

WHAT YOU CAN DO...

- Improve your space with these simple tips from Nicola:
- De-clutter – clear out what you don't need.
 - Change cushion covers.
 - Add candles and fresh flowers.
 - Use mirrors to open up spaces. If you put a mirror opposite a window it gives the illusion of another window, doubling the space.
 - Alter the lighting – add side lamps or use dimmer switches to change the mood and make a room more cosy.



Left and below, examples of Nicola's designs



WHAT NOT TO DO...

- Avoid these common interior design pitfalls:
- If you want to add colour, don't just paint a wall red. A feature wall of paper is fine but it is best to keep the background neutral and add colour in the accents rather than going over the top.
 - Don't keep everything the same. Playing it too safe by keeping everything beige and neutral is just as bad.
 - Don't display thousands of objects – too many nik-naks are too much for the eye to take in.

Louisa Emery learns about uplifting colours, retro furniture and blurring lines between inside and out

Injecting the wow factor

Decorating your home no longer means a trip to the local DIY store, dusting off the pasting table and hanging a couple of rolls of paper.

In 2011 the discerning home owner wants their rooms to have the wow factor so they're calling in the experts.

Interior designer Nicola Burt, who runs her own business Finishing Touch, said: "People want to see more colour in their space. They want to mix and match and be more eclectic."

"They want their home to be a haven and an expression of personality."

With such a broad palette of colours available, it is up to Nicola to guide her clients towards something that will suit them and she is seeing some familiar trends this year as well as a few new ones.

She said: "The folksy styles are still popular, people are still into feature wallpapers but they want to mix it up more, showing off possessions that mean something to them."

"Because of the financial climate,



Interior designer Nicola Burt says big trends at the moment are for older pieces of furniture up-cycled by adding colour accents

people want uplifting colours – strong purples, aubergines, lime green, wall papers with graphic, blocky prints."

She said there was a definite nod to the '70s but with a 2011 twist.

Nicola said: "There is a big trend

in up-cycling, taking '70s and '50s retro furniture and customising it "For example you could take a '50s sideboard and colour one of the drawers. There are a lot of people selling such pieces for a lot of money."

Nicola sources bespoke pieces for her clients and suggested eBay was a good starting point for retro furniture and Lotts Road for antiques. She said Greenwich Market was fantastic for finished pieces.

When designing a room Nicola begins by looking at the space, how the windows are dressed and how much light there is. She finds out what people want to keep and gets to know their lifestyle.

She said: "I help them create their ideal room so that they feel like it's theirs."

"I want them to feel that they can move things, not so the room is designed within an inch of its life. I ask them what their budget is and more often than not they don't know."

"If they see something they really like they will often spend more on that and cut back elsewhere."

Nicola can do a consultation starting from scratch or come in

“ I want clients to feel that they can move things, not that the room is designed within an inch of its life

to finish a room when a client is unsure of how to complete a new space.

She said: "Simply painting a room a softer colour can transform people's lives."

"People are proud to bring guests into their space whereas they might have been embarrassed before."

Simple things can totally change a space and how you feel about it."

The other big change in 2011 is that the distinction between house and garden has blurred.

Nicola said: "Anyone doing work with a kitchen space will have doors out to the garden. They are creating another entertaining room, whether by continuing the kitchen tiles out into the garden or having decking at the same height as the kitchen floor before the grass."

For more information about the services Nicola offers go to finishingtouchlondon.com, call 07766 133 727 or email info@finishingtouchlondon.com.