

# Next in style

We asked designers what they're excited about for 2026 – and from the surrealist revival to trompe-l'œil, they delivered

## DESIGNING FOR LIFE

'The interiors movement that I'm looking forward to seeing thrive in 2026 was summed up by designer Leanne Ford: "Don't squat in your own home",' says Alex Dauley. 'Homeowners are now embracing lifestyle design rather than trends. That is, designing spaces to support how you live functionally but also with aspiration: rooms where you can listen to your favourite vinyl or meditate and practise yoga. Interiors are bold, emotive, purposeful and personal – much like my WOW!house Date Night space.'

Alex Dauley's  
Date Night  
space at  
WOW!house  
in 2025

A project by Maddux Creative focusing on tactile textures including a distinctive vintage wallhanging

## DELICATE MATERIALS

'I'm drawn to this quiet return to emotional materiality, especially through embroidery and textiles,' says Jo leGleud of Maddux Creative. 'There's something so beautiful about the way embroidery is being used right now: not as fussy decoration, but as a kind of subtle texture. Tonal, tactile, often a bit abstract - it adds a gentle richness to upholstery, curtains, even walls. We're also seeing materials that feel alive: raw silk, brushed metal, soft glazes, surfaces that shift with light and age in a way that feels honest.'



PHOTOGRAPHS (LEFT) JAMES MCDONALD; (RIGHT) RICARDO LABOUGLE

## HIGH GLOSS

'Glossy textures will be key for the coming year,' says Ellen Cumber, co-founder of design studio Golden. 'We expect to use gloss paints from woodwork to ceilings, as well as introducing shiny, almost jewel-like brass finishes for lighting and ironmongery, bringing a richness and touch of glamour that perfectly offsets natural and organic materials such as wood, woven fibres and stone, for interiors that feel layered and considered. This built-in texture for paints allows for more use of colour after the dominance of beige. Deeper hues work particularly well in a gloss and play with the light to great effect.' ➤



**BESPOKE WORK**

'What excites me most is the continued rise of craftsmanship,' says Clare Gaskin. 'Clients are increasingly drawn to pieces that tell a story, where you can sense the maker's hand and see the care in the details. It's not about perfection but about process: knowing who made something, how it was made and why. This appreciation for the handmade feels like a quiet rebellion against the disposable. We recently completed a project with dressing room joinery that combined wallpaper panels with veneered doors and our first tented ceiling, all of which relied on the skills and artistry of the team.'

A new Marylebone townhouse project by Clare Gaskin relied on the skills and artistry of the team

**THE RISE OF CRAFT**

'We've had years of minimal restraint, but I see a growing appetite for decoration, detail and collaboration with artisans,' says Tolù Adèkọ. 'It's about craft, individuality and reviving techniques that add real richness to interiors. What excites me most is this shift towards a more specialist, layered approach - design that feels personal and expressive. At the same time, new sustainable materials are opening up new ways to combine beauty and responsibility, which I find hugely inspiring.'

PHOTOGRAPHS (LEFT) NICK SMITH; (RIGHT) BRITT SCHAEFFER

Kelly Wearstler's  
tile collaboration  
with Ann Sacks,  
featuring trompe  
l'œil-like designs

## TROMPE L'OEIL EFFECTS

'Lately, I'm loving a trompe l'œil effect,' says Kelly Wearstler. 'There's both sophistication and cheekiness there. You can feel it a bit in our tile collaboration with Ann Sacks, where some of the hard ceramic tiles look soft and pillowy, and some are rendered in geometric patterns that reimagine stone as a dynamic canvas, creating patterns that are architectural and fluid and totally trick the eye.' ➤

## THE SURREALIST REVIVAL

'I expect and hope that this will be the year designers defamiliarise the domestic and that iconic pieces will be born - a "revival of the surreal";' says Minnie Kemp. 'As the world around us becomes evermore chaotic, people are searching for escapism. I recently went to Friedman Benda's warehouse in New Jersey to view Caligari's Mistress's Desk and Chair, designed by Wendell Castle, who was a visionary and innovator. This piece was made in 1990 but it's only now that people are ready for such expression.'

Henry Holland's debut furniture collection captures the surreal and sculptural



## UPCYCLING INNOVATIONS

'As a studio, we've always been concerned about waste, seeking new and creative ways to upcycle - transforming overlooked or discarded materials into something beautiful and enduring,' says Richard Parr, founder of architectural firm Richard Parr Associates. 'In 2026, we're continuing this exploration through our new gallery space, BRINK, which we opened as an extension of the practice. In December, we curated a solo show with artist Julia Mottram, who transforms discarded local sheep's wool, usually destined for landfill, into striking sculptural hangings. Julia's work is a reminder that waste can be reimagined as something poetic and purposeful.'

### SCANDINAVIAN COUNTRY

'The one thing I hope to see more of in 2026 is the merging of two seemingly different aesthetic worlds - Scandinavian simplicity and relaxed country warmth,' says Margot Tsim. 'There is a beautiful synergy in combining these styles to create interiors that feel calm, authentic and deeply grounded. It is about celebrating natural materials, craftsmanship and honest textures that age gracefully over time. The result is a home that feels cohesive yet characterful; an oasis of calm without unnecessary fuss or excess.'

A project by Margot Tsim that merges Scandinavian with modern country style

