



Clockwise, from top House of Hackney medium velvet amatoria-fringed cushion 45cm x 45cm, £175; Bang & Olufsen BeoSound 2 smart speaker with Google Assistant £2,649; Bernardaud Aux Oiseaux teapot £581 and teacup and saucer £199; Bang & Olufsen Beoplay A9 speaker in Gold Tone £3,199; Ginori 1735 Rain Rock Creek candle 700g, £350

SPOILT FOR CHOICE

Overwhelmed by fabric swatches? In a spin about sofa placement? Step away from those floor tiles and paint samples... in a world of endless interior-design options, GRACE CAIN finds the solutions

ONE DAY, YOU'RE YOUNG, in love and playfully bantering over who picks the restaurant; the next, you're scrolling endlessly through Netflix from the floor of your new apartment because neither of you can decide which sofa to buy. This is the reality that my boyfriend and I currently inhabit – but at least it's better than the two days we stopped speaking because shopping for a fridge proved to be a surprisingly explosive issue.

I think we may be suffering from what psychologist Barry Schwartz termed 'the paradox of choice'. In his book of the same name, Schwartz theorises that the interminable number of options we now face either induce paralysis (as in, you end up with no sofa); or regret (as you wonder if, somewhere, there is a better sofa than the one you chose). We decide to narrow our search by at least settling on a colour, and opt for teal to match the tiles in the fireplace. Imagine my relief when Harrods' head of interior design, Letitia Fitzgibbon, vindicates our approach.

"It's always a good idea to start with any characteristics or features of your home that will remain – such as a fireplace or the floor – because these finishes can then form the base for every subsequent design choice," she explains. "Then consider your layout: does it meet all your requirements or could it be more efficient?" This is where you may want to call in reinforcements. Depending on your lifestyle, the in-house experts at Harrods Interior Design can tweak or entirely refurbish your floor plan to create spaces that are harmonious and multifunctional.

If you're happy with your existing space and more concerned about the details (such as sofas), Fitzgibbon says that it can be helpful to start with the overall 'story' you would like to convey. "Think about your inspiration – is there a design period you particularly like? Are you hoping to stay loyal to the history of the building? Do you want to build your room around a favourite artwork? Defining your design direction in this way will inform the choices you make around shapes, colour palettes and details. Just remember to ensure that any materials and finishes work alongside the base I mentioned earlier."

Zeroing in on your story is the simplest way to instantly eliminate a substantial portion of possibilities. Committing to the aesthetic of your Victorian townhouse, for example, makes it easier to discount mid-century modern furniture and conceptual sculpture. But it's still a decision-making minefield, which is why Harrods Interior Design also offers an in-store furniture planning option to help you find the pieces that work together aesthetically and suit your lifestyle.

There's also another option (I know, I know, but hear me out): stop scrolling through the infinite range of existing items and go bespoke instead. Furniture brands such as Frato, Maxalto and Savoir can all create customised pieces to suit your style and needs, with experts to assist with all

the decisions that come with such a project. And the same goes for the smaller (but no less important) details. Take Pratesi, for example; the maker of heritage Italian linens aims to simplify the process when it comes to making your bed, helping you to match existing details in your homes with custom embroideries and monograms. Michelle Klein, Pratesi's CEO, advises anyone shopping for bed linen to keep three things in mind: feel, fibre and weight. "You might also prefer to switch out your sheets from season to season," she adds. "An airier and cooler material, like percale, may be better for spring and summer. But for fall and winter, you could look for something a bit softer and more substantial, like sateen."

Meanwhile, if you've ever harboured dreams of having your own home cinema or aesthetically stunning sound system, the expert consultants at Bang & Olufsen can help take away any decision-induced stress with tailored tech solutions to suit your needs. The brand's bespoke service is also ideal if (as per Fitzgibbon's earlier advice) you can't find a speaker in quite the right hue to match your base – and if you live in London, they'll even visit to help you finalise your choices.

Once you've made all the decisions necessary to make your home 'work', it's time for the finishing touches. Home is where the art is, and even in a world full of alternatives, you'll never regret a one-of-a-kind piece commissioned just for you. The Harrods Interior Design team has a roster of artists and artisans who can create works to suit your home and style. This includes London-based artist Jan Erika, who can create dynamic abstract works on anything from tables and tableware to immense household walls; and Cuppebord, whose 'surface designers' layer metal leaf with paints and pigments (all mixed by hand) onto glass and mirrors to mesmerising effect.

Whether you're refurbishing, renovating or starting completely from scratch, Fitzgibbon has one final piece of advice. "As you build up your home, remember to take time to evaluate each decision," she says. "You want to be certain that it delivers on the story you have designed for each space." So I guess I'd better start thinking about the story I want my future sofa to convey... right after I decide what I'm going to watch on Netflix. □

BESPOKE SERVICES

The interior

From tablescaping and furniture planning to more dramatic alterations to the overall space, Harrods Interior Design has the know-how to bring your vision to life.

The furniture

Can't find what you're looking for? Dream up your own design. Many brands can create bespoke pieces – and Frato and Maxalto's custom-made creations have all the qualities of future heirlooms.

The linens

You know you've made it in life when your towels are monogrammed. But why stop there? Brands such as Pratesi also offer initialled bedding, table linens and decorative pillows.

The tableware

To bring something extra special to the table, consider hand-painted tableware. And some of the finest porcelain makers (Ginori 1735, Bernardaud) can be commissioned to create unique pieces.

The tech

From multiroom sound systems to the best home-theatre set-up for your space, Bang & Olufsen's experts are on hand to discuss your entertainment requirements.

Bang & Olufsen; Bernardaud; Getty Images; Ginori 1735; House of Hackney

Furniture, Home and Interior Design Studio, Third Floor; Technology, Fifth Floor; and harrods.com