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FEATURE KATE BURNETT PHOTOGRAPH MILO BROWN

A small matter

Increasing the sense of space in rooms that are small in stature is a design issue everyone wants to solve – we spoke to a few of our favourite interiors people to find out their solutions

Living rooms

Ways to enhance the feeling of space and character

CHOOSING FURNISHINGS

'Furnishings play an essential role in how a space is received. When working with less spacious living rooms, we recommend a considered curation of essential pieces – spreading a large rug as an anchor for the scheme and then building out from there, picking out tones from the rug and embellishing these throughout the room. A central table can create a focal point in a smaller room, best framed by inward-facing armchairs which help create depth and volume.'

JAMES THURSTAN WATERWORTH, founder, Thurstan

'Getting the furniture right in a living room is one of the biggest challenges in design. This needs to be a practical space, whether for watching TV or creating good conversation. What you choose needs to be stylish and contribute to the personality and harmony of the space. Inevitably, I find people often graduate to the smaller rooms of a house as they are more intimate and cosier, whereas big rooms can make you feel small and uncomfortable. Be bold with your little space and use large-scale furniture sparingly to give the illusion that the room is grander than it is.'

MIKE FISHER, creative director and founder, Studio Indigo

'People often assume they should buy small-scale furniture for small rooms, but that actually makes a space feel smaller. Don't be afraid to fill the room – get a rug that fully sits under all your furniture, and don't buy a love seat if you can actually fit a three-seater sofa in the room. Not only will buying larger scale furniture look better, it will also make your experience of the space so much more comfortable: win-win!'

SHEENA MURPHY, partner, Nune

'It is worth noting that a pair of armchairs can often take up more space than a small sofa. Certainly, a smaller armless sofa, complete with a little side table

to put down a drink, and a floor lamp rather than a table lamp can be a much better use of space.'

LONIKA CHANDE, founder and creative director, Lonika Chande

WORKING WITH COLOUR

'When a single colour is used on both walls and woodwork, a room suddenly feels bigger because having no contrast means that you are less aware of the confines of the space. The eye does not stop to register a second colour and glides straight out of the window to the view, blending the garden and room together.'

JOA STUDHOLME, colour curator, Farrow & Ball

USING PATTERN

'The living room is a communal space and should reflect everyone who lives in the house. It is a room where we socialise, entertain and relax so the design should be functional, but also fun. I like to play with pattern and colour here. For example, I might use patterned scatter cushions on a sofa alongside occasional chairs and pouffes upholstered in fabrics of your choice. These themes can then be echoed in accessories such as ornaments with colourful designs.'

EVA SONAIKE, creative director, Eva Sonaïke

CLEVER LIGHTING

'Some people feel the need to flood small spaces with ceiling lights to make them feel brighter and therefore larger. However, I think atmosphere and dimension can be added to small spaces with different levels of controlled lighting. The lowest level might be lamps on side tables; the next would be lamps on a desk, console or chest. Finally, add fewer rather than more directional ceiling lights, positioned closer to the walls and angled away from the centre of the room to create a feature glow on, for example, a piece of wall art.'

CLAIRE SA, director, De Rosee Sa →



Studio Indigo (top left) believes using some large furnishings evokes a feeling of grandeur. In this modest room (top right) Salvesen Graham fit in a work area. This scheme by Nune (bottom left) includes a striped rug to create the illusion of a wider space. Thurstan studio used a table with chairs facing towards it to establish depth and volume (bottom right)

PHOTOGRAPHS (STUDIO INDIGO) ANDREW BEASLEY; (SALVESEN GRAHAM) SIMON BROWN; (THURSTAN) SIMON BROWN

Hallways

Arriving or leaving, the hall's decoration sets a mood

WORKING WITH COLOUR

'Entrance halls should make a statement about the house and owners as well as being a welcoming space. Small spaces can be treated in a grand way – "be bold" is my advice. Large details can open up the space, such as using double doors but making them as tall as possible. A pair of facing mirrors helps create the illusion of more space and adds a bit of glamour. Painting the space a light colour will not make it feel bigger. Use strong colour to make a statement and give personality. Lastly, we are great fans of polished plaster in hallways – it's practical, tough and has a wonderful reflective quality that makes the space shimmer.'

MIKE FISHER, creative director and founder, Studio Indigo

'A small hallway can often be on the dark side. Light colours will not make a dark space light, but good colours will make it interesting. So go with the vibrant mid to dark colours that can be lifted and lightened with lamplight. Try deep blues such as Azurite, sophisticated London Brown or a deeper neutral such as our warm Clove.'

EDWARD BULMER, interior designer and founder, Edward Bulmer Natural Paint

'When dealing with a small or dark hall it's best to embrace what you have rather than fight it. Paint it a strong colour that will thrill you and your guests when you arrive at the house and make the rooms off it feel bigger and lighter.'

JOA STUDHOLME, colour curator, Farrow & Ball

'Even if it is only a space of transition, the hallway is the first room you enter in most houses, so for me it's vital to truly make an entrance – you still want to feel good when entering or leaving the house. Colours are scientifically proven to enhance our moods and

I love integrating bold colours in the hallway, such as bright pinks and rich blues. These, combined with sturdy runners and a beautifully decorated mantelpiece, are a great way to signal what to expect in the rest of the house.'

EVA SONAIKE, creative director, Eva Sonaike

USING PATTERN

'Hallways can often be narrow with little natural light so consider using colour and pattern to create a design scheme that brings warmth and light to the space. The hallway is a fantastic place to create a first impression for guests, but also the first area you enter when returning home, so consider how you want your home to make you feel: calm and cocooned or cheerful and vibrant? Don't forget to consider the views into the hallway from other rooms, how much do you see and how will the design you choose for the hallway flow into the rest of the house?'

RUTH MOTTERSHEAD, creative director, Little Greene

'By using patterned ceiling tiles in small spaces such as hallways you can draw the eye up, thus making the space feel bigger.'

ELNAZ NAMAKI, interior designer, Elnaz Namaki Studio

CLEVER LIGHTING

'Source a colourful vintage lighting pendant. It can add so much character and warmth to a small space such as a nook in a hallway.'

ELNAZ NAMAKI, interior designer, Elnaz Namaki Studio

CAREFUL ACCESSORISING

'A beautifully detailed wall of lightly antiqued mirror can be a great way to expand a tight hallway. Placing a console and lamps in front of a large mirror softens the coldness of the mirror material.'

CLAIRE SA, director, De Rosee Sa →



PHOTOGRAPHS (ELNAZ NAMAKI) JAMES McDONALD; (STUDIO INDIGO) ANDREW BEASLEY

Mirrors will always help to enhance the sense of space, as in this De Rosee Sa designed hall (top left). A glazed wall, like in this Elnaz Namaki scheme (top right), will also open up a hallway. Studio Indigo (bottom left) used a statement runner and light to draw attention away from the narrow dimensions. Farrow & Ball's Joa Studholme advises embracing a dark hall with a strong colour (bottom right)

Bathrooms

The best compact designs combine charm and practicality

WORKING WITH COLOUR

'Painting fitted furniture in a bathroom is a good opportunity to introduce stronger colours complemented with neutral walls or vice versa. Painted panelling is still very popular and we love combining our beautiful stronger colours Malahide or Invisible Green with exquisite wallpapers. Painting an old bath is another good way to inject some colour and our paints are perfect for traditional cast-iron baths: colours such as our earthy browns Brick or Etruscan Brown are favourites.'

EDWARD BULMER, interior designer and founder, Edward Bulmer Natural Paint

USING PATTERN

'We often find using mosaics within an alcove helps to optimise smaller shower spaces and a gloss finish adds to this illusion of grander proportions, reflecting natural light throughout the room. I recommend pairing two distinct mosaic designs within the space, thus creating a point of interest where these verticals meet and then setting them against a cool neutral paint colour that works to open up the bathroom.'

JAMES THURSTAN WATERWORTH, founder, Thurstan

'Of course bathrooms are practical and functional spaces but they don't need to be utilitarian. Be adventurous and give the space personality. A bold scheme will provide a conversation piece with guests and friends, particularly in a powder room. Pattern can be introduced through wallpaper, fabric or tiles. Complement your patterns with good light – in a powder room it can be atmospheric but in bathrooms you need light and plenty of it.'

MIKE FISHER, creative director and founder, Studio Indigo

'Bathrooms are somewhere you can indulge in strong pattern and colour without upsetting the

flow of your overall interior design. For a luxurious haven to unwind in, consider adding a textural element with the use of wallpaper. Our wallpapers can be used in well-ventilated bathrooms on walls that don't come into direct contact with water.'

RUTH MOTTERSHEAD, creative director, Little Greene

CLEVER LIGHTING

'In a small shower room it is crucial not to underestimate the importance of good lighting. This should always include decorative wall lights either side of a mirror to provide a softer, more flattering light for the face as well as a decorative feature.'

MARY GRAHAM AND NICOLE SALVESEN, founders, Salvesen Graham

SMART STORAGE

'When it comes to adding storage in small bathrooms think high-level rather than bulky floor-standing vanity units. I always go the extra mile to keep the floor as clean and empty as possible, with wall-mounted loos, vanities and low-level accessories such as toilet brushes or bins. This means thinking cleverly about storage and making the most of any niches, mirror storage units and shelves. We love the Oval Box mirror from Ceramica Cielo for its design credentials, friendly price-tag and generous storage.'

IRENE GUNTER, founder and creative director, Gunter & Co

'My bathroom is my sanctuary. I like the space clean and uncluttered, so storage solutions are an essential part of a good design here. If possible, opt for integrated storage so that the energy can flow freely. When designing a bathroom from scratch, consider all possible options. In my bathroom, a full-height mirrored cabinet spans an entire wall, providing ample hidden storage for all my beauty essentials.'

EVA SONAIKE, creative director, Eva Sonaike →

The earthy colour in this small but decorative bathroom (top right) is from Edward Bulmer Natural Paint. Kelly Mindell, founder of Studio DIY, also advises using colour and pattern (bottom left) to distract from the size of a room. The border tiles in this Studio Indigo space bring attention to the bathroom's height (bottom right)



PHOTOGRAPHS (STUDIO INDIGO) JULIAN ABRAMS