

Interiors



Eleanor Flegg with the best in design and decoration for your home

Must haves

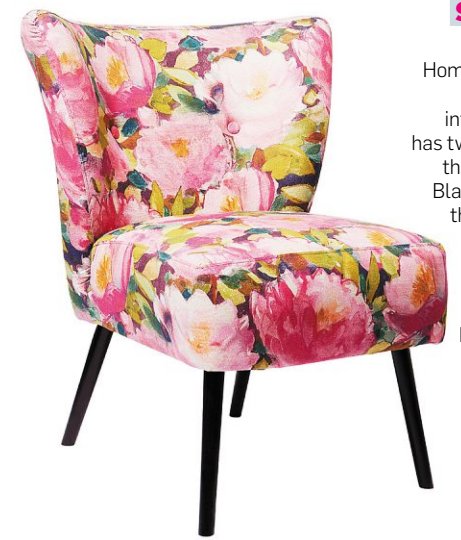
HEX APPEAL

The Hexagon wine rack combines the trend for geometric shapes with equally trendy metallics, while performing an essential task. Because you can see through the wire frame, it won't take up visual space. It costs €43 from oliverbonas.com.



SAY IT WITH FLOWERS

Homense is coming to Ireland! The international outlet has two stores opening this summer: one in Blanchardstown and the other on Grand Parade in Cork. Expect the likes of this little floral chair (€60 from homense.com).



IN LIVING COLOUR

You'll remember the versatile Kevin Sharkey from the TV series *Father Ted* (he plays the black priest from Donegal). He's also one of the artists to watch out for in the Art Loft of this month's House event. This one's called Finnigan's Rainbow (€5,200).

OUT OF AFRICA

This bright woven vase (€17) is one of a series of handcrafted items made in Uganda and sold by TK Maxx. It's part of an initiative to help disadvantaged families send their children to school. See tkmaxx.com.



Countdown to
house

27 & 28 May 2017
RDS Main Hall, Dublin 4
house-event.ie



Geometric mural from Wallsauce and (left) Eichholtz Connor coffee table

You better shape up

Avoid a chevron disaster with Jo Hamilton's fail-safe approach to using pattern



GOMETRY — it's almost foolproof!" says the interior designer Jo Hamilton. My heart sinks. When a celebrity chef tells me that a recipe is foolproof, it always goes wrong. Now there's a celebrity designer telling me I can play around with geometric patterns. What if I end up with a room that looks like a breeding colony of chevrons ran amuck?

"Geometrical patterns are supercool," Hamilton adds. "The lines are so simple that they're very calming, but they're also interesting to look at. You get lots of drama without looking naff."

When I voice my concerns, Hamilton admits I'm not alone. Combining geometrics is a pretty scary thing to do. "Remove the idea that you've put geometric patterns, layer on layer, and just think of them as patterns," she explains. "If all the patterns are on the same scale, then they will fight against each other. You need to divide them into small, medium and large."

This, she assures me, is a fail-safe approach to using pattern. I'm calling it Hamilton's Rule of Three.

When you look at Jo Hamilton's designs, you can see what she's talking about. In a Greenwich Village apartment in New York, she's combined Andrew Martin's Biography wallpaper, a grid of grey squares, with a big bold diamond patterned rug.

The shapes on the rug are echoed in the bare bones of a geometric coffee table, a chunky piece in marble and bronze that she commissioned to fit the room.

Between the long tall windows is a modern mirror made from a grid of antique glass. The mirror references the lines of the windows, and also the

wallpaper pattern. "The window frames were the starting point for the room," she says. "The owners loved the building, which has beautiful architectural mouldings, but I didn't want the room to feel twee."

Here, you can see Hamilton's Rule of Three in action. The pattern on the rug under the coffee table is small and detailed; the upholstery on the chair and cushions has a medium-sized pattern; while the geometrics on the rug under the bed are large. "There's a lot of drama, but it doesn't scream and shout."

For geometric designs at a reasonable cost, she recommends the British company Andrew Martin. They don't have a showroom in Ireland but you can buy wallpaper (from around €95 for a 10 metre roll); fabrics (€24 to €178 per metre); and cushions (from 53 plus fabric) from their online store.

The atmosphere in the room, as requested by its owners, is calm. Hamilton achieved this with a muted palette, basically shades of grey, enlivened by teal lampshades and velvet cushions. "When people ask for a relaxing atmosphere, I always think about cooler, calmer colours," she says.

Hamilton's design for a lounge in Hamstead, London, followed a very different brief. This is an exuberant, extrovert, and very expensive ensemble. "The story was set by the rug," she says. "The owners just fell in love with it."

It comes from the Rug Company, where prices range from €422 for a 6x4ft rug to €1,663 per square metre. If you want to shop more locally, the Irish companies Rug Art and Ceadoogan have plenty of geometrics on offer. Both are taking part in the interior design event House at the RDS at the end of this month. Once the



Clockwise from left: Jo Hamilton says you need to divide patterns into small, medium and large; the Greenwich Village apartment Jo styled with Andrew Martin Biography wallpaper; the lounge in Hamstead; and a geometric mural by Wallsauce



rug had been chosen and made to order, the challenge was to design the room around it.

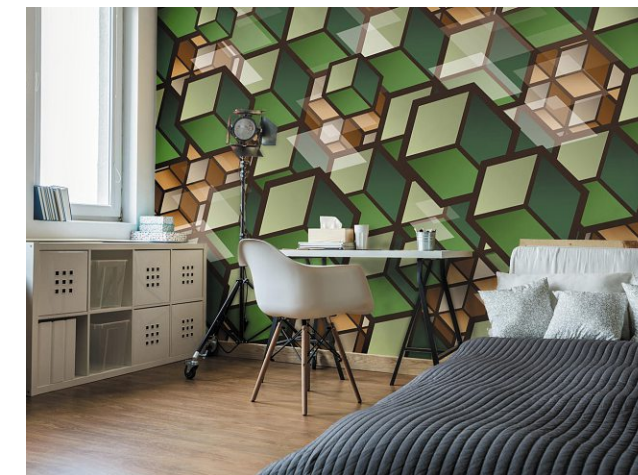
"With any interior, any big statement that you make needs to be balanced. You don't want to come into a room and feel that everything is shouting at you at once. Some pieces can raise their voices, but other pieces need to whisper."

To create a sense of equilibrium in the room, Hamilton's Rule of Three swings into play again. The large pattern of the rug is balanced by a medium scale pattern in the mirrors on either side of the fireplace, contrasted with a much smaller

pattern in a pair of matching cabinets below. Both mirrors and cabinets come from Christopher Guy. They're modern, with a 1930s flavour.

One simple and effective way of introducing geometrics is by using wire-framed light fittings. These enclose a pendant bulb like the skeleton of a lampshade or the outline of a cage. "The shape changes as you move around them and they cast wonderful shadows," says Hamilton.

She's also a fan of coffee tables with geometric frames. The Eichholtz Connor coffee table (€2,367) from Sweetpea



and Willow is a glitzy example, but you can buy much cheaper coffee tables based on a similar notion. "Because they're not too solid they make the space seem bigger," she says. "You can see the rug or the floor beneath them and the more floor that you can see, the greater the sense of space."

Jo Hamilton is a show ambassador for House and will be on the Inspiration Stage every day at the RDS.

She will be speaking about creating beautiful interiors and giving away insider tips and tricks on colour, lighting and layout on Saturday, May 27, at

11.30am and again the following day at 12.30pm.

Hamilton will also be putting together a sample board live on stage with the help of the House audience as she talks about how to design your interior on Saturday at 3pm and then again the following day at 3.30pm.

She will also be speaking twice on the trade-only day (Friday, May 26), at 1pm and 4pm, about designing for the luxury market.

See johamilton.co.uk, andrewmartin.co.uk, ceadogan.ie, rugart.ie, therugcompany.com, christopherguy.com

Home Economics

Answering your property questions

Q My daughter is leaving her flat after a year to move nearer college, but the landlord refuses to refund her deposit. He's claiming there is damage to the walls and paintwork, some furniture and the floor is chipped, and the glass on a print cracked. I would consider this 'wear and tear' rather than damage. She has also put up with mould in the bathroom which he refused to re-tile. She needs the deposit for her next apartment. What rights does she have?



A hole in the ceiling or wall would qualify keeping some of the deposit

Her rights are in the Residential Tenancies Act 2004, enforced by the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB). Deposit retention accounts for 22pc of all complaints. The odds are on her side, as 78pc of cases result in full or partial return of the deposit to the tenant.

The RTB provides adjudication services for €15 online (www.rtb.ie), but they told me: "The security deposit is considered the lawful property of the tenant, unless the landlord establishes a right to some or all of it, and they are legally entitled to its refund where there is no rent/utilities owing, where the tenant has not carried out an early termination of

the lease and where there is no damage to the dwelling beyond normal wear and tear at the end of a tenancy." The latter is, of course, where your daughter's problem lies.

They add: "While a dwelling should be left clean and tidy on its vacation, a landlord cannot expect the dwelling to be returned in the same condition it was presented in at the commencement of the tenancy. A landlord must take into consideration the length of the tenancy and whether any deterioration to fixtures, furnishings, walls or floor coverings reflected 'ordinary and reasonable use'."

"Damage in excess of normal wear and tear would likely include holes in walls or doors,

burn marks or excessive staining to carpets, missing fixtures, nicotine damage in the event that smoking was expressly prohibited in the lease agreement, torn curtains and broken glass in windows."

Honestly, I'd say the landlord is on a sticky wicket here and probably knows it. Nothing you've described amounts to unreasonable damage. I'd have her write to him, mentioning she's complaining to the RTB and asking for a full, written report of the alleged damage. He might be of the opinion that a young student is an easy mark.

Q Myself and my husband have resigned ourselves to the fact that we are going to be long-term renters. We haven't a hope of pulling together a deposit for a house, but I am due our second child and may have to give up work, compounding the decision. I'm worried if something were to happen my husband — like cancer or worse — I couldn't possibly afford the rent. I know that with mortgages, people take out protection policies with the bank, but is there anything similar for renters?

Rents are up over eight per cent higher than the boom heights, so I can see your dilemma. It's a really good idea to consider family protection at any time, but certainly in your case. You don't need a special 'renters' insurance, as this type of life insurance can be taken out by anybody. With mortgages, it is usually insisted upon by the bank so they benefit if the mortgage payer dies. In your case, you would directly.

Joe Charles of Royal London Assurance, who specialises in this type of cover, says "850,000 people live in rented accommodation, many of them long term. It leaves them in a potentially precarious position if the bread-winner were to become seriously ill or pass away. 'Rent Protection' is simple to put in place, for life and serious illness, to ensure rent and other expenses would continue to be paid for a surviving family."

I don't know your ages, but for non-smokers aged 33 and 35 looking for 10 years' cover on rent of €1,500 per month, or €180,000, he's quoting around €23 per month. Talk to a broker.



Sinead Ryan

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The Ryan Review

YOU have to feel for Simon Coveney. He's full of bright ideas, a real determination to sort out the housing crisis and the type of cutting-through-the-crap attitude that his predecessors swapped for loud rhetoric.

And yet, you'd still feel sorry for him because you know that the assault course he's jumping through has more hidden landmines than a war zone.

His latest light-bulb moment: the handing over of 1,700 hectares of State-owned land to build up to 50,000 houses and apartments is brilliant. In fact, it is so brilliant it comes simultaneously with questions of "why didn't anyone else think of that?" and "what's the catch?"

Allowing private developers free land is not 'selling off the family

silver' as he has been accused of. In fact, it's the equivalent of clearing out the potting shed of all the accumulated crap from the last decade and paving the way for a garden centre.

But a very tough hand will be needed to ensure builders don't, for example, hike up the house price to compensate for the freebie or engage in the usual behaviour of 'swapping out' their social housing requirement in Killiney to a plot of land in Ballymun.

He promises all of this through a tough system of checks and balances. That sounds like bureaucracy on speed. If it was that easy, why then didn't the local authorities get a grip on it before now and won't they resent the implication? He deserves our support while we find out.