

'We need real change to fire safety guidance'

Prudence Ivey

EDITOR



A breakthrough, of sorts, in the cladding crisis feels like a positive start to 2022. Housing Secretary Michael Gove's promise that no leaseholder in a building above 11 metres (around four to six storeys) will "ever face any costs for fixing dangerous cladding" is progress at last towards shifting the terrible financial burden of this four-and-a-half-year-old scandal off leaseholders. Inevitably there are large gaps in the new plans; myriad fire safety

issues now found to blight buildings beyond the original ACM cladding found at Grenfell have yet to be addressed and strange loopholes around things such as balconies and windows must be dealt with. But as a statement of intent it's a step in the right direction towards rectifying the mistakes of the past. However, many developers behind buildings that have now been found to have safety issues followed the building regulations to the letter. And yet no changes are being proposed to government guidance to ensure that all new homes are built safely. Without this, and a properly independent body to enforce rules, architects, developers, insurers and mortgage lenders must take their chances on the limited, optional guidance available. We cannot allow a pathological aversion to "red tape" to endanger more lives.



MID-RANGE
The curvaceous and compact bluebell-shaped lamp glows for seven hours between charges and has a dimmer function. Pantop portable lamp, in light blue, £102, by Verpan from Skandium

SAVE
Named after the Spanish word for mushroom, this joyful little lamp is an inexpensive and colourful way to brighten your home for up to 10 hours. Setago table light, in rust and thunder, £85, from Holloways of Ludlow

SAVE
This colour-block design from HAY can be used indoors or out and will give eight hours of illumination. HAY PC portable lamp, in dusty red, £71.20, from Made in Design

Just one thing

No socket? No problem — these stylish, cordless lamps will brighten any dark corner. By **Eleanor Cording-Booth**



SPLURGE
The retro Seventies styling of this glossy lamp comes in a handful of playful colours and the domed shade can be tilted up or down. Elmetto table lamp, in green, £226, by Martinelli Luce from Made in Design



MID-RANGE
Smaller than its otherwise identical wired counterpart, the portable Flowerpot lamp is a modern version of this 1968 design classic. Flowerpot table lamp VP3, in mustard, £145, by &Tradition from Monologue



MID-RANGE
The Bellhop design from lighting specialist Flos will fit anywhere with its neat size and punchy 24 hours of light between charges. Bellhop table lamp, in brick red, £161, by Flos from The Conran Shop

Inside man

> By **Jermaine Gallacher**

Our new interiors columnist, and London's off-beat style guru, says it's time to embrace the DIY ethos and individuality of Nineties Changing Rooms



MATT WRITTLE

What is good taste? Who has it? Who decides who has it? I say, "Who cares?"

Flicking through the style sections and design blogs, everything's just a bit too "lovely". It's all so well-mannered and, frankly, bloody boring. It's high time we stick two fingers up to good taste and start celebrating individual style, creativity and the unashamedly bad.

I have once or twice been called a tastemaker over the years, which I've always found hilarious — I've bought and sold some right old tat in my time and made some dubious decorating decisions. For example, I once painted all the doors in my basement flat a dark gloss mustard colour with pastel pink panel inserts. Needless to say, they didn't last long. But I'm a firm believer in applying the same principles to decorating a room or designing a candlestick as I do going out for the night: go hard or go home. You'll always deal with the hangover the next day and you can always paint over any total disasters. That said, don't ever call me a maximalist; 'bad' taste should never be a conscious decision.

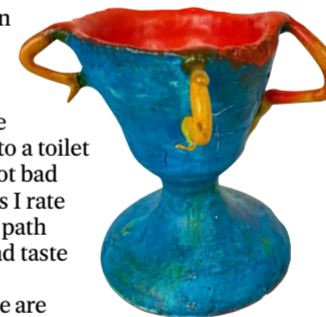
I always think of that episode of Changing Rooms when Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen found an old toilet seat, painted it up to look like a scarab beetle and hung it over a sarcophagus bed.

If that's not going for it then I don't know what is. Totally naff-off naff, some might say. But to this day it's one of the most creative things I've ever seen done to a toilet seat. Does this mean I've got bad taste? Probably. The truth is I rate anyone treading their own path with conviction. If that's bad taste then mine is the pits.

The good news is there are like-minded, free-thinking designers out there not giving two figs about what's trendy, tasteful or Instagrammable.

Take my friend Viola Lanari, who makes fanciful plaster creations including spiral lamp bases. When she's not sculpting those she's painting up fabulous abstract lampshades. I know oversized, pleated yuppie shades on wavy bases are all the rage right now but for my money, Viola's pieces are much more fun. Or if, like me, you're bored to sobs of oh-so-correct tablescapes, look no further than Miranda Keyes; her spiky goblets are a tonic in a sea of mottled Murano-style tumblers.

If you don't have much of a budget, unleash your inner Llewelyn-Bowen. There'll always be a drab little side table that needs a face lift. Line up your paint pots and go wild creating something original. Your friends might think it's a touch eccentric but I think we must all dare to be different.



Dare to be different: Jermaine Gallacher in his Borough studio, top. Inset, a Viola Lanari lamp and Miranda Keyes goblet

The Gardener's Notebook

These easy gardening resolutions will ensure you end this year as strong as you start — with a healthy planet and bank balance to boot, says George Hudson



DANIEL HAMBURY

MAKE A PLAN

It could be as simple as a list of things you want to grow this year or places to visit, or it could be as elaborate as a full scheme for the pots on your balcony, or a plot to tear up your lawn to create an urban jungle. Once you've got it down on paper, break it up by month. Seeds need sowing in spring so order them now, the magnolias at Kew are (normally) at their best in March, garden centres have the best plants at the beginning of summer. Planning ahead will help you get the best out of each season.

NO GARDEN? NO PROBLEM

London has more parks and gardens than nearly any other major city. Many of these public spaces have a friends' or volunteer group that regularly garden and maintain the space. You can often just drop in when you have the time and unlike with a private garden, if you go on holiday, you won't return to a plant graveyard. Make it a resolution to check the goparks.london website to find your nearest.

GET MORE ECO AWARE

Gardening is green, right? Not always. Plants are transported from all over the world, they're often wrapped in single-use plastic and have been sprayed with chemicals to make them look perfect. But you can avoid this. Learn to take cuttings and beg and borrow from friends, family and gardening neighbours. Plants you've reared yourself often last longer than a £3 supermarket impulse buy and are definitely more

Get growing: George Hudson says now's the time to get your garden plans in order

satisfying. If stealing is more your thing, walk around a local area with designer front gardens, and "steal" ideas (not plants!) for projects you can replicate at home. Avoid plastic pots by up-cycling food packaging. Just make plenty of holes in the bottom for good drainage.

BE MINDFUL

The garden is the perfect place to implement that digital detox. Nature will teach you patience, growing at its own pace. There is a rhythm to it; a few cold days will halt any progress but when the sun is out, spring happens fast. Take the time to watch from your window or a park bench noting the changes each day and sync yourself with the world around you, not your smartwatch.

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