



FLIGHTS OF FANCY

FROM CANTILEVERED OPTIONS TO DESIGNS IN
TIMBER AND STONE, THESE STATEMENT STAIRCASES
ARE AS MUCH ABOUT FORM AS FUNCTION

IN A SPIN

A double-height extension presented the opportunity to create an impressive staircase that defines the space. Against a minimally framed glass wall on one side, this open-tread structure, designed by architecture practice Cousins & Cousins, is made from a curved patinated steel sheet with a leather handrail and timber treads. 'The shape and materials contrast sharply with the crisp white walls, making the staircase the focal point in this period house,' says the practice's co-founder Ben Cousins. One of the big challenges was achieving the right finish on the steel to give it the correct amount of patina for the setting, with many tests and samples created before the ideal result was achieved. →



"THE HALLWAY IS A GREAT PLACE TO BE MORE ADVENTUROUS WITH COLOUR, PATTERN AND TEXTURE, SO GO FOR A BOLD RUNNER TO CREATE A WARM AND INVITING FIRST IMPRESSION"

ANDY GUARD, head of design, Roger Oates Design, rogeroates.com



ON THE RUN

Duck-egg blue paint – this shade is Teresa's Green estate emulsion, £45 for 2.5L, Farrow & Ball – brings a modern note to this traditional staircase (top). Caroline Inchyra of Inchyra Home added a wool runner edged in burgundy that gives a tailored look but is still robust enough for this busy household.

LIGHT THE WAY

In this contemporary design (above left) every other tread is lit. Classic oak can be used to clad the steps and risers, with more unusual materials in the details. A steel handrail runs up the wall and storage units under the stairs have been wrapped in aged metal to a design by Cave Interiors.

COLOUR CONTRAST

This scheme (above), in the home of designer Ben Pentreath, pairs a brightly coloured African Kente cloth-inspired runner with dark scrubbed treads. On the walls, the muddy olive tone is a strong neutral for the gallery of prints. The runner is Masai Emerald, £129 linear m, Roger Oates Design.



CREATIVE APPROACH

Re-thinking the position of the staircase from the side or back of the house to the middle can be a useful way of conjuring up more usable space, as well as creating important definition in an open-plan environment. Architects Stiff + Trevillion designed this staircase, which is constructed using folded metal sheets, for a mews house in Bloomsbury, London. Setting a chaste, industrial aesthetic, it also opened the opportunity to install a skylight in the ceiling above, which allows light to flood through the middle of the house during the day. On the top floor, glass balustrades around the staircase mean the source of light is uninterrupted. →

PHOTOGRAPHS (ON THE RUN) GAF INTERIORS/THE CONTENTED NEST/DAN DUCHARS (CREATIVE APPROACH) KILLIAN O'SULLIVAN/VIEW



BARE NECESSITIES

For a calming and harmonious look, strip back all the colour and allow the earthiness of natural materials to stand proud. A cantilevered bleached oak staircase creates a rustic elegance that is enhanced by an elemental stainless-steel banister. Take a cue from this staircase in the home of interior designer Nia Morris, by architect Richard Parr. The uniformity of the railings is echoed by the wide-width planks on the walls. Hexagonal-shaped floor tiles provide more interest than the usual flagstones, while a dark polished wooden bench adds a tonal contrast. The addition of woven baskets softens the straight lines of the staircase, cladding and stone floor. →

**"CLEVER DESIGN AND
ENGINEERING CAN TURN
THE STAIRCASE INTO
A CENTRAL DESIGN
FEATURE, CAPABLE OF
TRANSFORMING YOUR
INTERIOR WITH ONE
DRAMATIC STATEMENT"**

RICHARD MCLANE, design director,
Bisca, bisca.co.uk



TALL STORY

This cantilevered design in polished oak (top) by Martyn Clarke Architecture was given an additional modern element with railings that rise to the landing above. It is an idea that also helps to create the illusion of a higher ceiling, which can be very useful in basement projects.

IN THE FRAME

Glass balustrades allow for the maximum passage of light, while slim steel frames provide an elegant, tailored finish. This staircase (above left), designed by Jo Cowen Architects, extends towards the contemporary extension at the back of the house, giving a seamless transition.

AHEAD OF THE CURVE

Even in traditional settings, there is scope for a contemporary design. This curvy staircase (above) stands proud of an exposed brick wall, which helps to highlight it as a new addition. 'This design saves space, while creating a focal point,' says Graham Harris, managing director, SHH Architecture.

PHOTOGRAPHS (TALL STORY) RACHAEL SMITH; (IN THE FRAME) PAUL MASSEY; BOTH T1 MEDIA/CONTENT.COM; (AHEAD OF THE CURVE) GARETH GARNER; (WALL ART) CHRIS SNOOK



WALL ART

Embrace the chance to be bold with pattern or colour (or both) when decorating a staircase. In this transient area of the house, you can get away with using attention-grabbing wallpaper or mismatched works of art that might otherwise overwhelm the eye in a living room or bedroom scheme. For an elegant result, use the dado rail as a marker point – the area below can remain restrained and sophisticated, while the space above can be a creative contrast of colour, pattern and framed images. The wallpaper seen here is Tessella in Pointing/Arsenic, £91 a roll; for a similar paint shade, try Plummett estate emulsion, £45 for 2.5L, both Farrow & Ball. →



"HALLWAYS OFTEN LACK CHARACTER, SO USE LIGHTING TO GIVE THE SPACE A LIFT. MIX A RANGE OF DESIGNS, FROM DOWNLIGHTERS TO TABLE LAMPS, TO ENHANCE THE ATMOSPHERE"

JUDY SMITH, Crown colour consultant, Crown Paints, crownpaints.co.uk



ON THE FLOOR

Ceramic tiles laid in a graphic pattern look wonderful and are a hard-wearing solution for a high-traffic area. The tiles in this south London home (top) are original but try Original Style for similar. A sleek monochrome palette is a sure-fire way of striking a contemporary note.

RAINBOW BRIGHT

This visual feast (above left) is revealed as soon as the front door is opened. Studio Atara and Nicola Cooley came up with this ombré-effect staircase using different shades of high-grade linoleum from Sinclair Till. 'Recessed LED lights complete the alluring effect,' says Timna Rose of Studio Atara.

IN THE LIBRARY

Where there is a staircase in an open-plan room, the space beneath is often used for storage. Instead, interiors photographer Paul Craig created a library (above) with shelves on the wall and fitted under the stairs. The shelves were designed by Paul and made by Andwoodcraft.

PHOTOGRAPHS (ON THE FLOOR) ALEXANDER JAMES; (IN THE LIBRARY) PAUL CRAIG, BOTH TM-MEDIACONTENT.COM

INSIDER INSIGHT

TOP TIPS FOR DESIGNING A STYLISH STAIRCASE

LOCATION The first thing to consider with a staircase is its position within the space. 'It is fundamental to any design plan as a staircase ties levels together in order to create a unified whole,' says architect Rodrigo Moreno Masey. Not just functional, statement staircases are sculptural forms channelling light through the voids. 'It's possible to transform a home's layout by replacing several staircases with a single central one, with an atrium or a large skylight above allowing light to flood down to the lower levels,' says Mike Fisher, founder and creative director of Studio Indigo.

DESIGN From modern open staircases to spiral structures, floating treads and classical sweeps, the choice of design is not only endless but it will set the architectural tone of the entire house. 'A staircase is an integral part of the home and by combining the best materials with craftsmanship-quality installation, a staircase can be transformed into a stunning piece of furniture,' says James Murray, senior staircase designer at Neville Johnson.

BALUSTRADES A key structural element, the balustrade is also a chance to add decorative flair. Fine powder-coated forged steel spindles can be designed to set a contemporary or traditional tone, while stainless-steel and glass options add instant wow factor. Always bear in mind, however, that balustrades must conform to building regulations, so if you're thinking about doing something a bit different, talk to a building control officer or check current regulations at planningportal.co.uk.

FLOORCOVERING Staircases are heavy traffic areas so practicality has to be considered. Timber, painted or otherwise, can be noisy so an obvious solution is to fit a stair carpet or runner. 'We'd always recommend sisal or wool,' says Emma Hopkins of Crucial Trading. 'Sisal is a hard-wearing, durable option, while wool is softer and easy to clean. If going for a runner, you can add a personalised touch with a customised border in cotton, linen, leather or suede.'

LIGHTING Both practical and visually creative, lighting a staircase shouldn't be left as a last-minute add-on to a project. Traditional staircases can be lit with a dramatic pendant down the central well, while contemporary designs suit small step lights set within the skirting. Don't forget to consider what the lighting will look like from ground level, from the side and when walking down the stairs. 'As well as lighting the staircase, think about illuminating the visual end point – something to walk towards – such as a beautifully lit painting at the top of the stairs,' says Sally Stephenson of Owl Lighting. 📸

"USING DECORATIVE SIDE STRINGER BRACKETS CAN HELP TO GIVE A STONE-CLAD STAIRCASE THE LOOK OF A SOLID CANTILEVERED ONE"

NIKKI CHEE, creative director, Artorius Faber, artoriusfaber.com

THE INSIDER'S SOURCEBOOK: STAIRCASES

NEVILLE JOHNSON

In business for more than 30 years, this company's craftspeople can fit a new staircase or transform an existing one using glass, timber or steel, nevillejohnson.co.uk.

BISCA

The name of this designer is an acronym of brass, iron, steel, copper and aluminium – the materials that feature in many of its bespoke commissions, bisca.co.uk.

MORENOMASEY

This London-based architecture practice believes that staircase design needs to be the starting point when planning the layout of any space, morenomasey.com.

NEPTUNE

The in-house design service can create built-in storage or freestanding furniture to fit underneath the stairs. The team will advise on making the best use of space, neptune.com.