

# Dear Utopia



I'm constantly tinkering and mulling over various ideas as to how I can improve our home, when actually only a few months ago I had promised my other half that my work on the house had finished! In fact as far back as I can remember I was nicknamed Miss Pickford after the removals firm, because I would move the living furniture around at the tender age of five, much to my parents' annoyance. Clearly it wasn't in the right places! This simple act of re-orientating the furniture into a different arrangement will allow you to re-enjoy pieces afresh. I think of my home as an ongoing love affair; it requires day-to-day attention. And so February is a perfect time to fall in love all over again and get down to those jobs you've been putting off.

I look forward to receiving your questions

Andrea Maflin is an interior designer, TV presenter, author, artist and design consultant [www.andreamaflin.co.uk](http://www.andreamaflin.co.uk)

Star letter

**Q** My kitchen is large and sunny with cream units, steel handles and appliances, black granite worktops, grey wall tiles and yellow-painted walls. I'd like to remove the tiles and change the wall colour. Any ideas please?

Tina Dawson, via email

**A** Colour is a highly emotive subject and how we experience a hue and its effect on each of us will vary tremendously. What is important is to use a colour on the walls that is two shades darker or lighter than the cabinets. If a similar tone is used, there will be no definition between the two and the scheme will appear 'wishy-washy'. Touches of black will help to bring together the various elements of your kitchen. This can be achieved in an understated manner, for example, using black piping around seat cushions, table runners and napkins. Replacing the grey tiles with a small upstand in granite, using the same material as the worktops will unify this area. Consider fitting a larger piece around the hob as that area will get splashed. For the all-important wall colour, I'd lean towards warm buttery tones and mellow shades of biscuit. These will work brilliantly with cream cabinets and will exude elegance with a timeless quality. You will have an immediate impact by changing these elements. What remains will become a neutral scheme that you could take into any direction. Add the unexpected with splashes of pure colour in the form of paintings or accessories. Remember food can instantly add intense colour, as can a vase of dramatic flowers.

Do you have a question about your kitchen, bathroom or interior design? Write to Andrea at Utopia, The Old School, Colchester Road, Wakes Colne, Colchester, CO6 2BY or email Andrea at [dearutopia@propub.co.uk](mailto:dearutopia@propub.co.uk)

**Ecloth** The star letter winner receives an E-cloth cleaning kit worth £100, delivering speedy cleaning with just water. It includes the Bathroom Pack – an absorbent cloth for getting to grips with dirt plus a glass/polishing cloth for a smear-free finish on mirrors, tiles and taps. [www.e-cloth.com](http://www.e-cloth.com)



Image shows Neos kitchen by Rational. From £10,000. 01543 459 459 | [www.rational.de](http://www.rational.de)



Sicis has a fab selection of artful panels. Image shows the sheer glass mosaic collection. Prices on application. +39 0287 6099 | [www.sicis.com](http://www.sicis.com)

**Q** Can you suggest how to introduce some artwork into my bathroom please?

J Robson, Cleveland

**A** Exquisitely executed cohesion of art and design makes a statement like no other. Depending on how large and well ventilated your bathroom is, your will need to be cautious when including traditionally framed artwork made from wood, paper or board – all of which absorb moisture. Alternatively, Bisazza (020 7584 8837 | [www.bisazza.com](http://www.bisazza.com)) is a whizz at creating masterpieces using mosaic tiles. Its breathtaking artworks appear three-dimensional, while the range and repertoire are tremendous and the designs can be tailor-made to fit any size of wall. Or I would consider incorporating a large sculptural piece displayed in a prominent position, or an architectural planting. If you are fortunate enough to have a window, consider a window treatment that uses a statement print for a Roman blind.

**Q** Are there any colours I should avoid in a bathroom?

Daniel Stirling, Manchester

**A** I would avoid white unless you're going for a minimal style. Pale blues and greens tend to make the space feel icy cold and clinical when there is no real colour differential between that of the sanitaryware and the walls or flooring. Instead focus on cosy, natural shades that will soften and give the illusion of warmth. By introducing tones of brown, beige, grey and green with the emphasis on sage or khaki, you will confidently create an inviting space in which to bathe. Also try to use natural materials in the bathroom such as wood, bamboo, stone or porcelain.



Fired Earth's Terrano mosaic comes in three earth-based colourways. £139.84/m². 01295 812 088 | [www.firedearth.com](http://www.firedearth.com)

Several of Hotel Du Vin's suites have bathtubs in the bedrooms. This one is in Glasgow. 0141 339 2001 | [www.hotelduvin.com](http://www.hotelduvin.com)



**Q** What do I need to bear in mind if having a freestanding bath in my bedroom?

Mrs O Freeman, south London

**A** This really is one of life's indulgences and reminiscent of boutique hotel suites. Consider the layout of the room as a whole; this may require you to reconfigure the entire space. In order to begin the design process you are going to need to work out where the water and waste facilities are. Once this has been established, good ventilation is essential and needs to be located near the bathing area; this will help to reduce the warm moisture content within the space. Locate the tub away from wardrobes and bedding as any moisture may damage fabrics. Unlike a shower, a bath doesn't have to be a 'wet area', however, baths in bedrooms are not designed for children to splash around in and you should have stone or waterproof flooring around the tub. If one partner gets up earlier than the other, water noises might be irritating to the partner still trying to snooze. The bath ought to be beautiful because it will be on show all the time, and if it's a large freestanding model, check that the floor can withstand the weight.