

INTERIORS

Stick to the period for fireplace charm

A roaring fire may be the last thing on your mind right now, but it makes sense to think ahead before winter sets in. Here fireplace expert Owen Pacey explains how the right surround can add so much to your home.

THE role of a good interior designer is to make a house instantly more alluring to live in, to function better as a home and be more valuable for future buyers.

Installing features, such as an original fireplace, mirror or antique lighting is an appealing way to make this transformation but also keeps a period property true to its surroundings.

Having worked in the industry for over 20 years, fireplaces are my area of expertise, it's what I know and I consider them pieces of art. Georgian fireplaces are my favourite; I think it's because of their square-ish inserts, whereas Victorian ones are mainly arched or tiled.

The most frequent question I get asked is my opinion on period correctness. Personally, I think people should stick with the period – if you don't, it looks like you've messed around with the house. I've been asked to take stunning antique fireplaces out of houses that shouldn't come out and it breaks my heart. I just won't do it. You are just destroying the room and the value of your house.

However, if you've got a fireplace you don't like, then change it; it's easy to swap a tiled Victorian fireplace for a cast-iron arch. It is not about cost but what looks right.

Fireplaces come in a range of prices from Victorian grates to 18th-century



Black French Marble Lion Paw original fireplace, £3,800, renaissancelondon.com; handwoven throw, £209, zuzunaga.com; Devon chair, £579, sofaworkshop.com.

marble, priced from £750 to £100,000 for an extremely rare Adam, but now handmade, professionally aged reproductions with immaculate carving and attention to detail can be produced at a much lower price.

Many urban homes are challenged with space but it does not matter what type of home you live in – there is a fireplace that will fit the bill. One of my tips would be to never rip out an old fireplace to make way for a replacement without getting expert guidance. If you don't like

what you already have you can often trade it in for another mantelpiece. In my own house I've fitted an 18th century Italian Travertine fireplace in a modern dining room. I live in a converted Victorian pub above my showroom selling fireplaces, lighting and radiators. I bought the fireplace for £8,000 from a monk in Rome, it came from a monastery that had been damaged by an earthquake in 1997.

It makes sense to invest in a working fireplace this winter as you can ignite your property's value by up to 5%, add an aesthetic glow of a real fire and save on heating bills, too. With up to 20% more people choosing a real fire in the past couple of years, there's a definite trend towards investing in beautiful fireplaces.

And where some fireplaces can fetch up to £500,000 you don't have to spend a fortune to invest in a fireplace, you can get a marble or surround for less than £1,000.

I think a fireplace brings drama and glamour to a room. I love seeing fireplaces in every room and I'm seeing a returning trend of installing a fireplace in kitchens, bedrooms and bathrooms. Fireplaces are the design focus for many rooms and I'd love people to see their power and potential.



19th century Italian Gothic Travertine Fireplace, £14,400, renaissancelondon.com