



## Alexandra Thompson INTERIOR DESIGNER

I grew up surrounded by property and business. After completing my degree in Interior Design I went straight into Television Set Design working on various projects including Eastenders, Coronation Street and ITV Dramas. I then set up a consultancy service for both residential and commercial interiors. As a specialised designer I have completed various high-end projects ranging from house doctoring to complete renovation and from new builds to nightclubs. ■

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# INSPIRED INTERIORS: BRING WARMTH INTO YOUR HOME

Interiors expert *Alexandra Thompson* tells you how a few simple adjustments can bring the comfort of warmth into your home this winter

**A**s the blanket of winter has arrived now is the time to cosy up your interiors and make it easier to face the elements outside!

## COLOUR

Autumn/winter colours for 2009/2010 bring Christmas sparkle indoors with crisp whites teamed with blues and aquas. Soft lustrous metallics are also dominant, with pewter, burnished copper, old gold, and steely silver. To warm up this cool palate why not go for warm charcoal greys complimented with bright accent colours of aubergines, pinks and yellows.

## LIGHTING

As the nights draw in try to create a lighter atmosphere. Why not try miniature white lights or full spectrum light bulbs for a warmer light. Highlighting mirrors will reflect light back into the room creating a brighter feel. Lampshades could be swapped for warmer, richer tones to give a more intimate atmosphere. All the above teamed with candles will create a sense of warmth and comfort.



prominent in interiors and look great as scatter cushions placed here and there – but use them moderately unless you are going for the bling-bling look!

## FLOORING

Natural floorboards are a great in summer, however they can be a little cool underfoot in winter to say the least! If you don't fancy getting rid of this gorgeous feature, why not throw down a rich shag pile rug. Alternatively a selection of rugs shouting out geometric patterns and vibrant colours will instantly liven up your room with the added bonus of warmth and cosiness underfoot.

## ACCESSORIES

For the bathroom, why not try warmer, brighter coloured towels. Seasonal coloured or shaped soaps, scented candles and bubble bath will also add festive warmth to a long soak. For the bedroom, introduce woollen or tapestry pillows piled on the bed complimented by a quilt or woolen throw. Use a heavier fabric for window coverings finished in a complimentary colour to the walls. The heavier fabric will also keep the warmth in. In the kitchen why not try a richly coloured fabric tablecloth, for example a deep aubergine or opulent burgundy to bring festive warmth to the dinner table.



## WALL COVERINGS AND FABRICS

This season a whole host of cultures are represented in the world of fabrics whether it's Scottish Plaid, Tibetan Silks or rich, exotic jewel-like Sari shades. Heavier fabrics and textures help warm a room in the same way open airiness cools it in summer. Use wool and velvet throw pillows. Buy a fake fur throw for a luxurious feel. Arrange a wool throw over a chair, hang an heirloom quilt on the wall or use a lightweight quilt or tapestry as a tablecloth. A stack of quilts can be used to wrap up in on those cold evenings in front of the fireplace. An exuberant trend that comes straight from the catwalk this season is sequins and beads. They are extremely



*Stay warm and enjoy your home this Christmas... Alex*



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# LIVING IN SPACE: HOW TO MAKE IT MORE SPACIOUS

Smart city centre apartments need smart thinking to maximize the use of your living space. Interiors expert *Alexandra Thompson* says there's no better time of the year to throw out that clutter and transform your pad into a dazzling and chic palace!

**E**ven an organized mess can spoil the look of an amazing space. Magazines, books, too many ornaments lying around that don't have a home... the list can be endless.

Getting rid of clutter will not only clear your space it will clear your mind by creating a calming space in which you can relax.

Give items away to charity, put them on eBay or recycle. If it hasn't seen daylight in over a year it needs to go!! You can adopt the BUGS scheme that I use which is to separate clutter into the following: Bin, Use, Give away or Sell.

Once you have de-cluttered it's time to set about creating a spacious feel to your home.

A monochromatic colour scheme is the best to use for a compact space. This uses a single colour on almost every room surface.

Contrasting colours will break up a space, pieces of furniture will blend in with the space and will be far less interrupting if they match the wall colour. Use plain coloured upholstery instead of bold stripes, plaids or prints. Texture can still be used to create some interest.

Make sure your space is well lit is a key factor in making your space look larger. Get rid of heavy window coverings and let as much natural light in as possible. This amount of light and space can be optimised by using large mirrors. Mirrored furniture will also have the same effect.

By using a few larger, simple pieces of furniture rather than several small pieces you will create a calmer more comfortable feel.

Try to be creative when it comes to storage. Brushes, and mops can be hung up behind doors. Think about your wall space.

Televisions can be mounted on the wall which will save space and will be easier to view.

Use hanging racks to suspend pots and pans from the ceiling clearing up cabinet space. Make use of the walls to hang utensils and spice racks.

Multi task your kitchen cabinets, install dividing trays and extra shelves within your



cabinets to keep organised. Use a notice board instead of a junk drawer for all those bits of paper that we seem to accumulate!!

Use the back of bathroom doors for hanging towel racks or some hooks for your towels. Get a rack that hangs over your shower head to store your in shower toiletries to keep any shampoo bottles etc.

The best type of storage for small bedrooms is built in wardrobes with sliding doors. For a particularly small room I would recommend one of the wardrobe doors to be mirrored to create a lighter more spacious feel.

There are many beds now available with massive amounts of space underneath in drawers to store all your belongings away neatly.

If you have a studio apartment wallbeds are a perfect option for you as they are multifunctional, folding up into the wall during the day time giving you full use of the floor space for your living area. They then can be folded down in the evening completely transforming the room into a comfortable bedroom.

*Enjoy your space... Alex*

# FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Interior designer *Alexandra Thompson* reveals the secrets to making your home's interior look better to potential buyers



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Psychological studies have shown that an empty property remains on the market twice as long as one that has been dressed as it helps the potential buyer envisage the potential of the space. The classic buyer will also decide the appeal of the property within the first eight seconds of stepping inside; showing that making a great first impression is a must.

Creating a property that looks appealing can be complicated, if only because you will need to make time to be creative with your space, an option not available to us all due to work or family commitments. Making a good first impression can mean the difference between receiving serious offers for your home or being subjected to months of viewings that never result in a sale. So, how can you ensure that your home will make the best impression possible?

Clean, clean, clean!!! A well polished home will be far more appealing to buyers and will sell much quicker and for a higher price. Potential buyers will feel much more reassured buying a well looked after home because if what they can see is well looked after and maintained, it is likely that what can't be seen has also been maintained well. Adopt my BUGS scheme, which separates clutter into piles for the Bin, to Use, Give away, or to Sell.

An orderly home is much more likely to sell than a disorderly home. Buyers need to actually see the space that they are looking to buy to see its full potential. So if your home is brimming with excessive objects, ornaments and collectables, have a clear out or pack them away in storage for the short term while your home is being viewed.

Set the lifestyle scene! When many people view properties, they are not only buying into the property but the lifestyle too. Introduce lifestyle accessories, for example set the dining room table with some good quality matching crockery and glasses. Buy some 'showy' towels to be put out and set out the spare room with fresh linen. Be creative but keep it simple.

Dress your property. Zone your living space into relevant categories and dress accordingly. Just by adding a few simple accessories in each 'zone', you are setting the scene, showing



the function of the space and presenting it at it's very best to reflect its potential to the buyer. For example, when you enter the bedroom make sure the bed is facing you (if possible) with a bedside table at either side accessorised with lamps. A simple facelift for the bedroom would be adding a canvas with strong visual impact above the bed, a throw with co-ordinating cushions, an ornamental vase and decorative lamps to go either side of the bed.



The kitchen and bathroom must be spotless and clutter free before you start dressing. Again, keep it simple with fresh, fluffy towels, arranged neatly and will instantly lift the room and give it that hotel feel. For the kitchen, fresh fruit in a bowl and a chopping board with kitchen utensils placed by its side. Utilise mirrors wherever possible and pull back blinds and curtains to allow as much light as possible into your home.

Finally, look at your living space as if you've never seen it before. How does it make you feel? Is it inviting? Is it well maintained? Would you like to buy this home? If the answer is yes, yes, yes, then you have cracked it!!

*Good Luck!! Alex*

For examples of how to stage your home on a budget visit [www.refresh-interiors.co.uk](http://www.refresh-interiors.co.uk)

For help on staging your property and for more tips for a quick let or sale, contact Alexandra Thompson on 0161 881 5451 [www.alexandra-thompson.co.uk](http://www.alexandra-thompson.co.uk)

