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Everything you need to know about lighting your home

From the kitchen island to that spotlight painting, here's how to light each nook and cranny to professional perfection

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Of all the decorating decisions to make, lighting can be one of the hardest to get right.

Yet it makes such a difference. Simply swapping a bulb from cool to warm, changing a lampshade, or lighting a previously dark corner can immediately alter the mood of a space. From rechargeable bulbs to bathroom zones, here's how to light your home, room by room, with tips from the experts.

Kitchen

Bright enough to chop food but atmospheric enough to have friends over for dinner, kitchen lighting needs to be flexible. “Many people put grid-like spotlights in the ceiling and there’s no need,” says Romanos Brihi, interior designer and co-founder of Studio Vero. “Just make sure that there are adequate downlighters directed towards the cabinets and countertops.” Consider also adding lighting inside cabinets, on a sensor, so you can see what you’re reaching for.





'I don't rely on the island pendants for practicality but love having them on at night', says interior designer Romanos Brihi

| CREDIT: Studio Peake

For those not planning a full renovation, it is easy to make tweaks without a full rewire. “In a kitchen for a recent client, we wanted to add a new element without spending a fortune so I used under-cabinet strip lights, which I found online and stuck directly on; they aren't a thing of beauty but they don't need to be because they are out of sight,” says interior designer Naomi Astley Clarke. “You can also get battery-operated, remote controlled picture lights that screw onto the wall and battery-operated table lamps for the countertop, if you don't want wires everywhere.”



Decorative ceiling lights need to be atmospheric enough for when you have guests over | CREDIT: Studio Vero/Simon Brown

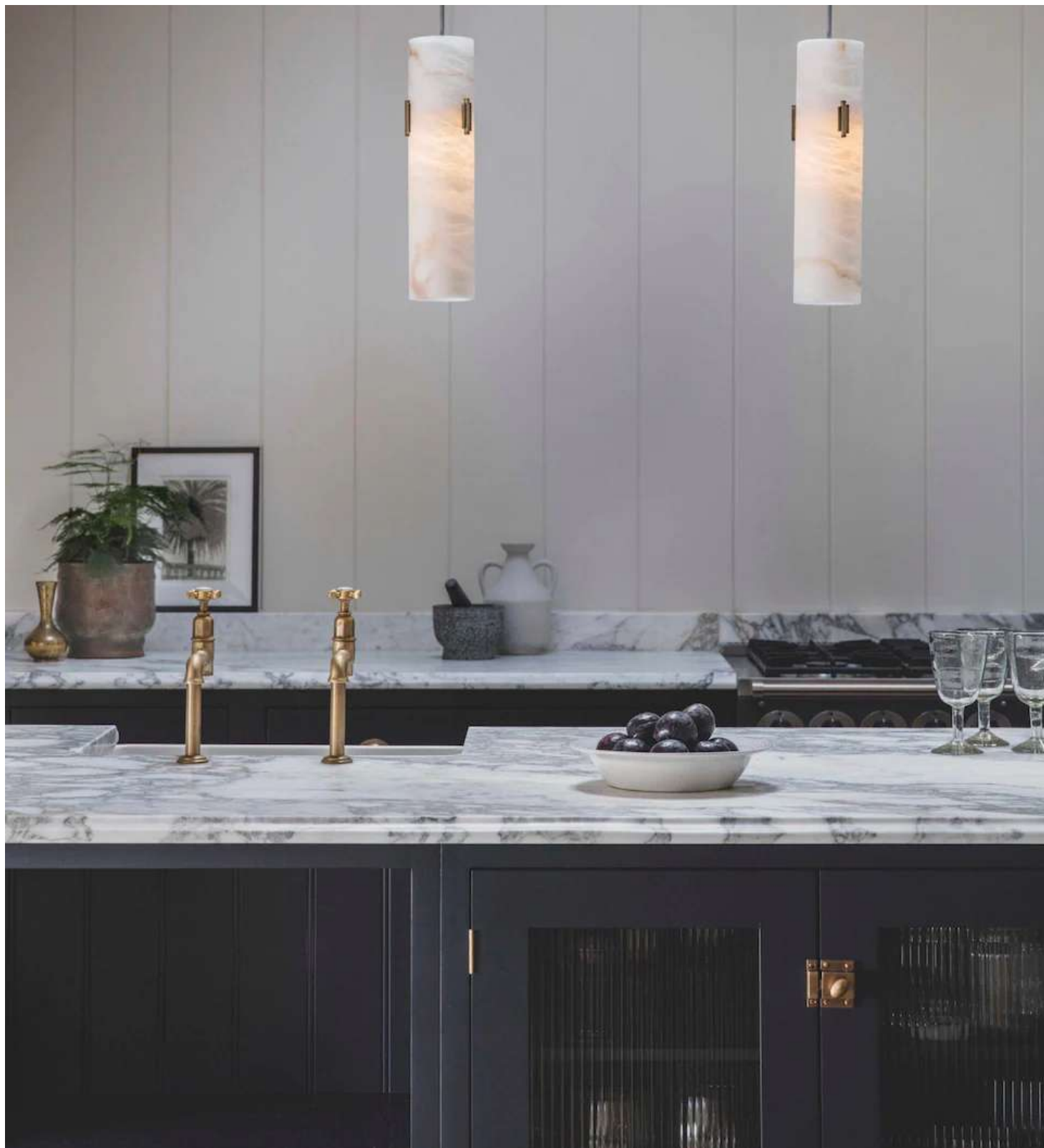
Downlights can also be used above shelves to highlight some favourite crockery, or a display of vases. “They are more elegant than spotlights but do the same job,” says Clarke, who often replaces a cooker hood with a tiled wall splashback and downlights either side of the hob.

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A kitchen island is a great opportunity for decorative ceiling lights. “In an ideal world, we would choose an odd number of pendants for over an island: a single wide one or three smaller ones, with spotlights in between for task lighting,” says Brihi. “In my kitchen, I don’t rely on the island pendants for practicality but love having them on at night.”





The Alabaster Pendant Lights from Tigermoth Lighting

Bathroom

If you're planning a bathroom from scratch, think about the lighting at the same time as the position of your fittings, as different zones must have lights with certain IP ratings.

“Materials are also important because it’s a damp environment,” says Harriet Daniels, founder of Tigermoth Lighting, which specialises in statement, sculptural lights. “Pick something durable that will last, such as brass. Having said that, we also offer bathroom lighting with silks that many customers love as a way of bringing in texture. It’s just a case of replacing the shade every five or so years.”



Lights either side of a mirror will light your face better than a spotlight above | CREDIT: Imperfect Interiors

Interior designer Beth Dadswell of Imperfect Interiors agrees that interesting materials are key. “Rattan, alabaster and bronze can all make an average bathroom feel much more stylish. One simple change is to swap out frosted fittings that don’t emit a nice light for clear or opal glass.”

If the ceiling height is too low for a wow-factor pendant over the bath, go for wall lights instead: either way put them on a separate circuit to overhead lights. “If lights are on different circuits, you can alter the brightness depending on if you need it to wake up in the morning or relax in the evening.”





Try a wow-factor pendant over the bath | CREDIT: Tigermoth Lighting

She also advises putting a heated Demista pad on the back of the mirror so that it doesn't steam up and adding a light into a recessed shelf in the shower. If you are using spotlights, she adds, be careful where you place them, "Directly above your head is very unflattering when using a mirror, and directly above a shower head casts a horrible shadow," she adds. "If you have space, a pair of wall lights either side of the basin mirror at eye level is the most flattering."

Guide to lightbulbs

- Halogen bulbs are being phased out. Buy LED (which cost less to run and last longer than older-style bulbs) and smart light bulbs. The latter are also LED but can be controlled remotely using an app on your smartphone.

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Hallway

Often dark, narrow or overlooked, hallways can be tricky to light well, but as a first impression, they set the tone for the rest of the house. "You don't have a huge amount

of furniture or fabrics in a hallway so decorative lights are a great way to add personality,” says interior designer Sarah Peake. “Don’t only light from the ceiling but from the sides too, so wall lights or picture lights, which help the space feel cosy.”

Interior designer Henry Prideaux agrees that layering light is the way forward. “Wiring for wall lights gives you optimum light when standing but this does mean chasing cables into the walls, which may not be straightforward.





Interior designer Sarah Peake: 'Decorative lights are a great way to add personality' | CREDIT: Studio Peake

“If you’re not renovating, table lamps are probably the best solution. A narrow console with narrow lights provides impact and adds style through your choice of the design and shape of the lamp itself.”

For especially dull hallways, he recommends adding a focal point at the far end, such as an artwork with a picture light above, to draw your eye out of the darkness. “A hallway could also benefit from linear strip lighting or cove lighting in the top of a cornice down the length of the corridor to provide a glow of light up on to the ceiling,” he says, adding that a central pendant or pair of pendants are ideal to make a statement in a larger space.



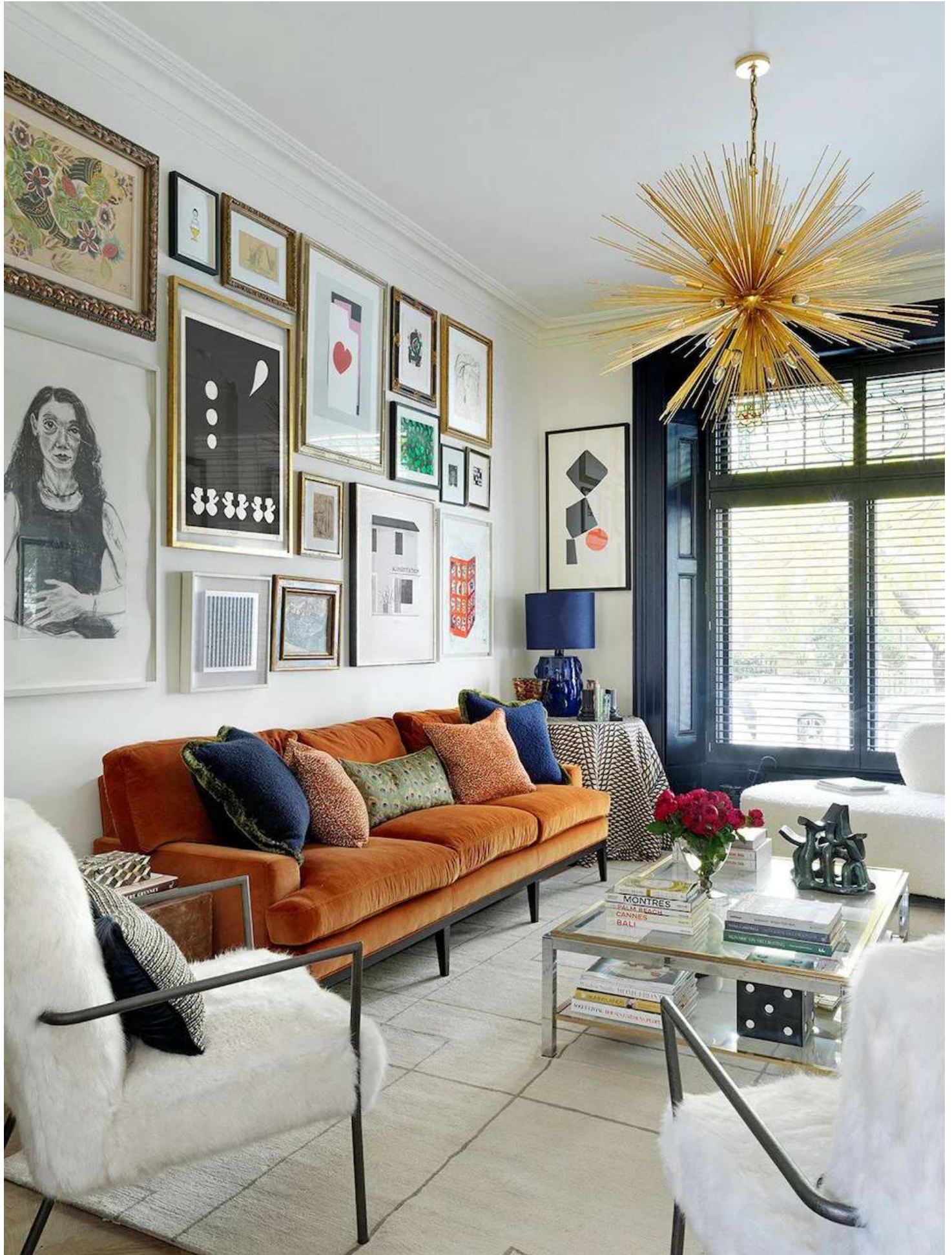
Lamps provide impact and add style through your choice of the design | CREDIT: Henry Prideaux/Tom Ullam

Adding a mirror to bounce the light around, and a dimmer switch are also easy ways to change the mood. “I love being able to dim the entrance hall light, especially when you’re having a party in the winter as it makes it feel welcoming,” says Peake.

Living room

“In the sitting room, more than anywhere else, the lighting wants to be atmospheric,” says Venetia Rudebeck, co-founder of Studio Vero. “The way we try and achieve that is

through different layers and heights of light, such as wall lights, picture lights, table lamps, and a wonderful chandelier.” With the latter, think about what’s below: don’t hang it too low if you’re likely to move the coffee table every time you host a drinks party.



Layer your lights: use a variety of sources, from ceiling pendants to picture lights and table lamps | CREDIT: Studio Vero/Simon Brown

When it comes to table lamps, Sarah Peake likes to play with scale - “in a small room, I often use oversized lamps to add drama” - and spread them out evenly around the room. She adds: “Think about where you’re going to be sitting reading or watching television and where you might need light.”

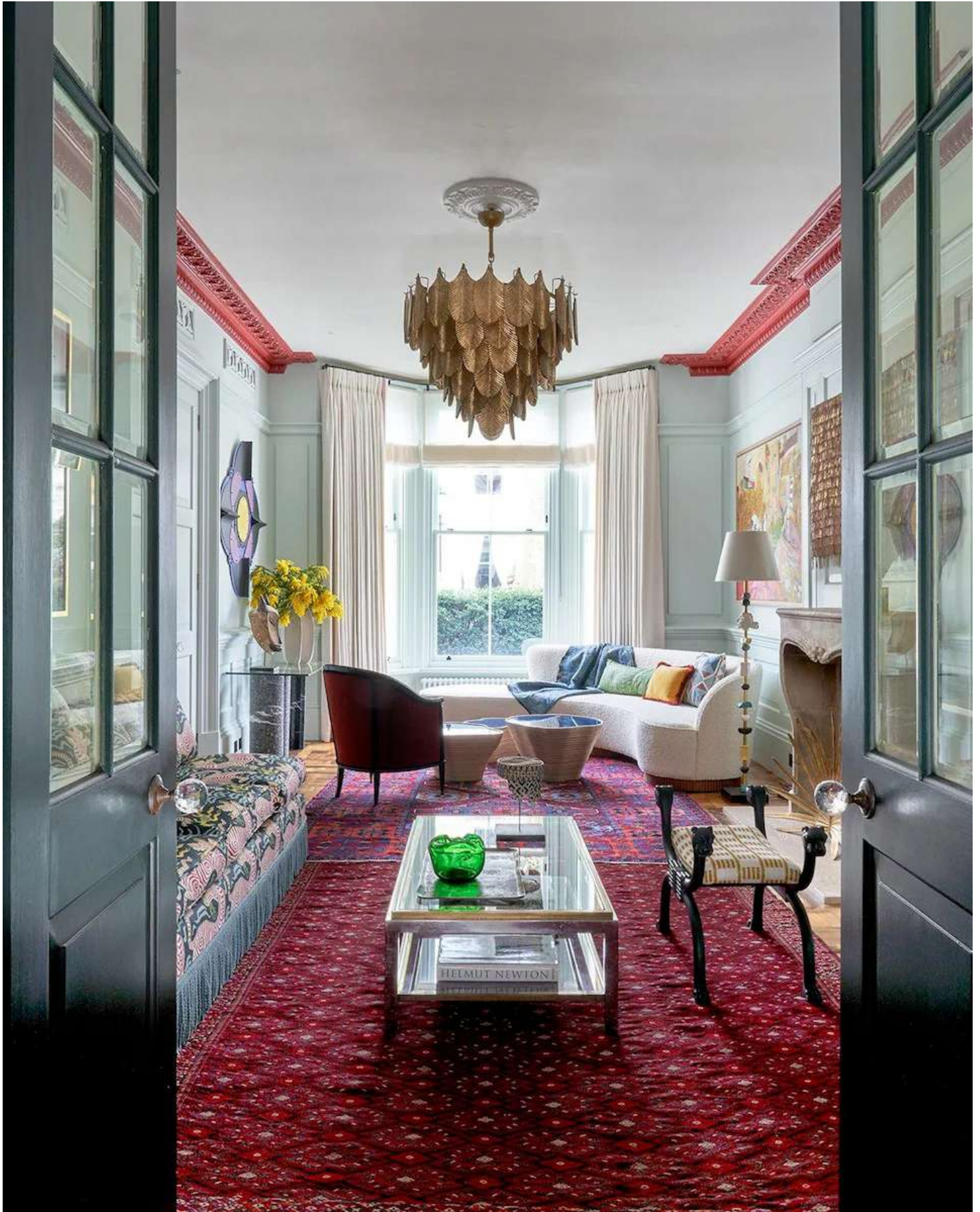
Rudebeck, meanwhile, believes that the shade itself is paramount. “We always choose natural materials such as rattan, or warmer colours; it’s not often we put a green lampshade in a room as it’s not a good illuminated colour.” Both also favour gold linings in shades and dimmer switches so you can change the mood, from when the children are playing with their toys to movie night.



Design by Studio Vero | CREDIT: Simon Brown

New lampshades to check out include the Nix by Nicola Harding range, which includes tall tapered shapes and pleats; Edit58 x Smock London’s hand-smocked skirt shades and Pooky’s pretty patterned shades in collaboration with GP&J Baker.

Lee Lovett, founder of the Soho Lighting Company, who has just launched the linen collection of pendant lights made from recycled plastics, says her biggest tip is to think about light circuits. “Put table lamps on a five-amp circuit so all lamps turn on at a single wall switch,” she says, suggesting wall lights with rechargeable bulbs if you don’t want to have to call in an electrician.



Design by Studio Vero | CREDIT: Simon Brown

Bedroom

Restful bedrooms conducive to a good night's sleep are improved tenfold by the right lighting. "The lights next to the bed are a big conversation I have with clients," says Peake. "A lot of people like task reading lights as well as bedside lamps but a good middle ground if you only want one is a wall light with a swing arm that you can direct towards a book or away from you as you wish."



The hardest yet most satisfying to get right, lighting has the power to change the mood of a room | CREDIT: Henry Prideaux/Tom Sullam

For those with small bedside tables who don't want them cluttered up with a lamp, Lovett suggests making use of sockets near the bed and hanging pendants on a long cable above bedside tables.

"Make sure you have the switch for that pendant, and the rest of the lights in the room, beside the bed so you don't have to get up to turn them off."







A wall light with a swing arm offers flexibility for when you want to read in bed | CREDIT: Studio Peake

Alternatively, if you’re restricted in space, create an extra-long headboard and back-light it, says Sally Storey, creative director of [John Cullen Lighting](#) and author of *Inspired by Light*, published by RIBA books. She adds: “It works especially well for twin rooms where you might want to move the beds together and apart.” She also suggests an LED strip light above a freestanding wardrobe to throw more indirect light into the room.

Pendants on a larger scale work well as a feature above the bed. “Ceiling down lights aren’t the most flattering for a [bedroom](#) and you don’t want to lie in bed looking up at the glare of lots of spotlights,” says Prideaux. “A pendant is a glamorous addition but quite often a decorative flush mounted ceiling light is a good solution too. Think not only about the light that is given off but the shape, colour and style of a lamp or light fitting itself.”

Do you have any preferred lighting tricks? Let us know in the comments

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