

COVER STORY

Secrets of Soho House's queen of style

Redesigning your home? In the first of her monthly columns for Bricks & Mortar, Linda Boronkay, the design director for the luxury group, shares her tips on where to start

With your home, there are no hard and fast rules, something that people will be surprised to hear me say, but it's the truth. You have to fill it with things that make it comfy — and make you happy.

I love colour. It can make a massive difference and can really help a room in Britain, where the light can be grey. But, at the same time, I feel that colour is also a very personal thing. I would not say to anyone that they should choose a particular shade because it's the fashionable choice this season.

Rather, I would say to that person, look in your wardrobe and see what colours you like to wear. Or take the colours in a favourite piece of art or a rug and use those as a starting point around which you build your colour scheme. If there has to be a rule, it is to add character to your rooms through interesting objects.

When we refresh the decor of a club, there will be one piece, such as a vintage rug, that we will retain and use as the building block, the inspiration for the refitting.

Anyone who is trying to give their home a new look should follow this approach with an object, an artwork, or piece of furniture that says something to you, that goes to your heart.

I am a collector of art and antique pieces and when I want to give my place



A bathroom in a New York home, designed by Linda Boronkay, below and on the cover, the design director of Soho House. Right: the company's club in Amsterdam

a makeover I will use them as the centrepiece for the changes. An oversized floor lamp is another great way to create a new mood.

A bathroom or a cloakroom is a good place to experiment with colour; you can move on later to the larger spaces, where you can make big changes with paint shades and wallpaper.

I am a fan of painting a hall in a deep colour in a gloss paint to create a sense of drama. I am also a fan of wainscoting, where you line the lower part of a wall in a hallway with panelling.

Anaglypta, a wallpaper that can be painted, is another way to give texture and interest to a hall. The name of this

paper comes from the Greek words for raised and cameo.

I am also keen on painting floors — pull up your fitted carpets and paint your floorboards. If this isn't for you, swap carpet for sisal, which gives a neutral background, but also provides texture and serves as a backdrop for rugs. I like layering rugs on top of carpets.

If you are apprehensive about colour on walls in a sitting room or a hall — or even a cloakroom — go for curtains in a fabric with an interesting pattern that draws the eye.

A good way to refresh your kitchen is by adding new handles to the units. Another quick — and cheap — way to update a room is by replacing the feet on armchairs and sofas. Adding mirrors will open a room up and bring natural light in — I always use a lot of mirrors. For me plants are the finishing touch. But again, I wouldn't start to lay down rules about which type of plant.



Why we all want our home to look like a members' club

Today bars, hotels, restaurants and, above all, private members' clubs are the most compelling influence on domestic decor, turning into the source of the large and the small interiors trends of the 21st century, such as metro tiles, dark paint shades, polished-concrete flooring and mismatched chairs at dining tables.

As these establishments have deliberately adapted to be more home-like, people have wanted to recreate the vibe in their properties, seeking to reproduce, in particular, the aesthetic created by Linda Boronkay, 36. Boronkay has for the past three years been the design director of Soho House, the private members' club group.

Soho House has 23 clubs in the UK, Europe, North America and Asia, with the most recent opening in Mumbai. Despite this global reach, the Boronkay look is anything but uniform. When she is creating the interior of a new club, or masterminding a refit, a key influence is the former life of the building in which the club is housed. As Boronkay puts it: "Our aim is that our clubs become the physical manifestation of the social fabric, historical and cultural heritage of every place in which we have houses."

The style of White City House in west London, which opened last year, reflects the site's past as the home of British television. The decor showcases the architecture's mid-century optimism and swagger, in the layout of the sitting rooms and restaurants and in smaller details, such as pictures and floor coverings. The rug in one of the club's spaces is woven to resemble the BBC test card, which was shown when no programmes were being broadcast.

Another of Boronkay's inspirations is her childhood in Hungary — her parents filled the family home with artworks and antiques. A mix of vintage and contemporary characterises her work on hospitality and residential projects for past employers, who include such leading names as Tom Dixon, Martin Brudnizki and Tara Bernerd. Anne Ashworth

GARDENS

One of the strongest messages from the Chelsea Flower Show is that a smart garden should not only delight the eye, but also play its part in reducing air pollution. The designers of the show gardens are as keen to emphasise the biodiversity and eco-credentials of their plots as the selection of blooms. Andrew Duff, the designer of the Savills and David Harber garden, points to the environmental benefits and pollution-absorbing powers of plants, including the green wall of ferns and grasses, and hornbeam trees.

At the heart of the garden, which resembles a woodland glade, is a luminous pool that not only offsets a bronze sculpture by Harber, but is also an example of eco-aware design. Duff explains: "We did not use any environmentally damaging cleaning agents or dyes in the water to make it reflective, which is what some people have done in the past. Instead we harvested leaves in autumn and used them to line the bottom of the pool. This makes the pool naturally reflective."

The Chelsea gardens are also likely to alter our perceptions of weeds. The planting list at the Savills and David Harber garden features *Ranunculus acris*, or common buttercup.

Outdoor living

The glorious summer of 2018, with its record-breaking temperatures, seems to have changed the way we use our gardens, with more demand for outdoor living spaces, according to Simon Burvill of Gaze Burvill, a furniture and design company. The shepherd's hut retains its allure, and rising fast in popularity, spurred by a growing interest in wellness, are outdoor kitchens, pods and treehouses — for children and adults.

People also want sustainably produced furniture that is elegant and suits alfresco entertaining. At the outdoor furniture displays at Chelsea the talk is all about planet-friendly materials, and pieces that are made to last. The wood used in some of Green Meadow's outdoor dining settings has been aged for up to 20 years to give it a silver look and increase its durability.

Gaze Burvill's garden at Chelsea showcases how for £135,000 it is possible to create three outdoor "rooms", with a covered dining area, sitting area and kitchen with a grill, drinks fridge and sound system (£32,000). The Dekton work surfaces are weather resistant, while the units can be configured to include a sink, fridge and drawers for £35,700. "In relatively little space you can create an extra dimension to your home, which will undoubtedly add value," Burvill says.

The treehouses at Chelsea are not reserved for children. One of the most impressive designs is Blue Forest's luxury prefabricated treehouse, which is launching in partnership with Chewton Glen Hotel & Spa in the New Forest. Inspiration for the five-part treehouse



The Morgan Stanley garden by Chris Beardshaw. Below: Rose Charlton, four, with her mum, Nadine, beside the playhouse in the Wallgarden and Sarah Eberle garden

Sustainability and the rise of the treehouse

came from wanting to "connect with your inner child", according to Andy Payne, the founder of Blue Forest. Priced at £200,000, the treehouse, built by hand using oak and cedar wood, has two spiral staircases, a lounge area, a full kitchen and a cosy reading nook. From July it will become a children's club at the Hampshire hotel, but for those wanting one of their own, the company has fairytales castles starting at £29,995.

Children keen on less boisterous play will be wowed by the miniature Hampshire Cottage that takes centre stage in the Wallgarden and Sarah Eberle-designed show garden. For £30,000 the cottage has a miniature Aga (for play purposes only) and Sanderson wallpaper, and is made of mini bricks and tiles, which Nadine Charlton, the founder of Wallgarden, discovered at a reclamation yard in Surrey.



Children

Outdoor play is one of the big trends of the show, championed by the Duchess of Cambridge with her magical Back to Nature Garden, designed in conjunction with the Royal Horticultural Society.

The Duke and Duchess's three children helped to gather hazel sticks, twigs, leaves and moss for the den, which was inspired by the one at Anmer Hall, their country house in Norfolk, while the garden also features a camp fire and treehouse.

"It took two years for us to get the rights from Aga to use their design and logo," Charlton says. Wallgarden's designs start at £5,000 for a simple children's potting shed. Last year it won plaudits at Chelsea for its miniature London townhouse. This year the garden is a mini replica of the jeweller Pragnell's showroom in Mayfair. Charlton says that most of her clients' children are about four years old, and if she can get them to play outdoors, that's no bad thing.

Children are encouraged to take an interest in growing and planting at Jody Lidgard's Montessori Centenary Garden. Featuring an old shipping container painted luminous pink, the garden focuses on urban farming, and features hydroponic trays in which children can grow salad leaves and small vegetables without soil.

Leonor Stjepic, the chief executive of the Montessori Group, says that, according to the World Health Organisation, children spend 90 per cent of their time indoors. She believes that should change, with children encouraged to learn about where food comes from. "What this garden shows," she says, "is you don't need huge amounts of space to get children involved and planting."



The Gaze Burvill garden, designed by Ross Allan, showcases its oak outdoor furniture

Trend alert Vases



▲ Green recycled-glass vase, £10 Urban Outfitters



◀ Pink and gold-dotted vase, £53.99 Trouva



◀ Mackenzie olive-green glass jar vase, £25 Habitat



▶ Ceramic vase, £19.99 Zara Home

Compiled by Victoria Brzezinski

▶ Van Gogh Irises vase, £40 John Lewis & Partners



▲ Recycled-glass San Miguel origami vase, £25 Liberty London



▼ Blue ceramic vase by Bitossi, £75 Artemest



▶ Eyes chalky blue and pink vase, £25 Habitat



▼ Strøm ceramic vase by Raawii, £45 Matchesfashion.com