

COUNTRY LIFE

EVERY WEEK

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CORONATION ISSUE



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Annabelle King/Country Life Picture Library; Alamy; John Holder



How to be wowed

This year’s WOW!house offers a rare opportunity to see the work of some of the world’s leading interior designers brought to life. Amelia Thorpe offers a sneak preview



Above: Christian Bense’s De Le Cuona Bedroom. Below: Oak Leaf console, £16,080, Cox London (020–3328 9506; www.coxlondon.com)

FOR a heady dose of interior-design inspiration this summer, look no further than the 18 rooms that will be created by some of the world’s leading interior designers at this year’s WOW!house, which runs from June 6–July 6, at Design Centre, Chelsea Harbour, SW10. Although show houses have long been a tradition in the US, there hasn’t been anything similar on this side of the Atlantic since the early 1990s, so last year’s inaugural WOW!house caused much excitement. This year’s event is set to be similarly inspiring.

De Le Cuona Bedroom by Christian Bense
GRAND safari meets London townhouse’ is how interior designer Christian Bense describes his creative approach to the bedroom suite for the house. ‘This room is more

of an escape than an everyday home, but it is also an entirely liveable space, rather than a safari-themed spectacle,’ he says. ‘I also want visitors to feel a sense of calm—an “exhale” moment in what will no doubt be a sensory overload of a show.’ The room is decorated entirely in fabrics by de Le Cuona, a leader in luxurious natural textiles for interiors, including stone-washed linen and wool bouclé, soft mohair velvet and finely woven paisley. ‘Fabrics are the star



of the show, but we have also mixed in a few well-sourced antiques and special bespoke joinery,’ he says. Pieces include a ‘Brutalist meets Africa’ desk made by the Galvin Brothers (www.galvinbrothers.co.uk), an antique Victorian faux-bamboo sleigh bed with brass fixings, a Safari armchair from Justin Van Breda (www.justinvanbreda.com) and an Oak Leaf console from Cox London (www.coxlondon.com). Both Mr Bense and Bernie de Le Cuona, founder of the brand, hail from South Africa, and both now live and work in London—hence the cross pollination of ideas reflected in the palette of the room, which leans towards the earthy colours of Africa. The architectural details, by contrast, feel English, including Georgian-style walls, cornicing and a classic fireplace. ‘The best-designed spaces are ones that look curated →

and collected, which is achieved by variance,’ says Mr Bense. ‘What I hope people will take away from visiting this room is how to design a space that toes a line, but still feels unique.’ De Le Cuona (01753 830301; www.delecuona.com) Christian Bense (020–7537 7791; www.christianbense.com)

Drummonds Principal Bathroom by Lucy Barlow and Joshua Sear, Barlow & Barlow
INTERIOR designer Lucy Barlow of Barlow & Barlow chose ‘a captain’s bathroom on a spaceship in 1975’ as the escapist inspiration for her design. ‘We want to show that, although a bathroom has to be practical, it is also possible to think outside the box,’ she explains. ‘Of course, a “standard” bathroom can be beautiful, but WOW!house offers the opportunity to push the boundaries and show that one doesn’t have to use tiles in a bathroom—why not treat it with as much flair as you would any other room in the house?’

The starting point of the retro-meets-futuristic design concept is a terrazzo-style floor, made with plaster flecked with tiny chips of mirror, rather than typical stone in concrete. Natural-coloured polished plaster clads the walls in smooth, rounded shapes, introducing another retro-inspired element to the room, with an elegant Meon bath from Drummonds set into a niche behind a curved entrance. It is screened by a silver-disc curtain, inspired by Paco Rabanne’s signature link design first introduced in the 1960s. More classic pieces from Drummonds, including a Taw vanity and large curved towel radiator, are featured in the room, alongside several



The Drummonds Principal Bathroom by Barlow & Barlow, featuring the Meon bath with a polished exterior, £4,470, Drummonds (020–7376 4499; www.drummonds-uk.com)

retro elements: a vast Lava Lamp, celebrating the 60th anniversary of manufacturer Mathmos (www.mathmos.com), plus vintage pendant lights and a retro-inspired side table designed by Barlow & Barlow. ‘We wanted to show that, although one might think the Drummonds products are traditional, they can be used successfully in many different schemes,’ says Miss Barlow. The design is completed with some cast plaster mushroom wall lights and a mobile made from plaster pelargonium leaves dipped in nickel, all by artist Jess Wheeler (www.jesswheeler.com). ‘Let’s celebrate escapism and the importance of the bathroom in our homes,’ she says. Drummonds (020–7376 4499; www.drummonds-uk.com) Barlow & Barlow (020–3645 1427; www.barlowandbarlow.com)



The Single Taw vanity with an Arabescato marble shelf, £5,070, Drummonds (as above)

Martin Moore Kitchen by Henry Prideaux, Henry Prideaux Interior Design
HENRY PRIDEAUX’S approach to this kitchen is appropriately ‘wow’. ‘It’s glamorous, exciting and a room to have fun in, but—being a Martin Moore kitchen—it is also very practical, with a considered layout and plenty of work surface for preparing and serving food, so it’s an excellent space in

which to cook and entertain,’ he says. Featuring Martin Moore’s New Deco collection, the streamlined, elegant furniture is painted in a soft pink with raspberry island and skirtings, topped with dramatic green and pink Strata natural quartzite worktops and splash back. ‘The mood is warm and inviting, with plenty of impact,’ says Mr Prideaux. ‘After all, this is a space designed to be used in the evening, as well as during the day.’ More welcoming warmth comes from richly coloured, velvet-upholstered bar stools by Ben Whistler (www.benwhistler.com). For added glamour, three amber-glass Sorrento chandeliers from Pure White Lines (www.purewhitelines.com) are suspended above the island, hung from a ceiling covered in Altfield’s Metal Leaf Gold (www.altfield.com). Walls papered in a gold moiré complement a large gold mirror ball, offset from the island. ‘Kitchen discos were prevalent during lockdown, but the notion continues—we want to be able to kick back and have fun at home and people always gather in the kitchen at parties,’ he says. Other features include a walk-in pantry and a cocktail-ready drinks cabinet, complete with built-in wine cooler and—for extra joy—a gold-sequinned ceiling and mirror-clad walls. ‘Although a kitchen needs to be →



Kitchen disco: there is an Art Deco feel to Henry Prideaux's Martin Moore Kitchen

functional with enough prep space and a workable layout, it really doesn't need to feel utilitarian,' he says. 'Don't shy away from decorating the room to make it glamorous and enjoyable.' *Martin Moore (0845 180 0015; www.martinmoore.com)*
Henry Prideaux (020-8891 0990; www.henryprideaux.com)

House of Rohl Bathroom by Studio Mica

AVOIDING any notion of a 'typical town-house bathroom', interior designers Carolynne Shenton and Abigail Kendler of Studio Mica are aiming to transport visitors to a luxury resort spa in warmer climes for their room scheme. 'We want to play with your senses the moment you step through the door,' says Ms Shenton. She designed the light to be moody and soft, with a gentle shimmer created by a Japanese rice-paper screen. The space is divided into three zones: a central area features a massage bench clad in recycled black terrazzo flecked with golden colours; one end is devoted to a luxurious bath, the

other to an alfresco-style twin shower. 'The two ends of the room are designed to capture different feelings,' continues Ms Shenton. Step under a beam at one end to feel as if you are outside, with two shower heads mounted on a wall clad in brick slips in warm honey and dark tobacco colours, arranged in a geometric pattern. 'We take everyday finishes and use them in a more crafted and detailed manner,' she says. A freestanding matt-white Edge tub from Victoria + Albert Baths (01952 221100; www.vandabaths.com) is set on a plinth at the other end of the room, creating the focal point of an intimate area, with brass Langbourn freestanding tap by Perrin & Rowe (www.perrinandrowe.co.uk). 'The bath is set against the same palette of colours as the brick slips in the shower area, but in different materials to create a woven, layered effect,' she explains. 'A bathroom is no longer merely a functional room, it's also somewhere



The House of Rohl Bathroom by Studio Mica (above), with Edge freestanding bath, from £3,489, Victoria + Albert Baths (01952 221100; www.vandabaths.com) and the Langbourn exposed shower set (below), £4,254, Perrin & Rowe (01708 526361; www.perrinandrowe.co.uk)

to relax,' continues Ms Shenton. 'We want to show that you can create an escapist atmosphere, even in a square box in Chelsea.' *House of Rohl (www.houseofrohl.uk)*
Studio Mica (020-7688 2582; www.studiomica.co.uk)

The Legend Room by Nicky Haslam and Colette van den Thillart

THE veteran interior designer Nicky Haslam is creating a contemporary library in the house, in collaboration with his former creative director Colette van den Thillart, who now runs an international design practice from Toronto, Canada. 'It is the first room you see on entering the house, so we wanted to create an immediate thrill,' says Mr Haslam. The romantic scheme—with a touch of Hollywood silver screen—is anchored by a photograph by Cathleen Naundorf from her Future Couture-Surrealism series, inspired by Dada and the art of the early 1920s. Its colours are echoed in those of the palette of the room, which he describes as 'air' colours: mauve-greys and blues. Walls are upholstered in lavender corduroy. 'Our idea of a dream,' says Ms van den Thillart. 'Often, upholstered walls are done in quite a luxurious way, but although corduroy has acoustic, cocooning qualities, it has a more casual feel. It harks back to men's suiting, it has a clubby →

feel—but, in lavender, it's very definitely not clubby. Contrasting the expected is our signature.' A sofa from their new furniture collection is upholstered in a bronze satin, teamed with a pair of chairs in tiger-fur velvet. Mirrored doors are topped with electrified hurricane lanterns to produce moody lighting, as columns, urns and lamps are made from white plaster, floors are made of burnt plywood and bookcases are wrapped in Mr Haslam's Seafern linen in Clouded Lilac. 'Many of the ideas are original and not necessarily expensive, such as the dark plywood floors used to set off the white plaster, wrapping bookcases in fabric and using corduroy on the walls,' she says. 'We always try to think of using materials in unexpected ways.'

(07960 479250; www.nh-design.co.uk)

Gosling Library by Tim Gosling

INSPIRED by a personal project—the restoration of a 57-room *château* in France—furniture designer Tim Gosling is basing his design on its elegant, tall-ceilinged rooms, with an added touch of splendour drawn from the Palace of Versailles. 'I was lucky enough to find two fantastic French antique



A bespoke games table (above left), £30,000, Gosling (020-7498 8335; www.tgosling.com), is the centrepiece of a library (above) by the furniture designer Tim Gosling



Hollywood glamour: the Legend Room by Nicky Haslam and Colette van den Thillart

corner bibliotheque sections,' he says of the starting point for the cube-shaped room. Dating from about 1880, each mahogany bookcase features gilded mounts and sits in front of mirrored panels that run up to the cornice. His workshop has made two more matching bookcases to adorn the other corners of the room in a similar fashion.

Working with the Rug Company (www.therugcompany.com), Mr Gosling has designed a new rug, handmade in Nepal, which will feature in the room. 'It is a crisper interpretation of an 18th-century Savonnerie in faded blush pink, red, straw and Prussian blue,' he says. The same palette of colours is used on the walls, covered in printed linen reproduced from historic Aubusson tapestries at Leeds Castle by Zardi & Zardi (www.zardiandzardi.co.uk).

The central games table is a design created by Mr Gosling, with backgammon board inset



Nicky Haslam Seafern linen in Clouded Lilac, £184.80 per m, Turnell & Gigon (020-7259 7280; www.turnellandgigon.com)

with sycamore to reflect the courtyard at Versailles. The Baccarat chandelier comes from his *château* and has been recently restored ('a labour of love'), and the fireplace is from his two designs for Chesneys (www.chesneys.co.uk), this one featuring lion sculptures inspired by Pompeii.

'I hope the room will encourage visitors to think about antiques in a different way,' he says. 'If you find something you love, you could have it copied to make a pair or adapted to suit your room—antiques make a sustainable choice, ready to be used imaginatively.'  *Gosling (020-7498 8335, www.tgosling.com)*

WOW!house is open June 5–July 6, Monday–Saturday, from 10am, with last entry 5.30pm. Individual tickets cost £20, with two or more tickets for £16 each on weekdays. There is a 2-for-1 offer on Saturdays, so you can visit with a friend for £20. Student tickets are £10. For more details and to buy tickets, visit www.dcch.co.uk

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