

Myriad of mirrors

Fiona Applegarth of Sable Interiors explores the endless uses and styles of mirror to enhance every room in your home

Mirrors have many practical applications such as being used for shaving, putting on make-up or helping us to get dressed. But they have many other important uses. When applied in the home with a little skill and imagination, mirrors can transform any room with tremendously dramatic effect.

Large mirrors create an illusion of space and amplify the apparent size of a room. This is particularly useful in small rooms such as bathrooms and cloakrooms. Positioned carefully, they can give the appearance that a room extends much further than it really does. To be most effective in this way, the mirror needs to cover the greater part of the entire wall.

Confined dining rooms feel less cramped and guests are more relaxed as a result of an expanded feel of space. Insignificant areas can be immediately transformed, and in most cases, with little extra financial outlay.

Another powerful result can be achieved by staggering a number of mirrors along the sides of a long corridor. This will make it appear much wider. Double banks of mirrors can create infinite reflections and add an interesting effect.

Apart from being a great space enhancer, a mirror can also be used to define an area, which can be a valuable tool in large open-plan living areas. In the same way that a rug will delineate an area, a number of mirrors strategically hung can be used in the same way.

Mirrors can be positioned so as to bounce light back into dark rooms, and are helpful in brightening dull corners. Convex mirrors have been used for decades to expand entrance halls. Their round shape placed directly opposite the doorway was obviously chosen to spread light and energy rather than merely to reflect faces.

Mirrors should always, where possible, reflect something pleasant – something worth seeing more of, like a good view, the garden, an attractive architectural feature or a beautiful piece of furniture. Care should be taken not to place it where it reflects untidy areas. This will result in a negative effect.

We should never underestimate the importance of a mirror as a highly

effective decorative object. Murano-based Venetian glassmakers, as far back as the 16th century, perfected the method of making mirrors out of plate glass, and for over a 100 years their mirrors were installed in richly decorated frames serving as luxury decoration for palaces throughout Europe.

Today, the availability of decorative mirrors is absolutely endless. Framed or unframed, mirrors now come in all shapes, sizes and finishes. Using equipment such as spray-robots, together with many other modern techniques, the finished products are truly amazing.

Technological developments mean that mirrors can be realised in extra light glass with effects such as degrading shaded silvering upwards and downwards, giving the appearance that the mirror is slowly vanishing. Mirrors cut with water jets can be fashioned into a multitude of different patterns. Modular systems of concave and regular mirrors combine to give a simple but unusual result.

A vast range of materials are used to cover frames, for example exotic and faux leathers such as crocodile, eel skin, ostrich, sea snake, lizard, shagreen, and even python.

Outstanding pieces made out of numerous pieces of cut mirror, which are then joined and put together in a multitude of different designs, appear breathtaking. One example of this is a large octagonal central mirror with a frame composed of 40 separate inclined mirrors on different levels.

A mirror like this is highly decorative and takes pride of place on any wall as a work of art.

Antiqued and hand-carved mirrors are also viewed as pieces of art and can bring colour and texture to an otherwise hard, cold reflective surface. Dramatic hand carved frames can be fashioned into many designs such as one continuous trace forming myriad curves, circles, ovals and kites.

This is but one example of what is possible and there are still craftsmen today who continue to create works of outstanding beauty. The power of the mirror is undeniable. ●

essence info

Fiona Applegarth is director of the interior design company Sable and has just opened the new Opus showroom in Thames Ditton.

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