



# LEAVING THE SIDELINES

Sideboards are no longer wallflowers, as discerning homeowners invest in glamorous, highly crafted and intriguing designs capable of stealing the limelight. **Nicole Swengley** reports

**T**heir name may imply that they perform a peripheral role in the home, but an increasing use of unusual materials, bold colours and enticing finishes is transforming the sideboard into a glamorous eye-catcher capable of taking centre stage. "Clients increasingly want bespoke or one-off pieces with specialist materials and finishes," says Simon Stewart, founder of bespoke furniture, lighting and interior design studio Charles Burnand. He cites White Ice (from £29,000), a piece featuring gypsum marquetry hand-set in a brushed copper frame on white sycamore, created for the firm by French furniture-maker Jallu Ebénistes. "In addition to exotic-wood veneers and dyed vellum, we've been working with mica and gypsum. Many designers avoid mica as it's tricky to handle, but I love its raw, organic texture and we've developed a technique to give it a more luxurious and uniform look by covering it in resin. The eucalyptus carcass used for the Porchester



sideboard [£26,000, pictured overleaf] allows the timber's beautiful golden streaks to enhance the shimmering gold of the mica." Equally chic is the Briscoe (£15,500), whose smoked eucalyptus carcass is clad in deep-blue dyed vellum. "We used a technique that creates an almost reptilian finish and, as a surprising contrast, flocked the interior baby blue," says Stewart. Just as striking is the white-ebony veneer with exaggerated black veining on the art deco-inspired Riccardo sideboard (£16,500), which emphasises the piece's elongated curves. "Its shape is relatively simple, so the exterior can take a very strong, statement finish complemented by a luxurious matte-lacquered Macassar-ebony interior." Experimenting with exotic materials also excites London-based designer Simon Orrell. "The lustre of shell finishes is currently

From top: Rupert Bevan ebonised beech, vellum and brass sideboard, from £10,500. Bonaldo wood, metal and lacquer Summer sideboard, £2,500

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Clockwise from left: Bonaldo ash and lacquer Doppler sideboard, from £3,140. Miniforms wood, copper and lacquer Dalila sideboard, from £3,310. Charles Burnand eucalyptus, mica and brass Porchester sideboard, £26,000



creating great interest," he says, mentioning in particular a pair of blacklip shell sideboards (£10,600 each) with a kabebe shell border and natural oak interior that were commissioned for a client's dining room, and a 2.5m-wide red tiger pen-shell sideboard (£16,200) with black oak interior made for a customer in Russia. Orrell has also created bespoke sideboards combining selenite – a type of gypsum – with antique brass (£26,000), shagreen with mahogany (£10,300) and French-polished maple with parchment panels (£7,900).

"Clients push us to create ever more unusual pieces, and much of this process is driven by combining diverse materials," says furniture maker Rupert Bevan. "Gilding, gesso work [paint combined with chalk, gypsum and pigment], glass and brass are greatly in demand; I get much of my inspiration for exotic materials and finishes at the V&A." His sideboard commissions have included an ebonised oak design with doors covered in water-gilded and burnished silver crackled gesso (from £12,000), one whose antiqued mirror-glass panels were backed with floral fabric (from £14,000, pictured overleaf), and a marble-topped piece with an ivory gesso exterior featuring asymmetric hammered bronze rods (from £32,000). Bevan has also made a dining-room sideboard clad in patinated copper panels (from £19,000), its various shades creating a geometric pattern, and an ebonised beech piece with natural vellum doors (from £10,500, pictured on previous pages) designed to work in a living room.

Eoin Lyons of Dublin-based LyonsKelly, an integrated architecture and interior design company, describes this new breed of statement sideboard as "the featured soloist, while the rest of the furniture is the orchestra". He adds:

"These sideboards are the visible stars, anchoring a room and setting the scene – creating a vignette involving lamps, artworks and objects on them"

"These sideboards are the visible stars, anchoring a room and setting the scene – creating a vignette involving lamps, artworks and decorative objects placed upon them." For standout designs Lyons turns to Dublin-based furniture-maker Zelouf+Bell, which has three pieces in the National Museum of Ireland's permanent collection and recently displayed two spectacular sideboards – Othello and Jungle – at the interior design show Decorex in London. "For Othello [€30,000, edition of 10]," says designer Susan Zelouf, "we hand-inlaid 22,000 Macassar-ebony triangles radially in a pale-pink ripple-sycamore starburst pattern and had wraparound marquetry punctuating each end of the dark, highly figured Macassar sideboard.

The interior is a blush-figured sycamore with pink lambskin-lined drawers. It reflects our deepening interest in geometric graphics, referencing Islamic and Japanese patterns through detailed marquetry." This intriguing pattern-on-pattern technique also adds drama to Jungle (€17,870, edition of six), where a bold marquetry leaf design is superimposed on vertically laid Macassar ebony. The sideboard sits on a brass plinth and is topped by vivid rainforest-green marble, while its door and drawers are touch operated.

"Our work is hugely labour-intensive, but we love what we do; we take risks and feel that the pieces reflect that," says Zelouf, whose approach has generated singular designs such as Glimmer (€14,550, edition of six), a three-door sideboard in smoked oak inlaid with aged brass or polished aluminium, and the stunning seven-door Curved Briques (€34,000, edition of six) – the first of which is now in a New York penthouse overlooking Central Park and was created as a response to the iconic 1925 black-lacquer Briques screen by Eileen Gray. Each of



Left: Zelouf+Bell bolivar, taba, sycamore, birch, koto and lacquer Cranes in a Row Noir sideboard, €15,900

can sit with the planks pointing either upwards (when floorstanding on a set of small feet or wall-mounted) or downwards (when combined with a metal base and legs).

Even more visually intriguing are the Ritratti sideboard (£3,240), designed by Marzia and Leo Dainelli for Mogg, which plays with perspective through a colourful mix of glossy and matte resin finishes on laminated phenolic wood, and Gallotti&Radice's Diedro sideboard (from £8,560, pictured on previous page), in a chic combination of white taba frisé/black Tanganika wood veneers or ash/rosewood. Meanwhile, letting its contents do the talking, the Liber sideboard (from £2,070, pictured on previous page) from Italian glass specialist Tonelli features "extra-clear" toughened glass panels (with less green tinting than ordinary glass) that are joined using Tonelli's trademark bonding process, and can be fitted with up to three drawers in white matte lacquer or an exhaustive range of other colours. The sideboard is undeniably taking top billing this season. ♦

## THE SIDEBBOARD EXPLORED

**Ali Robinson**, by appt, 020-3034 0631; alirobinson.com. **Bonaldo**, bonaldo.it and see Go Modern. **Charles Burnand**, 15 Crawford St, London W1 (020-7993 4968; charlesburnand.com). **Gallotti&Radice**, gallottiradice.com and see Go Modern. **Go Modern**, 565 King's Rd, London SW6 (020-7731 9540; gomodern.co.uk). **LyonsKelly**, +3531-603 0804; lyonskelly.com. **Miniforms**, miniforms.com and see Go Modern. **Mogg**, mogg.it and see Go Modern. **Rupert Bevan**, by appt, 020-7371 1919; rupertbevan.com. **Simon Orrell Designs**, by appt (020-7371 9339; simonorrelldesigns.com). **Tonelli**, tonellidesign.com and see Go Modern. **Zelouf+Bell**, by appt, +3538-7230 5386; zeloufandbell.com.

"Bright colours work beautifully against walls painted in the deeper shades of heritage greys or blues, and there's a wonderful sense of optimism about them"