

4 expert ways to renew your home this year

Interior designer **Simone Suss** explains how to show your post-lockdown home (and the planet) some TLC

The pandemic has encouraged us to re-evaluate our lives in a myriad of ways – to cycle more, buy less single-use plastic and to finally use the hair dye we bought in 2009.

At the start of a new year, and with the virus still raging, we should also think about re-spinning our homes.



2. Bring the outdoors in

Desks near to windows, greenery arranged in creative ways, at Studio Suss we are always try to bring the outside inside. Why? Because the Great Outdoors is good for the soul! Natural exposed materials such as wood, wicker and stone also help bring a touch of the outside world to your home. They might get the odd scratch, but embrace wear and tear. It says: we live here. My marble kitchen table, for example, bears the scars of thousands of meals shared with family and friends (and one toddler's encounter with a cook's blow torch).

4. Get in the zone

Lockdown has proved, if proof were needed, that many of us are quite able to work from home. So make sure your home is as functional as it is beautiful.

If you're designing a study, this means having a printer, charging station and filing cabinet within easy reach. If you can, position your desk near a window so you get natural light – it's good for blue-sky thinking. As the nights draw in, you'll also need good desk lighting, ideally without trailing wiring.

But if you don't have space for a study, try to organise some division of space. Do you

1. Style for the long term

Fast interiors – like fast fashion – are past. It's time to take the long view. If you are designing your children's bedroom, go for a blank canvas; wallpaper and curtains in neutral hues that don't scream: "I'm five". You can replace cheaper items such as cushions, bedding and artwork as your child's tastes change. My son, Oliver, is almost ten and the curtains and paint on the walls of his bedroom are the same as when he was a baby.

Similarly, you don't need to replace your entire kitchen to update it. Just change the splashback or worktop, or maybe the cupboard doors. Small design interventions can transform a room.

And when it comes to the dining and living room, rather than buying new furniture, consider reupholstering, re-staining, or even French polishing, your existing sofa and chairs. This is how you breathe new life into old furniture and save money at the same time – the resale value of second-hand furniture is generally very low.



3. Go green

If you're laying a wooden floor, make sure it started its life in a responsibly managed forest. Choose flooring with the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) logo.

For paints, there are plenty of alternatives, including Earthborn and Edward Bulmer Natural Paint. Graphenstone's eco-friendly paint will actually gobble carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, too.

You could also consider installing solar panels on your roof or a grey-water harvesting tank to recycle rain water.

When we built our house ten years ago we installed a tank at the same time, and it's good to know that the rain it collects supplies our washing machine and flushes our loos. And when there's a hosepipe ban we get to water the garden guilt-free.

And when you are renovating, don't automatically buy everything new. Think about using reclaimed wood, recycled plastic from the likes of Smile Plastics, glass from Diamik Glass and marble offcuts from Altrock, for example.

We use recycled materials in our design schemes and furniture, and so can you.

have a big or long hallway? Install a desk and some shelving at end and you have a de facto study. And if you're lucky enough to have a home cinema room, it can double up as an office and gym – with weights, bench press and gym balls artfully hidden in cabinetry.

If these aren't feasible, draw up a schedule of how rooms are to be used by your family at different times of the day – quiet work zones and loud play zones for designated periods. It's not easy to work from a table in your kitchen with family members milling in and out. And make sure the chair you sit on at your kitchen table is comfortable and at the right height. Your feet should touch the floor and your elbows the table.



Prediction: I think the days of open-plan interiors, the holy grail of design-conscious living for the past two decades, are drawing to an end. **Challenge:** get ahead of the crowd, and add doors between rooms to create actual zones.

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