director at Bisca says, "Developing a staircase that pleasantly transitions between levels may well take more space."

By contrast, basement conversions in busy urban areas can prove very appealing to growing families or those not wishing to move. Where it is structurally feasible to dig out an entirely new basement and extend under the garden, a whole new storey can be created to free up space on upper floors.

Basement rooms, given that they are likely to be darker spaces, are particularly suited to the creation of cinema rooms, home gyms or wine cellars. If looking to create spaces such as playrooms, living rooms, kitchens, bedrooms or home offices below ground, do bear in mind that the introduction of natural daylight is vital if they are to feel comfortable and inviting. Should rooms extend beneath the garden it is possible to include walk-on roof lights or perhaps floor-to-ceiling windows or bi-fold doors which open on to a sunken terrace (*see p102, top left*). In terms of access – as with lofts – always look to a smooth, imperceptible transition between old and new.

A roofline loft conversion can prove a great investment when looking to expand and in many cases does not require planning permission. *Refurbishment of the property by Broseley with interior architect Jonathan Tuckey. Wallpaper and lampshade, Larksong, Sanderson*

TOP LEFT Removing the plaster from between timbers can be a sensitive option when creating a more open-plan feel without knocking down walls. *Conversion and renovation of seventeenth-century barn by Architect Your Home*

MIDDLE LEFT This oak-frame extension was built offsite and comes as a kit, complete with a full set of drawings to aid planning permission, should it be required. *The Wylde garden room kit, from £11,876, Border Oak*

BELOW Combining several smaller rooms at the rear of this Grade II listed converted Manor House has enabled the creation of a large, open-plan living space, *Interior design by Cherie Lee Interiors*

MORE LIGHT

Expanding the home is, of course, not the only solution to lack of light and space. Judicious remodelling of internal layouts, along with the installation of generous daylight sources, will also prove advantageous when improving environments

INJECTING LIGHT

Natural light is one of the most desirable qualities a home can have, instantly making it feel spacious, inviting and airy. External glazing is, therefore, often a top priority when looking to add light and boost ambience in small or north-facing rooms. Whilst, as a broad rule, this should equate to 10 per cent of a room's floor area to achieve adequate illumination, many designers agree that daylight penetration can be even more dramatically improved by increasing this to around 20 per cent to ensure that rooms feel airy and bright. Do check with the local planning authority before starting any work and be mindful of energy efficiency targets and regulations.

Simply reconfiguring or enlarging existing windows is a popular solution and generous banks of glazing can offer a direct link to the garden, enabling natural light to flood in. "Classic French windows are ideal for period or country properties," advises Hey. "Beautifully crafted timber windows create a classic and elegant look." Whereas Montefulco says, "Sliding and bi-fold glass doors and recessed panel windows that reveal uninterrupted views and make the most of natural light at all times of day make for an incredibly spacious, elegant aesthetic." Those wishing to replace entire walls with expanses of glass should carefully deliberate issues of privacy and proportion.

Glazed internal screens, whether with doors or without, act as room dividers as well as affording light to flood into the home. *Bespoke internal bronze screen by Architectural Bronze Casements*

Introducing secondary light sources, such as dual-aspect windows or external glazed doors, will also prove more light-enhancing than a single aperture. If there are concerns about being overlooked, look to alternative solutions. "Overhead glazing and skylights are perfect for overlooked properties as they will increase light but with an element of privacy," says Jake Randall, director of IQ Glass. Roof lights can offer 40 per cent more daylight than standard windows, and overhead glazing or lanterns offer up to 75 per cent more. Alternatively, consider the humble light tunnel to brighten a windowless en-suite bathroom or corridor.

Within the home, it also pays to borrow light via more simplistic devices, such as inset panels or transom windows above door frames to help transform light-starved areas. On a more grandiose scale, glass floors and walls can prove a highly effective means of transferring daylight through all levels – sand-blasted glass or glass that can switch electronically from clear to opaque should address any privacy issues. Also look to glazed internal doors or open-tread staircases. "Maximise available light with a glazed-tread staircase," advises McLane. Though do bear in mind that, as with all structural glazing, this requires strict regulation and specialist toughened glass.

RECONFIGURING LAYOUT

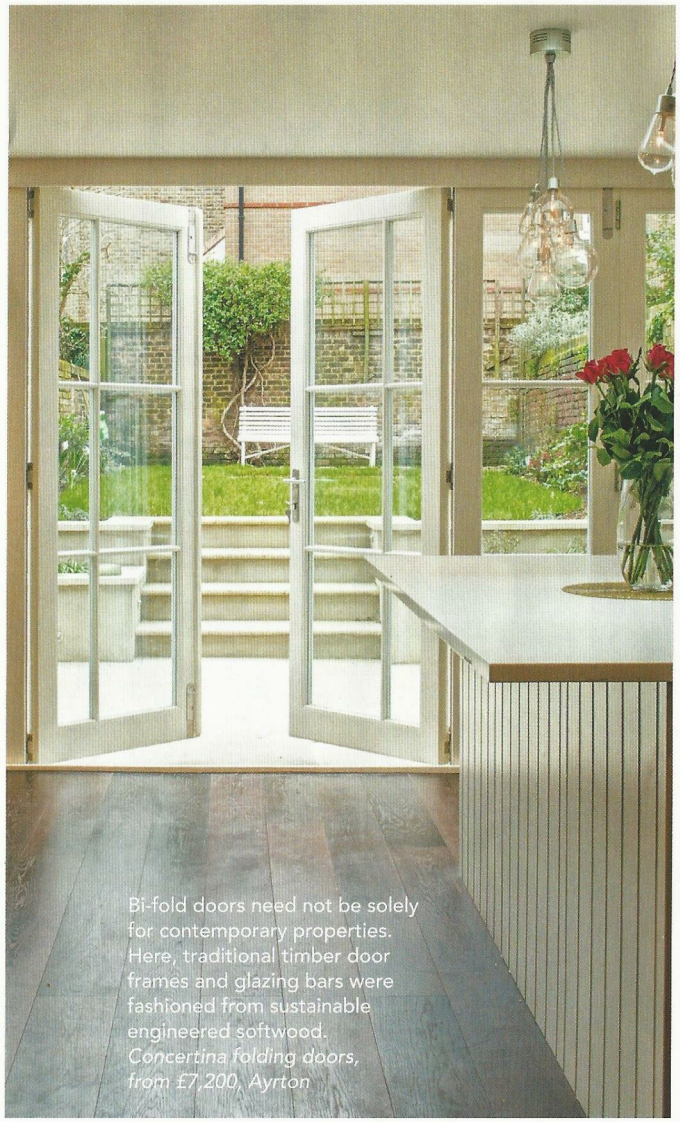
The principal motivation for opening up internal layouts is to create more flexible, inviting sociable spaces, in keeping with today's more informal, open-plan way of living.

Removing walls between rooms is a popular strategy when looking to improve the footprint of living, kitchen or family areas, enhance circulation and flow, and draw natural light into the core of the home. It can also allow for the integration of under-utilised areas such as hallways and corridors, transforming rooms into visually appealing and useable spaces. Those wishing to create additional space but still maintain openness and light, may wish to consider the application of mezzanines or galleries.

Of course, removing walls is not for the faint-hearted, as structural support and adherence to building regulations may well be required. However, rewards can be immense in terms of the multi-functional nature of such spaces. Light-filled areas that combine living, dining and kitchen zones and open up to the garden or terrace are often high on the list of priorities. Bear in mind that such layouts also require the setting up of well-considered, practical, functional and interlinking zones in order to create a coherent layout complete with clear access and flow.

ABOVE LEFT A roof lantern is a highly effective way of introducing natural light, warmth and style to a building or extension. *Bespoke engineered timber roof lantern by Westbury Windows & Joinery*

ABOVE RIGHT The open-tread staircase helps to ensure this entrance hall is flooded with light. *Bespoke staircase with hand-forged uprights, a leather handrail and treads made using reclaimed Polish oak vodka vats, from £22,000, Bisca*



Bi-fold doors need not be solely for contemporary properties. Here, traditional timber door frames and glazing bars were fashioned from sustainable engineered softwood. *Concertina folding doors, from £7,200, Ayrton*

Working with existing features or incorporating architectural details, such as beams, can help retain character in larger open-plan layouts. However, if a less modified approach is sought, consider retaining some of the structural framework in an older home or look to simply remove strategic sections of a wall, that again can help to maintain architectural integrity.

Mobile walls, in the form of sliding or pocket doors (where doors slide into the walls), allow for the opening up of the home on demand and increased flexibility in busier households where closing off areas might be necessary for noise-level control. "Steel-framed room partitions create a separation between rooms, whilst still allowing light to flow," Randall suggests. Simply enlarging doorways will also add significant benefits by means of borrowing space and light from adjoining rooms. Alternatively, try re-positioning doorways, in the style of a classic *enfilade* (where doors are aligned throughout a suite of rooms) for an unhindered vista throughout the home. This will make any property instantly appear more spacious and aid flow whilst still permitting the option of more intimate spaces.

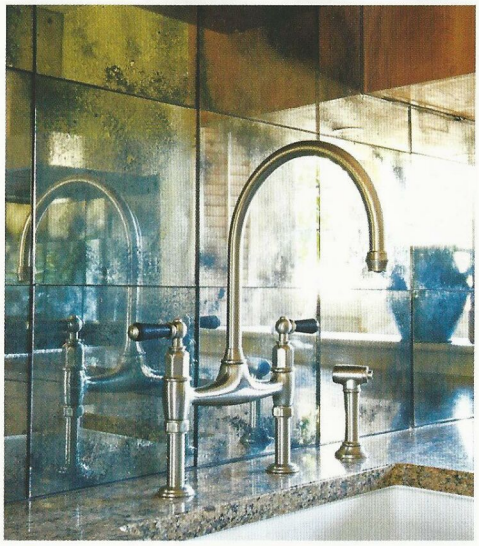
ON REFLECTION

Employing mirrored surfaces is a tried and tested method of enhancing light and creating an illusion of space within the home – an ideal solution for those wishing to improve interiors without committing to more complex changes

TOP RIGHT Interior designer Philippa Hart has used antiqued mirror panels and an ornate gilt mirror to create an inviting space full of light and depth. *Antiqued mirror glass, from £660 a square metre, Rupert Bevan*

MIDDLE RIGHT In this kitchen by Rebecca Hughes Interiors, antiqued mirror tiles produce a chic splashback, *For similar tiles, try Rough Old Glass*

BOTTOM The mirrored splashback, double-height ceiling, and roof lights cumulatively magnify the airy feel of this kitchen. *Bespoke kitchen, from £20,000, Naked Kitchens*



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Nicola Cox of Cox London sculpting an armchair. Specialist craftspeople at the company's workshop and foundry in London preserve skills and innovate, forging iron, casting bronze, milling and fabricating brass, steel and stone, sculpting in plaster and other materials, and blowing, cutting and silvering glass.

Support our SKILLS

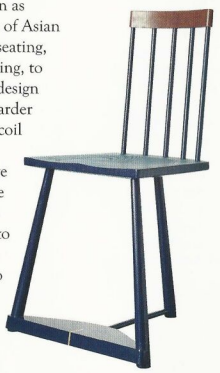
Will traditional interiors craft skills survive into the next generation? We look at concerns over their possible loss, and some initiatives being taken to ensure their survival

From hand-stitched upholstery to hand-forged ironwork, traditional craft skills are intrinsic to the highest level of interior design.

Making things in the time-honoured, often painstaking ways in which they have been produced for centuries is, for a faithful restoration or renovation (and often for new projects, too), considered the best way to honour our heritage and create buildings and interiors that will both look beautiful and stand the test of time. "With skilled craftsmanship, what you can achieve is a room or a piece of furniture that looks good for at least 100 years," says Andrew Petherick, director of Artichoke, designer and maker of bespoke luxury kitchens and interiors.

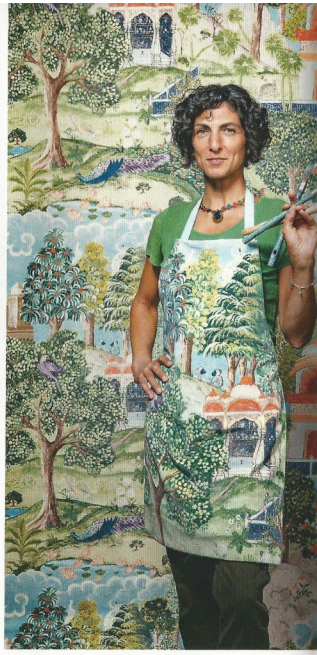
Such craftsmanship is, however, at risk in certain areas. According to the Heritage Crafts Association (HCA) Red List 2019 of Endangered Crafts, in danger of dying out are gilding, pargeting (also known as 'stuccoing'), japanning (a European imitation of Asian lacquerwork using shellac), chair caning and seating, passementerie and hand-block wallpaper making, to name a few. There are worries, too, amongst design professionals that other skills are becoming harder and harder to find. "Making upholstery with coil springs and hand-stitched horsehair is a rarified skill," says Christopher Howe of Howe London, who makes classic, bespoke furniture using traditional methods. "When I needed a local blacksmith to make a handrail in order to finish a project, it took me a year to find one. And to have a rush seat done we have to go to a guy who is close to retirement, and it's

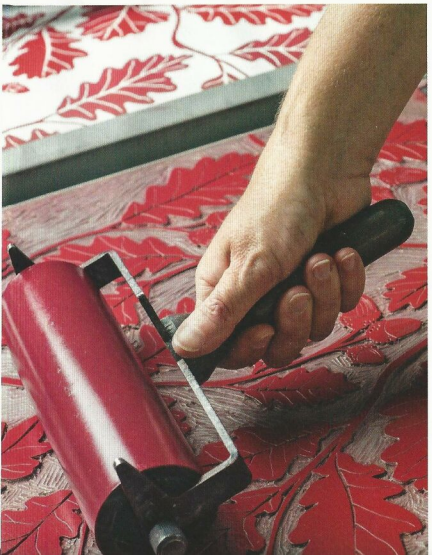
ABOVE The New Craftsmen gallery in London champions British craft and its makers. From left: Aimee Betts, textile and embroidery artist; Catarina Riccabona, loom weaver; Pedro da Costa Felgueiras, historic paint and lacquer expert; Otis Ingrams, leather designer; Rosalind Wyatt, textile artist and calligrapher.
BELOW Pilgrim's Chair, £2,930, Pedro da Costa Felgueiras, The New Craftsmen



Established in 1874, Watts of Westminster still uses the original handmade pearwood blocks and rollers to make wallpaper. This design is Malmesbury Stone Forest Green, made to order at £536 a roll

One of the UK's leading architectural sculptors, Geoffrey Preston makes decorative plasterwork and sculpture at his workshop in Devon. He also works in stucco (a form of plaster for exteriors), a technique that had its heyday in the eighteenth century and which is now very rarely used. ABOVE RIGHT Elaborate window treatments with swags, tails, decorative rope and trimmed leading edges, such as this design by Joanna Wood, take great skill to create.





LEFT Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust (QEST) Craft Scholar Anneliese Appleby designs and hand-prints wallpaper. Shown here is the lino block she carved for printing her Oak & Acorns wallpaper. FAR RIGHT Antiques dealer Max Rollitt's bespoke furniture range reproduces a few of the antique pieces he particularly loves. The range is made in the UK using sustainable materials and traditional skilled craftsmanship. *New Howard chair, £5,300, Max Rollitt*

really worrying, because he hasn't trained anybody else. I feel frustrated, because there is so much potential and so much that could be done, but it needs to be done quickly. We don't really know how close we are to losing it all. What sets us apart from the rest of the world? It's craftsmanship. It's one of this country's most important assets."

"It's important to keep these skills going," says Petherick. "Whilst we don't have a problem finding furniture-makers at the moment, we are anticipating that there will be problems in the next 10 to 15 years. I am quite worried about the future of traditional skills because young people aren't being introduced to making. It's not on their radar, but it should be."

Meanwhile, designer Joanna Wood, who is renowned for her classic English interiors, states that very few people now know how to make traditional swags and tails for classic window treatments. She points out that just one pair of elaborate curtains can involve at least a dozen different craft skills, including gilding the poles, weaving the fabric, making a box pelmet and creating trims, leading edges, pulls and tassels. She also observes that, whilst there are some very good people working in specialist paint finishes, there is only a small number of them left. "There was a time when every single wall was rag-rolled and, naturally, what followed was a reaction. The trend swung very far the other way," she says.

Changing fashions, specifically the desire in recent decades for minimal interiors, are just one reason why the demand for certain interiors craft skills have diminished. Price is another major factor: these are labour-intensive skills that have been learnt and honed over long periods of time and the resulting furnishings are, consequently, expensive – especially when seen in comparison to mass-produced items or cheaper imports from around the globe. Petherick says: "Only the very wealthy can afford to commission this type of work. This area is always going to be led by people with money, because you are buying work by someone who is highly trained and who delivers excellence." More than simple cost, however, is a general attitude towards value. Howe adds: "It's a perception of how much it costs. We will pay more for a solicitor, or for someone to fix our cars, than for a craftsperson who has trained for 30 years or more. People need to be re-educated – it's not just a question of reviving craftsmanship, but it's about how those skills are valued."

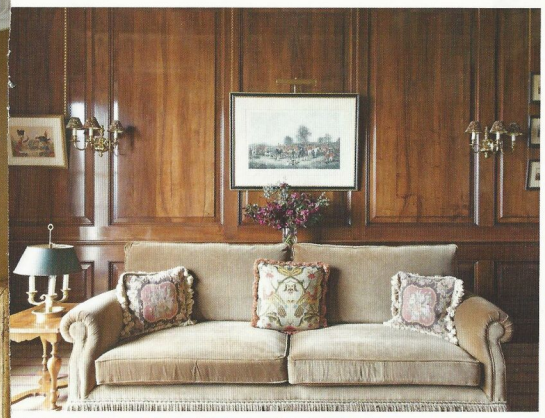
A further reason for concern is craft education. Daniel Carpenter, research manager for the HCA Red List, says that in addition to shrinking and precarious markets, "Practitioners are often ageing and cannot afford to take time away from production to train a successor whilst leaving that market unfulfilled for any length of time. Generally, they have received no government support for passing on their skills, as funded apprenticeship schemes are geared towards larger companies and industries." In schools, craft is "disappearing at an alarming rate", says Nicky Dewar, head of learning and talent development at the Crafts Council. "This is worrying, as it potentially means we won't have a new generation of professional makers – who work across a number of creative industries and others, including engineering, but it also denies young people the chance to learn skills that improve mental and physical well-being."

The Creative Industries Federation states that "access to creative and technical learning is in jeopardy," citing entry rates to creative subjects at Key Stage 4 (when pupils are aged 14 to 16) as having fallen to the lowest in a decade. What is more, a Crafts Council study found that the number of higher education craft courses halved between 2007/8 and 2015/16, with first degree student numbers in most disciplines also dropping, and with participation in some courses, such as metal crafts and silversmithing, vanishing in recent years.

The overall picture is not all doom and gloom, however. Demand for British luxury goods from abroad has "exploded" in recent years, according to Walpole, the official sector body for UK luxury. Meanwhile, at home, surveys have shown that British shoppers are trying to buy more British-made products, and saying that they would be willing to pay more for a product that they knew was made in this country. A backlash

ABOVE RIGHT & LEFT This wallpaper is the result of a collaboration between designer and painter of decorative interiors Melissa White (*above right*) and co-owner and creative director of Firmdale hotels Kit Kemp. *Mythical Land Mural, from £378 for a 1.40m x 6m panel, Kit Kemp collection, Andrew Martin*

Studio Indigo worked with decorative artists Mathew Bray and Matthew Collins to create this striking mustard wall. The walls were given a tinted scumble glaze (a very thin coat of opaque paint) and then stippled. A clear-gloss lacquer layered on top provides the lustrous effect.



ABOVE This wood-panelled library was designed by Artichoke and made from European walnut by the company's craftsmen at its workshop in Somerset. The panelling was finished by hand with French polish.

against cheap, 'fast' design – much as in fashion – seems to be underway. Backing that up, the tide may be turning in favour of a renaissance of classic English style, says Wood. "One of the delightful things is that some of these traditional skills are starting to make a comeback. For instance, we've just completed a build with a lot of bullion and fringes, which was lovely."

Petherick, too, has seen a return to classicism over the last five years and is finding that clients still very much want to invest in pieces that will last . Howe is clearly in agreement, saying, "Now is a great time to consider traditional skills, because people are thinking about what materials are used and what goes into the making of something. We are only just picking up momentum." Wood points out: "People want to buy less and buy better."

On closer inspection, there are many and various positive stories. Simon Orrell, for example, has revived the skill of working with mica and selenite, though his is the only company in this country doing so, and is one of the very few still making straw marquetry. Soane Britain is proud to have rescued the only remaining rattan-weaving workshop in the country by buying the machinery and raw materials and re-employing the exceptionally skilled craftsmen after it went into administration. With a rattan apprenticeship now established, Soane Britain hopes to have secured the future of the craft in Britain. And Artichoke is setting up an after-school training facility that will be free to children from Cheddar, where it is based, to introduce half a dozen or so young people to the use of hand tools in fine furniture making. "If we can light a spark in just one of the six, we can advise them where to go from there. And who knows, in future years we could have an apprentice," Petherick says.

Naturally, it is not just private companies who are leading the way. A range of organisations are also intimately involved, from the Crafts Council – which is currently championing bringing craft back into the classroom through its Make Your Future programme (involving 63 secondary schools across the UK) – to The Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust (QEST), which funds the training and education of talented and aspiring craftspeople. QEST is currently ▸

ABOVE LEFT Soane Britain owns the only rattan-weaving workshop left in the country. The Ripple Console is a cane-framed table with hand-woven rattan contours that take the form of draped linen.

ABOVE The leading edges of the curtains in this study are finished with trim handmade by Jessica Light. One of the UK's last remaining *passementerie* weavers, Light uses techniques dating back to the fifteenth century. Interior design by K & H Design.

ABOVE Made of hand-wrought iron by one of the few blacksmiths still able to work in this way, this four-poster bed reflects Christopher Howe's passion for preserving time-honoured methods. Only six beds a year are made, starting at £18,000 each, from Howe London.

RIGHT Aiveen Daly specialist upholstery studio in London uses luxurious embellishment techniques to adorn furniture and surfaces, such as the made-to-order Concertina bench shown here, for £9,233.

FAR RIGHT Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust Craft Scholar Melissa White adapts Elizabethan designs for today's settings, hand-painting surface patterns, such as this design on the walls of Swan House Bed & Breakfast in Hastings.

collaborating with The Prince's Foundation to deliver a series of hands-on training builds at heritage sites across the UK, and has also just published a book, *A Celebration of British Craftsmanship*, featuring 100 portraits and stories of QEST alumni from across the UK, representing more than 80 crafts, both traditional and contemporary. Added to which, of course, the Heritage Crafts Association endeavours to safeguard craft skills and knowledge for the future, advocating for the sector and making annual awards that celebrate and highlight the UK's traditional living crafts. As Joanna Wood says: "I don't think we need to wail and gnash our teeth. There's a huge amount going on towards saving British skills, and there are many, many people out there doing marvellously. I'm very, very positive. Craftsmanship is very much alive and kicking, and the future is bright." ■

How to support

- Support local craftspeople by buying and commissioning their work. Find them via the HCA's Makers Directory (*themakers.directory*) and the Crafts Council Directory (*craftscouncil.org.uk/directory*).
- Become a member of the HCA (*heritagecrafts.org.uk/get-involved*). This will help the Association become more financially sustainable as an independent charity, and build a community of like-minded individuals whose voice will becoming increasingly difficult for policymakers to ignore.
- Donate to the HCA's Endangered Crafts Fund (*heritagecrafts.org.uk/ecf*), which has been set up to ensure that the most at-risk heritage crafts in the UK are given the tools and support they need to thrive.

FEATURE KATHERINE SORRELL **PHOTOGRAPHS** P92 © ALUN CALLENDER; P95 (MAX ROLLITT) © TOM MANNION; P97 (STUDIO INDIGO) © JULIAN ABRAMS; P98 (HOWE LONDON) © PAUL MASSEY