



comfortable *Country*

In 'Comfortable Country' – newly published in paperback – Enrica Stabile shares her ideas for a practical and relaxing style of interior design that's inspired by a rural way of life. Here, we overview her approach and consider how simplicity and domesticity can make for an appealing home...

The relaxed country style pictured in *Comfortable Country* appears effortless, which is just what makes it so appealing. But as with any interior design scheme, these projects are a result of informed and careful selection.

In one project, deep sofas are loosely covered in white linen and scattered with plump cushions in red stripes to pick out the colours of an antique rug. Walls, doors and a low coffee table are all painted in the same peppermint shade to ►

Appearing spacious and understated, this room demonstrates some of the characteristic features of country style: a focus on relaxation, a controlled use of colour and a carefully edited selection of accessories.



encourage a feeling of continuity and space. A few books, pictures and china pieces all share a floral theme and add decorative interest, complementing real flowers in simple containers.

Comfortable Country sets itself the task of guiding you through the necessary elements, including colour, patterns and texture, to achieve this look. Since a large part of the comfortable

To achieve peacefulness, the guidance is to minimise clutter. If you follow the rule that each household item and piece of furniture should be either useful or comfortable, this will help to keep you on concept. The idea is to recall a time when comfort and not decoration was the main concern.

The country look home is designed as a haven, so hide away hi-tech goods and other

“Why, asks the author, do we keep our rooms looking the same all year round? Her aim is to create a vision of a house that is alive with the activity of its inhabitants...”

country look is in the details, there is also a focus on the decorative elements which give a scheme credence and personality. The author has some excellent tips for how to make the country look work on a practical level, too. For example, one nice idea is to hang two shower curtains, each on a separate curtain ring – something waterproof for the inside and something prettier on the outside.

The book is divided into parts. The first explores five key sources of inspiration: the changing seasons, peacefulness, nostalgia, utility and natural materials.

‘Pay attention to nature’s influence’ is its prime piece of advice. Why, asks the author, do we keep our rooms looking the same all year round? Her aim is to create a vision of a house that is alive with the activity of its inhabitants. One of her recommendations is to change dramatically the look and feel of the room by adding and removing items according to the time of year. These might include cosy rugs, cushions and blankets and log baskets piled high with wood.

One of the most popular tips given by interior designers is also covered: bring the outdoors in by using flowers that are seasonal, or better still, from your own garden. To give the relaxed feel that *Comfortable Country* aims for, place them in containers such as a jar or jug rather than a conventional vase.

reminders of a hectic lifestyle and instead aim for pieces that are timeless, such as monogrammed linen or handcrafted furniture.

The author believes that these hints of nostalgia don’t necessarily need to come from personal experience; charity shops and antique markets are just as good a source. A carefully ▶



Nature is the key influence in the country-style home. A leaf-design chandelier in a dining room adds rustic charm whilst potted plants take centre stage in a garden room.



edited selection of chinaware or pictures will invoke feelings of memory and a relaxed mood. The rule is to avoid romantic overkill and aim for fresh rather than gloomy.

Traditionally, the signs of a busy country

materials are, of course, a key resource. In particular, wood, stone, rushes and grasses are attractive and tactile and can be combined with simple man-made fabrics such as linen, muslin, calico and hessian. The key advice when it comes to selecting fabrics

...hide away hi-tech goods and other reminders of a hectic lifestyle and instead aim for pieces that are timeless, such as monogrammed linen or handcrafted furniture...

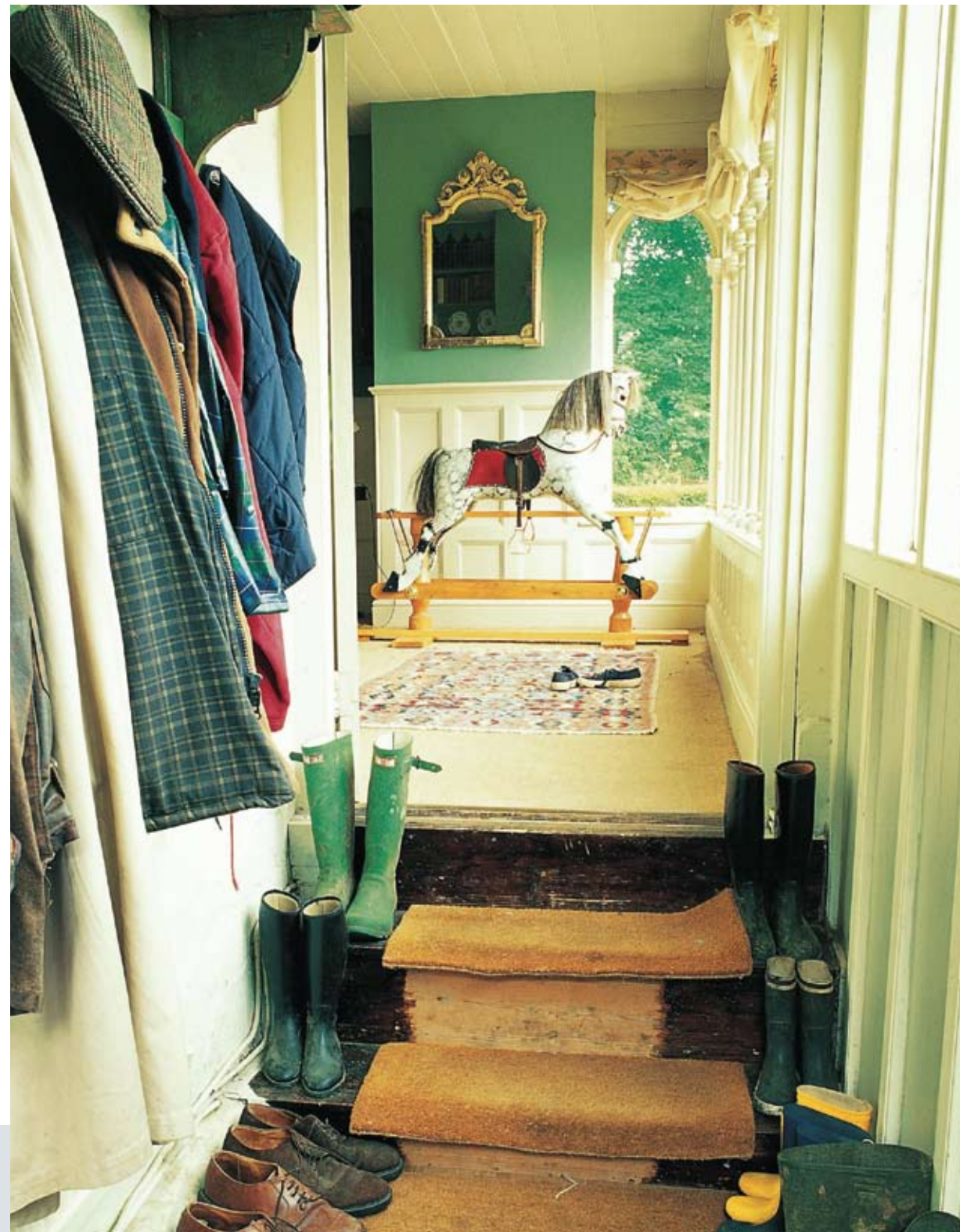
household were visible. On that basis, the practical essentials such as crockery and linen offer an alternative source of decorative interest. The recommendation is to strive for continuity in one factor such as colour, which will mean the display avoids looking messy.

With the aim of reflecting nature, natural

is to look for basic designs such as stripes or checks which you can accent with botanical prints and stylised florals.

Paint is another staple material in a comfortable country interior. Natural hues such as duck-egg blue, dawn blushes, pale moss greens, grey and sands are among the favoured shades. ▶

Above: A 1730s Bavarian armoire in Autumn shades is the focal point in a simple setting. Meanwhile, the glass doors of a white cupboard allow pretty china to be admired. **Right:** Country style is about keeping the signs of a busy family life on show, whether that means a family heirloom or a collection of wellingtons.





Specialist furniture paint gives a new lease of life to neglected pieces which bring an antique, almost French charm.

Painting the walls and furniture in the same colour is a little-considered option – but the results make a room appear more spacious and understated. Paints with a matt finish rather than those with a reflective sheen are best for furniture. Floors are also bare or painted. However, rugs can be used to restore a feeling of warmth. Contemporary examples often

relaxation; hence, the author works on the basis that the central piece of furniture in the sitting room is the sofa, or a group of cosy armchairs. The positioning of the sofa is an important part of achieving a truly comfortable feel. In a large room, the advice is to set two sofas with a low table between them, or in an L-shape. Of course, any

...carefully edited selection of chinaware or pictures will invoke feelings of memory and a relaxed mood...

have a uniform pile and a bold pattern – but rag or hook rugs, Welsh woollen weaves or old oriental rugs are a stylish and relaxed alternative.

The second section of the book provides room-by-room suggestions for colour schemes, lighting, materials and key items of furniture:

Living Rooms

A comfortable country scheme prioritises

chair needs to be piled with cushions and throws, which can also add splashes of colour.

Light is an important consideration, too. A sofa placed in front of a large window or a cosy window seat makes the most of natural light. Candelabras and chandeliers bring charm but anything too ornate will detract from the informal feel. Pools of light from table lamps are more in keeping with the country theme than a flood of light

from a central source, and can be especially cosy on dim afternoons. Mirrors multiply the effect of the light and also lend an impression of space.

For when it is too cold and wet to sit in the garden, a garden room filled with pots of plants and flowers is the next best thing. The author treats this room as the others, with more suggestions for putting outdoor things to indoor uses, such as a flower-cutting basket for papers and a farm stool for a side table.

Kitchens

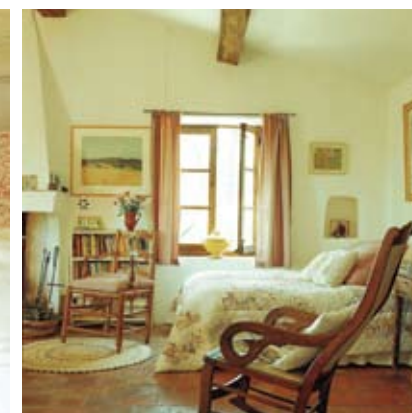
The aim of the kitchen and dining room are to make cooking and eating enjoyable and relaxing. Here the lesson is to make the most of the space available and, with relaxation in mind, one piece of advice is to consider your dining room as another sitting room and to see if you can create a seating area away from the table to use before or after a meal.

For an informal kitchen setting, the author recommends free-standing pieces or furniture such as armoires for crockery and glassware. If you

have good-looking pots and pans, the idea is to put them on show alongside other implements, tea towels and oven gloves. The odd piece of traditional cooking equipment is another option if you prefer to keep your pots and pans stored away. Pieces of classic ironware or enamelware can often be found in charity shops. Meanwhile, a line of potted herbs along a windowsill adds to the country feel.

The ultimate kitchen feature for a comfortable country look is, of course, a large farmhouse range. If you are considering new kitchen appliances, such as an oven, the suggestion is to keep them below counter level rather than the contemporary, urban tradition of the double oven installed at shoulder height. Large china clay butlers' sinks or French farmhouse sinks also promote the country theme. Old brass taps suit the look, though remember to check that they will be compatible with your plumbing system.

One clever idea for a joint kitchen-dining room is to arrange the lighting so that you don't necessarily have to light both parts of the room at ▶



Right: Floors are often bare or painted so rugs are used in the bedroom to add a feeling of warmth and another splash of colour. Comfortable chairs provide somewhere to read and relax besides the bed itself.

once. As well as visually separating the two areas, this will give the space an intimate feel. Different styles of lamps or lampshades with help to further define the two areas from one another.

Bedrooms

For the comfortable country style, it is the bedroom which is the heart of the house and the bed is the key piece there. The best styles of bed to establish mood are the traditional brass or painted iron frame, a wooden sleigh or a four-poster – but a screen or carved wooded panel behind a standard mattress on a bed base can be equally effective. The main thing is to make sure you have plenty of inviting linen, blankets and pillows. A quilt or throw is also more appealing than just a tailored cover.

One suggestion for a romantic feature if your ceiling is high enough is to drape canopies in muslin, voile or net over the bed by threading the material through a door knocker. The author also recommends including a seating area if the room is large enough. A small sofa at the end of the bed or an armchair by a window provides an alternative to the bed for reading.

And, as in the kitchen, the advice is to opt for free-standing cupboards or armoires – or even to display your clothes on wooden hangers or in neat piles on open shelves.

Bathrooms

The bathroom is yet another place of relaxation. One idea is to position a roll-top or clawfoot bath in the middle of the room, as this gives the impression that there's no need to make practical use of the space available. For smaller rooms, positioning the bath under a window with a pleasant view is offered

as another option.

As traditional utensils have a place in the comfortable country kitchen, so the bathroom is home to natural sponges, wood and natural bristle nailbrushes and back scrubs. The author recommends antique washstands for storing these bits-and-bobs alongside bottles, towels and bath-time reading. Decorative elements such as small china, bowls or jugs are an alternative to maritime themed paraphernalia – or, if the bathroom is well ventilated, you can hang the walls with pictures.

The overarching lesson of *Comfortable Country* is to borrow selectively from those two stalwarts: nature and the past. By sketching a clear vision, the book demonstrates how much more there is to this perennially popular style that you might expect – whilst revealing various ways to achieve it.



Old fittings such as the taps pictured here can often be found at antique markets or reclamation yards.



This feature contains information drawn from the book *Comfortable Country* by Erica Stabile, with photography by Christopher Drake.

READER OFFER: *Comfortable Country* is published in paperback by Ryland Peters & Small, priced at RRP £12.99. It is available from all good bookshops or call Macmillan Direct on 01256 302699 and quote GLR 2GS to purchase a copy at the special Preview readers' price of £10.99 including free p&p. This offer is valid until 30 November 2009.



Lydiard House and Park is holding Heritage Open Days on 12 & 13 September, with free entry into Lydiard House and the Walled Garden, St Mary's Church and St John Triptych. The ornamental fruit and flower-filled Walled Garden is particularly lovely at this time of year. During your visit, you can hire a barbecue and make a delicious lunch to enjoy in the Park. There's also a huge children's play area and quiz trails. To find out more or for other events taking place, visit lydiardpark.org.uk / 01793 770401

Editor's Choice

Our selections include ideas for Autumn garden colour and events celebrating our national fruit on Apple Day in October



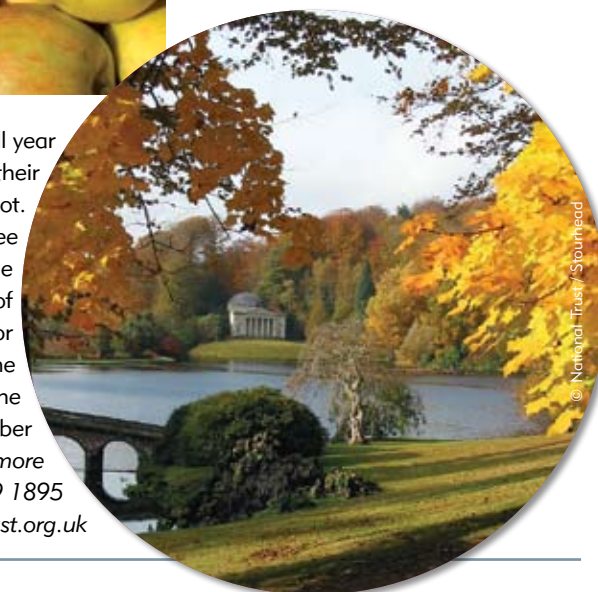
October sees the annual celebration of Apple Day, with events being held on various days throughout the month. On 18 October, from 11am-4pm, Lacock Abbey will be holding its Apple Day event, with fruit demonstrations, a tour of the Orchard and craft activities. Food and drink will be available, including a delicious hog roast and a cider bar – what more could you ask? For more information visit nationaltrust.org.uk or call 01249 730459

Stourhead Gardens at Warminster may be beautiful all year round, but they are spectacular in the autumn with their woodland, full of golden leaves that crunch underfoot.

According to their Head Gardener, the best time to see it is the first week or so of November. "Expect to see the golden glow of the tulip trees, the russets and reds of the beech and the deep rusty colour of the Taxodium or Swamp Cypress". With The Autumn Colours Walk, the

Estate Warden takes visitors for a ramble through the autumnal woods and further. Taking place on 25 October and 2 November. Booking is essential, to find out more about Stourhead and their future events call 0844 249 1895

or go to nationaltrust.org.uk



WALKER'S LOGS

kiln dried firewood from sustainable sources

Delivery throughout Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire,
Hampshire, Warwickshire and Wiltshire

Kiln dried logs generate more heat
with better fuel efficiency

Be eco-friendly - burn wood not fossil fuels

Truck & Trailer Loads | Small Bags
Bulk Bags | Wrapped Pallets



www.walkerslogs.co.uk | info@walkerslogs.co.uk
The Doll's House | Yanworth | Cheltenham | GL54 3LQ
T: 01285 720940 M: 07952 032051

outdoor SCULPTURE



1

Outdoor sculpture can play an integral part in garden design by adding an eye-catching permanent feature. Throughout the Autumn and Winter, an attractive, well-placed piece guarantees continued interest and really comes into its own...

Art displayed indoors can create mood and provide a room with a focal point. The same is true of outdoor space, especially at this time of year when colour begins to fade and a garden loses volume. Hard structural elements provide a solid presence. They can also add beauty or even humour.

Like the garden's natural elements, the appearance of sculpture changes over time, too: metal takes on new colours and even stone eventually weathers. Night illumination can also highlight colour and form to create a striking feature.

On the following pages, we have selected some of our favourite pieces from galleries and sculptors based in Wiltshire or locally, from classically-inspired statuary to contemporary abstract creations.



2



3



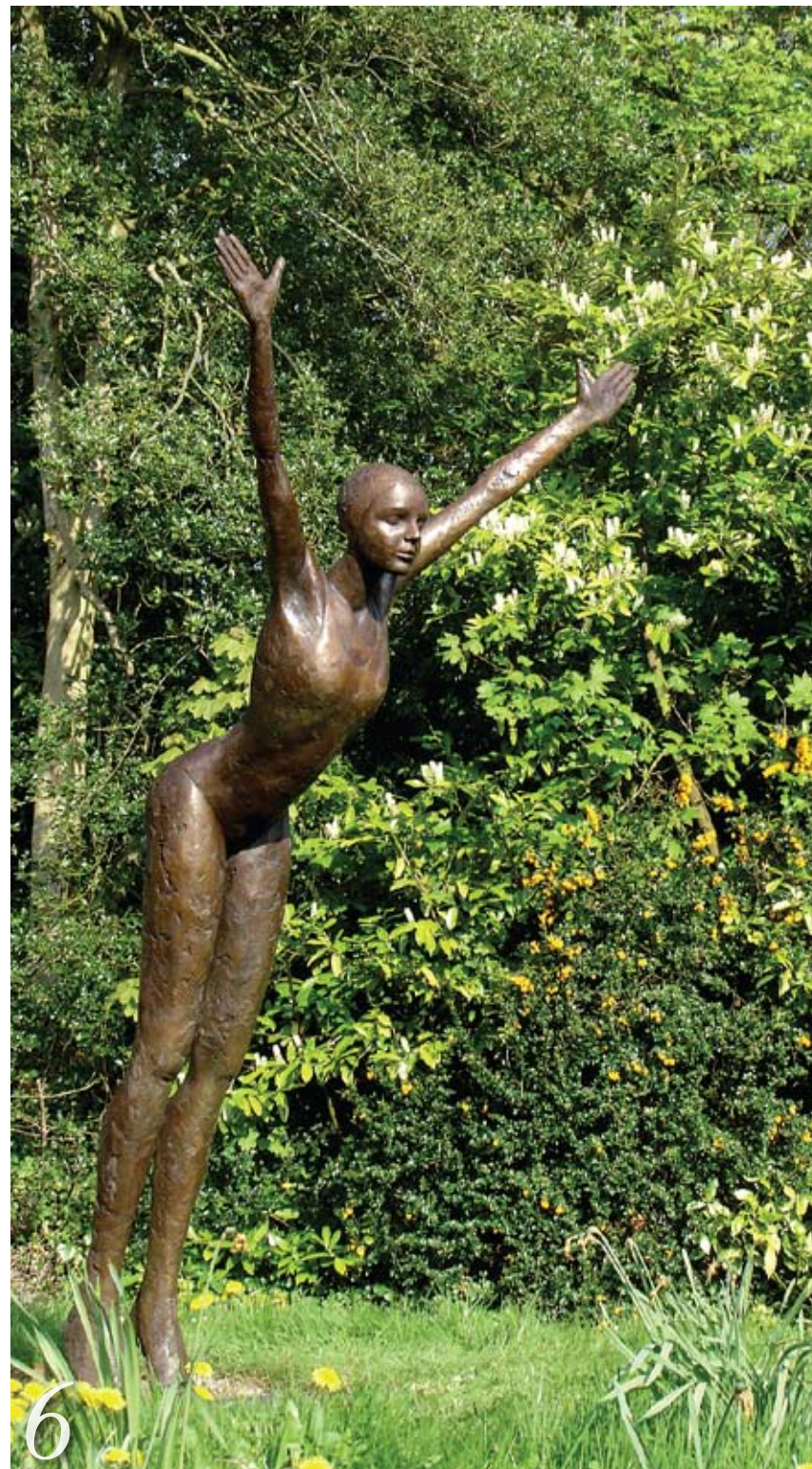
4

1 'Serpent' by Tetbury-based sculptor **Giles Rayner**. A bold sculptural fountain in mirrored stainless steel reflects and distorts its surroundings, replicating the the water in which it sits.

2 'Japanese Garden' by **Simon Allison** at Kiftsgate Court, Chipping Campden. This well-known piece was made to commission for the gardens here. 24 stainless steel stems with gilded bronze leaves provide height and movement as they sway in the wind.

3 'Displaced Perspective' by Stroud-based **Sally Fawkes**. From a certain angle, the point of this carved piece echoes that of the roof behind. Glass complements the materials of this traditional facade.

4 'Sheep and Lamb' by **Suzie Marsh** at Broadway Modern, Broadway. Scale is an important factor in positioning a sculpture. This cast bronze resin pair is in perfect proportion to the stone wall and surrounding landscape. ▶



“Decorative elements can create mood and provide a focal point”

5 **'Goat 1'** by Terence Coventry at Gallery Pangolin, Chalford. This sculptural goat, in bronze, has an almost mechanical feel. Here, the rigid outline of the sculpture is particularly defined against the deep green of a yew hedge.

6 **'Possibly'** by Bristol-based Carol Peace. This towering bronze swimmer is even more striking because the subject is unexpected in such a setting.

7 **'Exchanged Glances II'** by Richard Jackson, based in Stroud. Simple, modern pieces work well alongside minimalist, evergreen planting where they bring year-round interest.

8 **'Boxing Hares'** by Claire Norrington. Sinuous hares provide an eye-catching focal point that successfully punctuates a long border in this Cotswolds setting.



9



10



11

9 'Bird' by Wiltshire sculptor **Gordon Dickinson**. A sculpture such as this set in wide open space provides an eye-catching focal point from afar, particularly given the realistic subject matter of the piece.

10 'Wake Up Sleeping III' by **Chris Buck** at **Martins Gallery, Cheltenham**. Sculpture does not need to dominate to provide interest. Positioned here, this serene piece enhances the garden's relaxed mood. Its clean, flowing lines contrast perfectly with the informal planting.

11 'Lion I' by **Lynn Chadwick** from **Gallery Pangolin, Chalford**. The work of the late Gloucestershire-based sculptor Lynn Chadwick is on display this Autumn between 21 September and 13 November in an exhibition at Gallery Pangolin.

12 'Iron Stag' by **Dido Crosby** at **Campden Gallery, Chipping Campden**. An iron sculpture stands out well against a plain backdrop as the surface metal changes to russet with age. The effect is even more striking because it is life size.

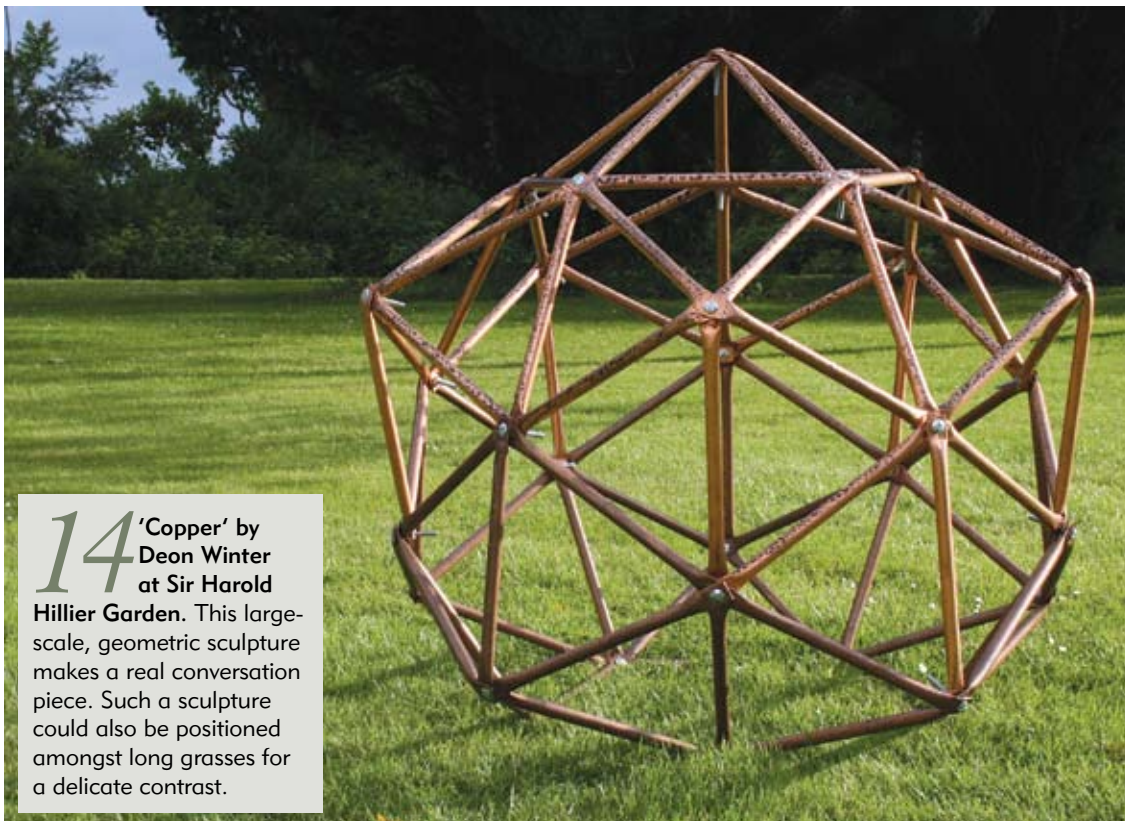
13 'Signs' by **Hubert Dalwood**. This piece is among those on display this Autumn at Roche Court near Salisbury as part of an important exhibition of work by leading post-war sculptor Hubert Dalwood. ▶



12



13



14 'Copper' by Deon Winter at Sir Harold Hillier Garden. This large-scale, geometric sculpture makes a real conversation piece. Such a sculpture could also be positioned amongst long grasses for a delicate contrast.

The sculptures pictured here are produced by masters of their craft. Many have their works displayed in public and commercial galleries; most also work on a commission basis.

Locally, The New Art Centre at Roche Court in East Winterslow near Salisbury represents sculptors whose work is either designed specifically to be displayed outdoors or is suitable for an outdoor location. These sculptors include household name Henry Moore, Kenneth Armitage who was part of

the great renaissance of British sculpture in the early post-war years and also Barbara Hepworth for whose estate the New Art Centre is the sole representative. Sculpture Parks such as Roche Court are some of the best places to see what is available and the ways in which sculpture can be displayed.

Whether you opt for a subtle piece that blends into its surroundings, or choose an eye-catcher in the rich tradition of garden art, the possibilities open to you are boundless.

Featured contacts

Broadway Modern: 01386 858436 / broadwaymodern.com

Campden Gallery: 01386 841555 / campdengallery.co.uk

Carol Peace: 07989 515172 / carolpeace.com

Claire Norrington: 01794 323714 / clairenorrington.com

Gallery Pangolin: 01453 889765 / gallery-pangolin.com

Giles Rayner: 01453 835201 / gilesrayner.com

Gordon Dickenson: gordondickinson.co.uk

Kiftsgate Court: 01386 438777 / kiftsgate.co.uk

Martins Gallery: 01242 526044 / martinsgallery.co.uk

Richard Jackson: 01453 767234 / richardjackson-glass.com

Roche Court: 01980 862244 / sculpture.uk.com

Sally Fawkes: 01453 767234 / sallyfawkes.com

Simon Allison: 01295 758066 / allisonfountains.co.uk

Sir Harold Hillier Garden: 01794 369317 / hilliergardens.org.uk



SPA CONSERVATORY CO.



Spa Conservatory Company have been designing and building bespoke Conservatories, Orangeries and Garden Rooms for almost 25 years and we are proud to have built a strong reputation of offering quality and functional yet attractive space solutions.

Please call 0800 389 5928 to discuss your requirements.

SPA CONSERVATORY COMPANY – BLOOMS GARDEN CENTRE EVESHAM ROAD
CHELTENHAM GLOUCESTERSHIRE GL50 4SJ

www.spaconservatorycompany.com

ESTABLISHED IN 1985. THE FIRST CONSERVATORY COMPANY IN THE COTSWOLDS TO QUALIFY FOR THE GOVERNMENT ENDORSED STANDARD, **TRUST MARK**.

