

Home

Since #wallpapergate and Downing Street's cash for cushions madness hit the headlines, the questions at the top of our list were: what does Nicky Haslam think? And how would he spend the official decorating allowance of £30,000?

The interior designer offered us some good advice that is worth living by, whatever your budget. "Be practical rather whimsical," he said. "Get rid of anything you never use, add discreet storage wherever possible, you can't have enough. Remove all ceiling lights and replace with more dramatic, lower-placed sources. People look terrible top-lit. Rewire, making sure all lights operate from one switch at the door – forget about dimmers, they always go wrong."

"Up the comfort level. Get the most exquisite bed linen, the most luxurious towels and put plenty of sturdy hangers in every wardrobe. Invest in a good, big set of glassware – different glasses look tacky, whereas random china is fun. Put terracotta saucers under plant pots, plates are dreadful. Change 'mahogany' lavatory seats to chunky white-painted wood, far more chic. Find nice, less flimsy door furniture."

Haslam alternatively proposes blowing "the whole lot on white flowers, as Nancy Mitford suggested when asked this very question".

Here are 16 other striking, stylish and sensible ways to spend £30,000, care of top designers and Instagram's best DIY experts. Be inspired, or simply log on to John Lewis and follow your own dream.

Be strategic

Matthew Williamson (matthewwilliamson.com) recommends starting with a three-way breakdown of the budget. "Split it between the 'shell' or 'envelope' of the home, the furniture and the final flourishes. Allot the first £10,000 to choosing wallpaper, paint colours and rugs, which will provide you with a palette when it comes to sourcing your furniture and accessories. Assign £14,000 for big-ticket items of furniture such as sofas, tables, chairs, beds and storage. Buy vintage to make your money go further. The final £6,000 is to splash on artwork, cushions, lamps and objets."

Join the bespoke club

Commission the design and manufacture of some beautiful bespoke joinery, says Patrick Lewis, an architect (patricklewisarchitects.com). "It can unlock spaces that are otherwise redundant. Use every inch of space, use interesting materials and colours, and make it personal and to last the test of time."

Pick an outdoor kitchen

Annie Ebenston, a lead designer at Blakes London

(blakeslondon.com), suggests adding an outdoor kitchen to make your garden more usable and sociable. A sink and undercounter fridge make the cooking experience more convenient and look slick. She cites a recent project: joinery and construction, £12,000; porcelain tile worktop, £9,500; Franke sink, £400; and Siemens undercounter fridge, £500. Add an outdoor Napoleon-style countertop BBQ and you'll be cooking on gas all year round.

Go green

Change the entire ground floor of your home to timber, preferably a light oak timber from a sustainable source, and put in underfloor heating – it's easier to clean and reduces dust mites, says Victoria Meale (victoriamealedesign.com), an interior designer. Redecorate walls and woodwork with one of Eico paint's environmentally friendly whites, and add potted plants to filter toxins and add natural texture and colour.

Moveable feast

Anna Burles, an interior designer at Run for the Hills (runforthehills.com), advocates buying furniture and art that you can take with you. She says to try not to spread your £30,000 too thinly across too many things and throughout the entire house – decide which updates will make the most difference. One of her clients splashed the cash on gorgeous furnishings and accessories for the living room and bedroom: a Julian Opie screen print from Phillips auction house; a dining table for £2,000; and a set of six vintage dining chairs for £1,000, reupholstered for £600.

The big sleep

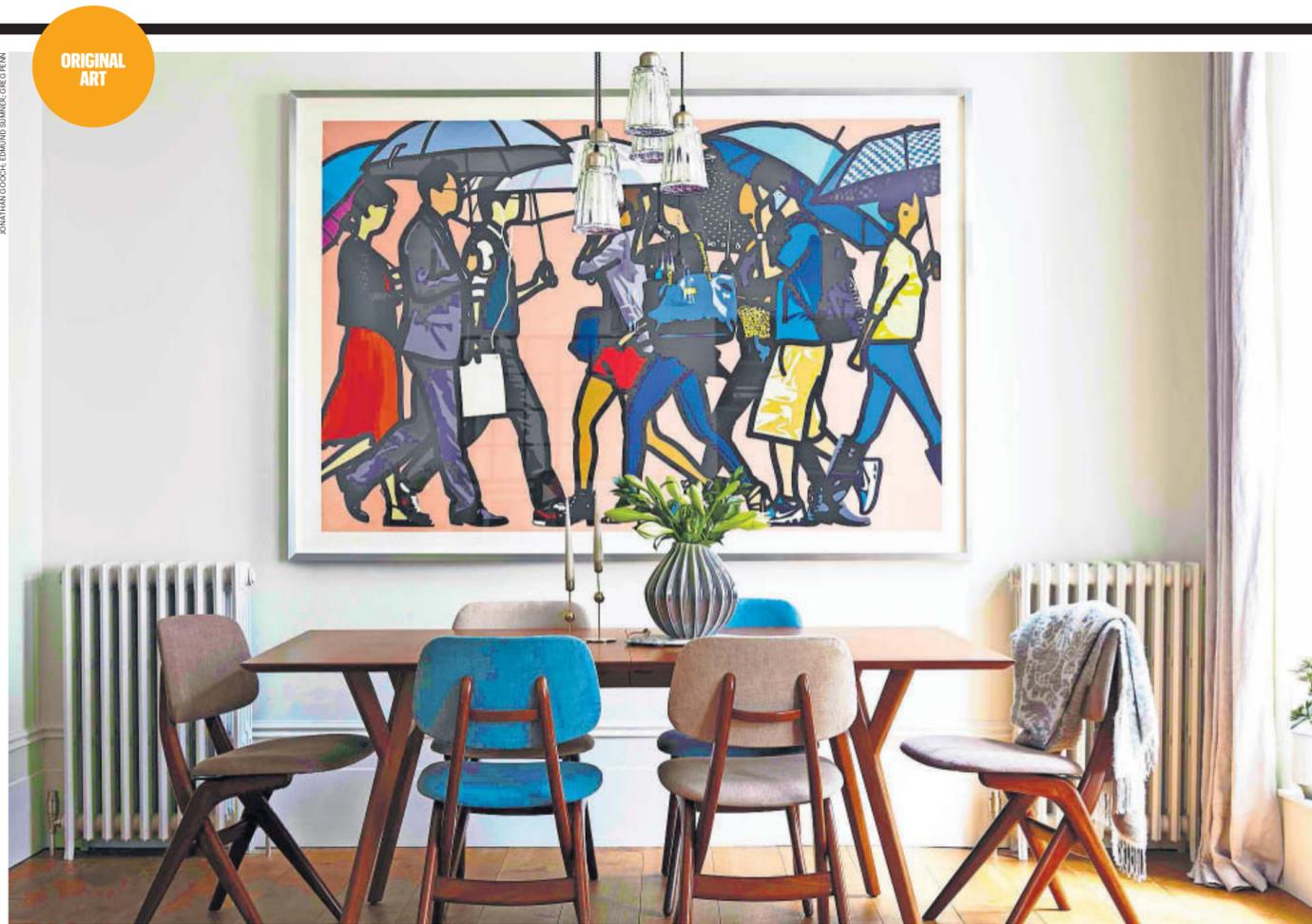
Spend a decent amount in the bedroom, says Emma Deterding, who is the founder of Kelling Designs (kellingdesigns.com), and you will be rewarded for many years to come with good sleep. Get the biggest bed and mattress the room will take, add proper lighting at the bedside for reading, and window treatments with blackout lining.

Remodel

It's much more cost effective to tweak an existing footprint and update with decoration than it is to extend, says Joanna Simpson of Simpson Studio (simpson-studio.com). Be bold with colour and create opportunities to open spaces up to increase light. A recent project opened up a wall into the kitchen to link it with the rest of the ground floor and highlighted the structural steel beam by painting it pink.

You can't beat a bathroom

Nick Cryer, the managing director of Berkeley Place (berkeleyplace.co.uk), who works on Georgian listed



ORIGINAL ART

Left: a client of Anna Burles bought a Julian Opie screen print, a dining table and chairs to update this space. Right: be bold with colour to make an impact, says Joanna Simpson. Far right from top: a statement headboard from Albion Nord; Greg Penn's pink bathroom

“Be inspired – or simply log on to John Lewis and follow your own dream

HOW TO SPEND £30K ON YOUR HOME

The possibilities are endless if you have a politician's budget, so what do the experts advise? By Katrina Burroughs and Victoria Brzezinski

buildings around Bristol and Bath, says his clients can easily spend £30,000 on a single luxurious bathroom. Go for really nice marble tiles, a freestanding copper bath, a walk-in shower, with taps and shower head and fittings from Devon & Devon or Lefroy Brooks, underfloor heating and a marble-topped Porter vanity unit.

Kitchen sync

Nick Felstead, a university lecturer (and one half of @dustandbricks on Instagram), recommends Ikea's online kitchen planner. Quotes for their 16-unit kitchen started from about £9,000. Cabinetry, the worktop and all appliances, apart from the seven-burner range cooker (£700; ao.com), cost £5,500 from Ikea. "Ikea appliances always come in as best buys from *Which?* magazine," he says. "If we'd had a huge budget we would have gone with a quartz worktop, but we went with a slightly thicker, deeper worktop in white, high gloss. It's called butcher's block thickness."

Be discount savvy

Negi Moody, a surgeon and interiors enthusiast (@negi.at.home on Instagram), is clear: know when to splurge and when to

save. Hunt out discount codes online, wait for sales and sign up for newsletters to get some money off. She bought her bathtub a year before she did any work in order to get it on sale. If your budget won't stretch to a new chair, pick one up second-hand and reupholster it. Moody bought an old tub chair for £10 on Facebook Marketplace and recovered it in white bouclé fabric; you can follow her tutorial on covering a chair on her Instagram stories. "The bouclé fabric was from Fabrics Galore and cost £6 for half a metre. I needed about two metres for the chair (about £24). All in all the project took me around two hours from start to finish and it was super easy."

Quality not quantity

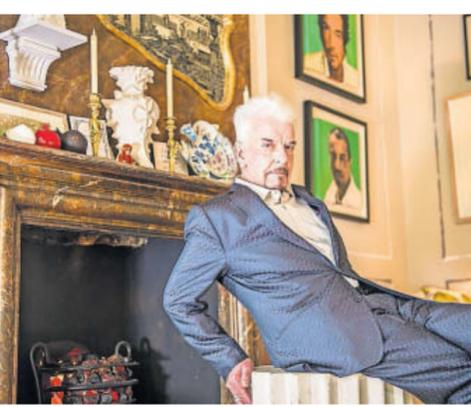
Greg Penn (@manwitha hammer) is painstakingly renovating a Georgian house in Devon. In his bedroom he painted the walls in Burnham Overly, a deep grey-blue from Fenwick and Tilbrook – in a robust, washable finish on the walls and two coats of eggshell on the woodwork. Prep work is the key, and good paint is more expensive but it's worth it. "My favourite places for second-hand furniture are the saleroom.com, which allows you to search through hundreds of local auction sites



ELEGANT KITCHENS



OUTDOOR KITCHENS



Top: an outdoor kitchen by Blakes London with a countertop barbecue. Above: the designer Nicky Haslam



BEDROOM DETAILING



INDULGENT BATHROOMS

in one place, or Facebook Marketplace," Penn says.

Rethink and reupholster

Cath Beckett of Yellow London design studio (yellowlondon.com) suggests reupholstering sofas and chairs. Choose a wonderful new fabric to go with a new wall colour, to revitalise your trusty old sofa or chair.

Get plastered

Over lockdown the sisters Sophie and Charlotte Wilson have been renovating in Newcastle (see their progress on Instagram @jesmondtownhouse). They assigned about £2,000 to £3,000 (of the £30,000) for plastering as "it's one of the best ways to freshen up a home by giving it smooth new walls and a blank canvas for decorating," they say. They also recommend Homesense and B&M for budget-friendly furniture. "They have dupes of John Lewis pieces for about 80 per cent less," they add.

Head for heights

Every makeover needs a power headboard, according to Camilla Clarke of Albion Nord design studio (albion-nord.com). She says the Wave headboard by David Seyfried is one of her go-to shapes (from £590; davidseyfried.com) or the

India headboard from Ensembler (£2,545 for a double bed; ensembler.com). Or why not make a bespoke statement with a bobbin headboard by Alfred Newall from the London Workshop (£1,250 for a double; thelondonworkshop.com).

Cocktail hour

After the first lockdown Jamie Watkins, a co-founder of the pattern emporium Divine Savages, budgeted £1,500 to make over his London lounge. He zoned the living room and turned an unused corner into a versatile space that can be used for breakfast, working on a laptop or as a relaxed cocktail space in the evening. Two rolls of Deco Martini Midnight Gold wallpaper (£150 a roll; divinesavages.com) paired with Farrow & Ball Hague Blue paint (£49.50 for 2.5 litres; farrow-ball.com) added some glamour. Most paint stores will be able to match to a specific colour within the wallpaper for a seamless finish.

Watkins splurged on two sculptural Oliver Bonas Tress armchairs (£375 each; oliverbonas.com) in azure velvet and also found a Georgian parlour table at Sunbury Antiques for £50. Any "leftover" budget would be more than enough to entertain for the year.