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The art of ILLUSION

Interior designers and experts reveal how to add magic with paint effects, mirrors and hidden elements



INSIDER KNOWLEDGE

LEFT Kelling Designs clad one wall entirely in mirrored glass to enhance the sense of space and light in this sitting room design.

BELOW LEFT Emma Deterding, founder of Kelling Designs.

THIS IMAGE & BELOW

A bespoke antiqued mirror by Dominic Schuster (*below*) runs all the way up to the ceiling to enhance natural light and add a sense of height and grandeur to this entrance hall.

Thriving on creating homes that surprise and delight, interior designers and experts in their field use their skills to make the most of any space. To add to the impact of a scheme, they employ a host of artistic and design devices to introduce the illusion of more space, enhance natural light or conceal surprise features.

Mirror mirror

Antiqued mirror glass specialist Dominic Schuster understands how mirrors can be used to trick the eye and transform a space. "Placement is crucial," he says. "To maximise the impression of space, place mirrors opposite windows or close to other sources of ▶





“Long, vertical mirrors can draw the eye upward, making a room seem taller, while horizontal ones can make a narrow room appear wider.”

Dominic Schuster, antiqued mirror glass specialist



ABOVE In this design by Studio Vero, walls have been hand-painted to resemble marquetry to accentuate the scale of the room. **LEFT** Romanis Brihi, co-founder of Studio Vero.

light, which will not only make a room feel instantly brighter and more open but will also reflect outdoor scenery giving a sense of depth.” Long, vertical mirrors can draw the eye upward, making a room seem taller, while horizontal ones can make a narrow space appear wider. Large, unframed panels of mirror can create a seamless look, blending into the walls and creating the illusion of a larger room.

When cladding a wall in mirror, Emma Deterding, founder and creative director of Kelling Designs, says, “You want to make sure that the reflection isn’t just a blank wall and actually adds something more to the space. Hanging lights in front of mirrors is another great way of reflecting more light back into the room, making it feel bigger and brighter – just be sure to check that the light has a flat back so that it can be fixed directly on to the mirror, with no reflections of fittings, wires or anything else unsightly.”



TOP & ABOVE LEFT
 Panelled doors open
 and slide into side
 pockets to reveal a
 surprise bar in this
 design by Tamsyn
 Mason.



ABOVE In this
 design by Guy
 Goodfellow,
 decorative artists
 Mathew Bray
 and Matthew
 Collins painted
 and stencilled the
 columns to look like
 marble inlaid with
 decorative mosaic.

RIGHT Guy
 Goodfellow and
 creative director
 Steven Rodell.



Pictures and curtain poles can also be hung directly on to the surface of the mirror, creating a floating illusion, but care needs to be taken to find the precise position before the mirror is cut for fixings.

While framed mirrors can also be used to make a room feel larger, Dominic Schuster has more suggestions. "Mirrored furniture, including smaller pieces, can be a lovely way to introduce more light and interest into a room, especially in spaces where it isn't feasible to install entirely mirrored walls or large panels of glass," he says. A mirrored back to a bar cabinet or an alcove can add depth, while antiqued, gilded, smoked and bronzed finishes can introduce glamorous warmth and softness.

Art of deception

Paint effects and murals are also useful in creating illusion, as is *trompe l'oeil*, an artistic effect which deceives the eye into thinking a flat surface is three-dimensional. Known for richly layered, expressive interiors, Guy Goodfellow enjoys using decorative paint effects to add imaginative elements to his designs. In his drawing room for WOW!house at the Design Centre, Chelsea Harbour ▶

Paint effects can be used to add unexpected detail, enhance a mood or add playful interest?

Guy Goodfellow, interior designer



‘Central to this transformation is a bespoke bookcase that conceals a hidden entrance to a snug’

Lauren Gilthorpe, interior designer



this year, painted and stencilled columns created the look of real marble inlaid with decorative mosaic. “Paint effects can be used to add unexpected detail, enhancing a mood or simply to add playful interest,” he says. “Unless you are a confident artist yourself, it is important to work with a painter whose work you admire, because, while you can explain the look you want to create, you also need to give the artist some freedom of expression to create real magic.”

As well as adding fun and character, paint effects can be used as an alternative to sourcing rare, unusual or impractical materials, while murals and *trompe l’oeil* can add decorative delight. Interior designer Jo Aynsley of Jeffreys Interiors commissioned an artist to paint horses on a merry-go-round, making the most of a curved wall and adding charm to a child’s bedroom design. Studio QD opted for a painted *trompe l’oeil* design to suggest real wall panelling, ceiling detailing and shelves filled with books in a new-build room which was previously largely featureless. Romanos Brihi, co-founder of Studio Vero, chose a hand-painted design to resemble marquetry, adding something unique to the walls of a contemporary living room in a recent project. “It is such a vast space, we wanted to find a wall finish which brought the room to life,” he says. “The technique plays with the scale of the room and the colour palette of blue, teal and off-white shimmer in the light that pours in through the windows.”



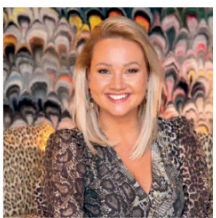
ABOVE Studio QD added playful character to this holiday house bedroom with painted panelling and bookshelves.

ABOVE Jena Quinn and Lucy Derbyshire, co-founders of Studio QD.



OPPOSITE RIGHT
Interior designer
Lauren Gilberthorpe.
ABOVE A hidden
door in this bespoke
bookcase opens to
access a cosy snug
in this design by
Lauren Gilberthorpe.

RIGHT Jo Aynsley
of Jeffreys Interiors.
FAR RIGHT Jo
Aynsley used the
unusual curved wall
of this bedroom to
create the illusion of
a magical painted
merry-go-round.



Secret entrances

Concealed doorways are another way to introduce illusion to a design. "A hidden door will always add an element of intrigue," says interior designer Lauren Gilberthorpe, who reconfigured the ground floor of a house by transforming a neglected boot room into a snug, tailored for family movie nights and quiet relaxation. "Central to this transformation is a bespoke bookcase in the living room – it not only serves as an elegant storage solution but also conceals a hidden entrance to the snug," she explains. A fun, secret space like this can be what Gilberthorpe describes as "a private retreat away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life", but it can also be eminently functional – hiding away wardrobe storage or an appliance-packed utility room, for example. ▶

