



LEAVING THE SIDELINES

Sideboards are no longer wallflowers, as discerning homeowners invest in glamorous, highly crafted and intriguing designs capable of stealing the limelight. **Nicole Swengley** reports

Their name may imply that they perform a peripheral role in the home, but an increasing use of unusual materials, bold colours and enticing finishes is transforming the sideboard into a glamorous eye-catcher capable of taking centre stage. “Clients increasingly want bespoke or one-off pieces with specialist materials and finishes,” says Simon Stewart, founder of bespoke furniture, lighting and interior design studio Charles Burnand. He cites White Ice (from £29,000), a piece featuring gypsum marquetry hand-set in a brushed copper frame on white sycamore, created for the firm by French furniture-maker Jallu Ebénistes. “In addition to exotic-wood veneers and dyed vellum, we’ve been working with mica and gypsum. Many designers avoid mica as it’s tricky to handle, but I love its raw, organic texture and we’ve developed a technique to give it a more luxurious and uniform look by covering it in resin. The eucalyptus carcass used for the Porchester



sideboard [£26,000, pictured overleaf] allows the timber’s beautiful golden streaks to enhance the shimmering gold of the mica.”

Equally chic is the Briscoe (£15,500), whose smoked eucalyptus carcass is clad in deep-blue dyed vellum. “We used a technique that creates an almost reptilian finish and, as a surprising contrast, flocked the interior baby blue,” says Stewart. Just as striking is the white-ebony veneer with exaggerated black veining on the art deco-inspired Riccardo sideboard (£16,500), which emphasises the piece’s elongated curves. “Its shape is relatively simple, so the exterior can take a very strong, statement finish complemented by a

From top: Rupert Bevan ebonised beech, vellum and brass sideboard, from £10,500. Bonaldo wood, metal and lacquer Summer sideboard, £2,500

luxurious matte-lacquered Macassar-ebony interior.”

Experimenting with exotic materials also excites London-based designer Simon Orrell. “The lustre of shell finishes is currently



Clockwise from left: **Bonaldo** ash and lacquer Doppler sideboard, from £3,140. **Miniforms** wood, copper and lacquer Dalila sideboard, from £3,310. **Charles Burnand** eucalyptus, mica and brass Porchester sideboard, £26,000



creating great interest," he says, mentioning in particular a pair of blacklip shell sideboards (£10,600 each) with a kabebe shell border and natural oak interior that were commissioned for a client's dining room, and a 2.5m-wide red tiger pen-shell sideboard (£16,200) with black oak interior made for a customer in Russia. Orrell has also created bespoke sideboards combining selenite – a type of gypsum – with antique brass (£26,000), shagreen with mahogany (£10,300) and French-polished maple with parchment panels (£7,900).

"Clients push us to create ever more unusual pieces, and much of this process is driven by combining diverse materials," says furniture maker Rupert Bevan. "Gilding, gesso work [paint combined with chalk, gypsum and pigment], glass and brass are greatly in demand; I get much of my inspiration for exotic materials and finishes at the V&A." His sideboard commissions have included an ebonised oak design with doors covered in water-gilded and burnished silver crackled gesso (from £12,000), one whose antiqued mirror-glass panels were backed with floral fabric (from £14,000, pictured overleaf), and a marble-topped piece with an ivory gesso exterior featuring asymmetric hammered bronze rods (from £32,000). Bevan has also made a dining-room sideboard clad in patinated copper panels (from £19,000), its various shades creating a geometric pattern, and an ebonised beech piece with natural vellum doors (from £10,500, pictured on previous pages) designed to work in a living room.

Eoin Lyons of Dublin-based LyonsKelly, an integrated architecture and interior design company, describes this new breed of statement sideboard as "the featured soloist, while the rest of the furniture is the orchestra". He adds:

"These sideboards are the visible stars, anchoring a room and setting the scene - creating a vignette involving lamps, artworks and objects on them"

"These sideboards are the visible stars, anchoring a room and setting the scene – creating a vignette involving lamps, artworks and decorative objects placed upon them." For standout designs Lyons turns to Dublin-based furniture-maker Zelouf+Bell, which has three pieces in the National Museum of Ireland's permanent collection and recently displayed two spectacular sideboards – Othello and Jungle – at the interior design show Decorex in London.

"For Othello [€30,000, edition of 10]," says designer Susan Zelouf, "we hand-inlaid 22,000 Macassar-ebony triangles radially in a pale-pink ripple-sycamore starburst pattern and had wraparound marquetry punctuating each end of the dark, highly figured Macassar sideboard.

The interior is a blush-figured sycamore with pink lambskin-lined drawers. It reflects our deepening interest in geometric graphics, referencing Islamic and Japanese patterns through detailed marquetry." This intriguing pattern-on-pattern technique also adds drama to Jungle (€17,870, edition of six), where a bold marquetry leaf design is superimposed on vertically laid Macassar ebony. The sideboard sits on a brass plinth and is topped by vivid rainforest-green marble, while its door and drawers are touch operated.

"Our work is hugely labour-intensive, but we love what we do; we take risks and feel that the pieces reflect that," says Zelouf, whose approach has generated singular designs such as Glimmer (€14,550, edition of six), a three-door sideboard in smoked oak inlaid with aged brass or polished aluminium, and the stunning seven-door Curved Briques (€34,000, edition of six) – the first of which is now in a New York penthouse overlooking Central Park and was created as a response to the iconic 1925 black-lacquer Briques screen by Eileen Gray. Each of



of its individually made vintage Rio rosewood “bricks” is pinned with polished aluminium rods and assembled with a wraparound grain whose subtle undulation conveys a sense of movement.

Zelouf & Bell’s fascination with Japanese aesthetics is evident in its eucalyptus Danu sideboard (€13,370, edition of six), which merges sliding doors in a timber lattice (an architectural cue borrowed from Kyoto’s traditional wooden houses) with an acid-etched steel “lace” panel through which internal LED lighting partly reveals the objects stored inside. A Japanese *tenugui*-fabric motif, meanwhile, inspired Cranes in a Row Noir (€15,900, edition of six, pictured on final page), a black bolivar sideboard featuring marquetry in bleached, figured taba, grey ripple sycamore, red birch and yellow koto, finished with 20 coats of hand-applied lacquer.

A distinctly playful approach differentiates a recent commission created by London-based designer Ali Robinson, whose debut furniture collection,

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Kynance, launched in July. The original version of his Hugon sideboard (£5,160) was commissioned by a client who wanted a toy storage unit that could have different uses as the child grew up. Primary colours and enamel toys informed the initial concept, which developed into a highly practical piece of modular storage that could be tailored to suit all kinds of spaces. Circular patinated steel finger-pulls open two limed-oak cupboards to reveal a vermilion stained-oak interior, while flush magnetic handles, inspired by sports cars, open a pair of blue vitreous-enamel drawers. An open-fronted module box made from perforated, polished steel offers a nod to Robinson’s childhood Meccano set. “All my designs



From top: Tonelli glass and lacquer Liber sideboard, from £2,070. Rupert Bevan sideboard featuring mirror-glass panels backed with floral fabric, from £14,000. Mogg larch, metal and lacquer Zio Tom sideboard, from £3,240



start with subliminal references to previously seen and used objects, so they often resonate with users," he says.

According to Tina Mahony, director of contemporary-furniture retailer Go Modern, the standout trend at the Salone del Mobile this year was hot hues and bold, graphic prints. "We spotted zingy colours such as Marsala red, Veronese green and shades of blue from duck egg to cobalt," she says. "Bright colours work beautifully against walls painted in the deeper shades of heritage greys or blues, and there's a wonderful sense of optimism about them." The Summer sideboard (£2,500, pictured on opening pages) from Italian manufacturer Bonaldo, for example, comes in saffron-yellow and red lacquered versions, and its angular wooden frame has a drop-down surface concealing internal compartments when closed. Mahony also highlights family-run Italian company Miniforms, whose Dalila (from £3,310, pictured on third page), Code (£2,030) and Stoya (from £2,770) sideboards come in vibrant shades such as



Gallotti&Radice ash, rosewood, metal and lacquer Diedro sideboard, from £8,560, which plays with perspective

Marsala red and an intense blue, with the latter sporting a plaid pattern created by silkscreen printing.

For other eye-catching patterns she cites Bonaldo's Doppler (from £3,140, pictured on third page), which features asymmetrically opening cupboards whose brightly coloured graphic patterns create an optical trick by appearing to overlap, and the company's Shade sideboard (from £3,710), whose lacquered iridescent exterior is set off with a graphic line detail. She is also a huge fan of Como-based Mogg, a rising star in Italy, founded in 2012 by architect Nicola Galbiati. The company is gaining a reputation for quirky designs such as Zio Tom (from £3,240, pictured on previous page), a sideboard by Claudio Bitetti that features irregular rows of reclaimed larch and



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Left: Zelouf+Bell bolivar, taba, sycamore, birch, koto and lacquer Cranes in a Row Noir sideboard, €15,900

can sit with the planks pointing either upwards (when floorstanding on a set of small feet or wall-mounted) or downwards (when combined with a metal base and legs).

Even more visually intriguing are the Ritratti sideboard (£3,240), designed by Marzia and Leo Dainelli for Mogg, which plays with perspective through a colourful mix of glossy and matte resin finishes on laminated phenolic wood, and Gallotti&Radice’s Diedro sideboard (from £8,560, pictured on previous page), in a chic combination of white taba fris /black Tanganika wood veneers or ash/rosewood. Meanwhile, letting its contents do the talking, the Liber sideboard (from £2,070, pictured on previous page) from Italian glass specialist Tonelli features “extra-clear” toughened glass panels (with less green tinting than ordinary glass) that are joined using Tonelli’s trademark bonding process, and can be fitted with up to three drawers in white matte lacquer or an exhaustive range of other colours. The sideboard is undeniably taking top billing this season. ◆

THE SIDEBOARD EXPLORED

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