

KITCHENS BEDROOMS BATHROOMS

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Your perfect kitchen

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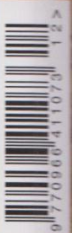
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Ask the expert

Warm up winter with a stunning fireplace says Owen Pacey of Renaissance London

Words: Sophie Baylis

1 The aesthetic value of choosing antique or reproduction fireplaces for your home is immeasurable. They have the ability to make a house more alluring to live in, function better as a home and make a property more attractive to future buyers. Installing original features, such as a fireplace, mirror or antique lighting, is an appealing way to make this transformation, and it keeps a period property true to its surroundings. Fireplaces are the design focus for many rooms and bring drama and glamour to a space. It also makes sense to invest in a working fireplace as they help save on heating bills over the winter months.

2 Original fireplaces come in a range of prices, from Victorian grates to 18th-century marble, and can be priced anywhere from £750 to £100,000. However, Renaissance London is now introducing handmade, professionally aged reproductions with immaculate carving and attention to detail at a much lower price point. This is important as often pairs of period fireplaces are required for a design project or large room. They typically cost a third of that of an authentic period piece but look just the same.

3 With fireplaces and original pieces, the general rule of thumb is to match architectural pieces to the period of the property you live in. I've been asked to take stunning antique fireplaces out of houses that they shouldn't come out of and it breaks my heart. You are just destroying the room and the value of your home. You can make the fireplace of your dreams suit a scheme as long as you choose the correct scale for the room. It's easy to swap a tiled Victorian fireplace for a cast-iron arch. It is not about cost but what looks right.

4 One thing to remember when installing or replacing a fireplace is that you don't need a flue liner unless your chimney leaks, so do a smoke test (you can get really good smoke pellets now) before you shell out £3000 on a liner. Another thing to consider with a fireplace is to make sure it's not stolen – if you can't get a receipt, don't buy it.

5 One of my top 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.



Above: Original Victorian corbel, circa 1860, with a reproduction cast-iron insert, £1800.

Left: Black French marble lion paw original fireplace, £3800.

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