

'My husband's favourite hue was my starting point'

To surprise her husband with a new office, **Anne Tiainen-Harris** mixed warm terracotta with retro wallpaper to put the bounce back into this once-bland room



BEFORE



Anne took her design cues from a vintage film poster – and her husband's favourite colour, orange – to create a personality-packed office with retro style

STEP INSIDE...

WHO LIVES HERE? I'm Anne Tiainen-Harris, 49 (on Instagram @nordiclivingincolour), an interiors PR and business consultant. I live in a 1920s detached home in the Chiltern Hills with my husband, Christian Harris, 49, MD of a digital marketing agency, and our daughters, Elsa, 16, and Hilda, 14.

WHAT WAS UPDATED? During lockdown we had to turn the top-floor bedroom into a home office, but there wasn't time to decorate.

WHY THE CHANGE? Christian had a foot operation in November 2021 and was unable to climb the stairs for a while, so I surprised him by giving the office a makeover.

HOW LONG DID IT TAKE? A couple of months, as I was busy with work and family life, and I wanted to take my time to avoid mistakes.

TOTAL COST £1,221

DESK SOLUTION
Slotting a kitchen worktop off-cut into the tight alcove proved to be the perfect answer when Anne couldn't find a desk to fit



'We didn't have the budget to fit a solid oak floor, but the engineered wood has a top layer of real wood,' says Anne. 'It was our biggest expense, but worth it. The grey undertones give a fresh look'

Having outgrown their previous home, Anne and Christian were keen to buy a bigger property in the nearby countryside, but didn't want to take on anything that required building work. Anne, who is from Finland, fell in love with this newly-renovated, neutral house, but she soon craved colour. 'The white walls and hardwood floors instantly reminded me of houses back home,' she says. 'Although I love the minimalist look, it began to fight with my deeper love of colour and need for vibrancy, which began to emerge as I decorated.'

The attic office was crying out for a punchy new hue. So, Anne decided to redecorate as a surprise for Christian while he was recovering from a foot operation that meant he couldn't climb the stairs up to the office for a while.

THE PROJECT

The office, which is tucked into the attic with a small dormer, felt closed-in beneath the sloping ceilings, while the pale blue decoration lacked warmth. Luckily, Anne didn't have to look too far for inspiration. 'Christian is an exuberant, high-energy man and happens to love orange,' says Anne. 'It's a bit of a running joke – even his work colleagues sent him a hamper of orange-packaged goodies after his foot

operation!' Anne turned to Instagram to search out tasteful orange decorating ideas. 'I'm not a fan of orange myself so I couldn't go all the way. Instead, I had a low-key orange in mind paired with a fresh, Scandi white.'

WHAT I DID

Anne was drawn to terracotta, liking its warmth, which would make the room feel comforting and cosy. Samples helped her find the right shade that wasn't too pink, too red, or too dark. 'There isn't a lot of light in the room and I didn't want the orange to feel oppressive,' she says. 'Finnish paint brand Tikkurila's terracotta had the right earthy tone and is also eco-friendly, with a matt finish and a slight sheen that I liked.'

Anne was keen to replace the carpet with engineered wood flooring in a close match

'There really was only one solution to where furniture went,' says Anne. 'There are amazing views towards Oxford from the desk, the shelves were already here, and there's only one clear stretch of wall for the sofa'

My style tips

- GET RECOMMENDATIONS**
I saw the office chair on an interiors Instagram account and messaged the homeowner to ask them if it was comfortable before purchasing. It's a great idea for important purchases like chairs and sofas.
- ADD PERSONAL ARTWORK**
Look for prints on days out or holidays so artwork has a memory attached to it, like my James Bond poster, bought when my husband and I were living in Amsterdam. It makes it so much more special.
- STOCK UP ON STORAGE**
Keeping paperwork in simple box files and baskets will prevent open shelving from looking cluttered and give you more space for decorative items.



Feature: Jane Crittenden Styling: Marisha Taylor Photos: James French



Christian's favourite James Bond film poster happened to pick out the orange and offered a hint of blue, inspiring Anne to bring in the turquoise cushion, blue wire side table and blue-grey blind. 'I love the energy that comes from using contrasting colours,' says Anne

to the solid oak on the floors below. 'In Scandinavia, carpet is a complete mystery to us as we're obsessed with sweeping our floors clean,' she explains. 'The carpet had to go.'

HIGHS & LOWS

Anne began painting the room from the bottom up, thinking orange paint splashes would be easier to wipe off the finished gloss skirting boards than the other way around. 'Painting was therapeutic and satisfying. It's incredible how adding colour can totally transform a space,' she says. 'Although I needed a steady hand and a thin brush for cutting in all the corners.'

Anne took down the existing shelves so she could paint them white and hang the wallpaper in the alcove. She took her time as this was her first go at wallpapering, learning along the way to have the strips cut and ready before she pasted the wall so that the paste didn't dry out. 'I had three wallpaper widths to line up, but the tapered corner was the fiddly bit,' she says. 'I'm such a perfectionist, I spent ages sticking small pieces into the gaps like a jigsaw so the pattern looks cohesive.'

'Strong colours need light and airiness to be appreciated, so I used a crisp white on the ceiling to bring out the terracotta,' says Anne. 'Orange and blue are punchy, so I toned them down with natural accessories like the neutral rugs'

SHOPPING TIP

'Shop' the rest of your home for key pieces - Anne moved a sofa in from the dining room, and a cabinet from the spare room

THE FINAL DETAILS

Anne's last challenge was to make sure that the layout was functional in the awkward space. She upcycled where she could, bringing in a pale-grey sofa no longer needed in the dining room. This became an ideal place for taking a break or a phone call. A white cabinet had been in the spare room, and she also purchased a comfortable desk chair.

The vintage James Bond film poster is a cherished piece of the couple's history and



WALLPAPER POWER

Use a bold wallpaper on a feature wall or alcove to add a splash of print without overwhelming the space

Anne's decision to wallpaper the alcove came late on, after spotting the 1970s print on Instagram and having a 'light bulb' moment. 'Terracotta is a very powerful colour and, combined with the funky wallpaper, has the matching energy to make the room pop,' she says

was bought in Amsterdam, where Anne and Christian both lived when they first met.

'Throughout the project, my main consideration was Christian's reaction, so I was very happy to see his huge grin when he saw the finished results,' says Anne.

'It's a small room that's perfect for his big personality,' she explains. 'He really loves showing it off to colleagues when he's working from home.'

ROOM PLAN

THE DETAILS

PAINT	£120
WALLPAPER	£43
CHAIR	£249
FLOORING	£500
FLOOR LAMP	£220
LAMP SHADE	£49
RUG	£40
TOTAL	£1,221

SHOPPING LIST

Joker silky cover wall paint in Terracotta N405, £15.59 per 1L; Siro matt ceiling paint in Paper F497, £14.27 per 1L, both Tikkurila. Groovy Baby wallpaper in Sunset Pink and Sunrise Orange, £43 per roll, Lust Home. Deluxe office chair with low backrest in Vintage Tan, £249, Cult Furniture. For a similar sofa, try Arlo small sofa, £549, John Lewis & Partners. PS cabinet in white, £80, IKEA. Kahrs Oak Porto flooring is similar, £42.99 per sq m, Flooring Supplies. For similar lamp shade, try Litecraft Farmhouse natural woven 35cm lampshade, £49, B&Q. Rattan tripod lamp, £220, Tine K Home. Round jute rug, £39.99, H&M Home. For a similar cushion, try Nirvana cotton cushion in Teal, £14.99, Homescapes. For a similar cushion try Malini zig zag cushion, £18, Cult Furniture. For similar side table, try Bergeson side table in terracotta, £73.99, Wayfair. For a similar poster, try James Bond Dr No movie poster, £17.50 for an A3 poster, Gallery Print & Art. For a similar blind, try Tuiss Aquamarine Roman blind, from £136 for 1 x 1m, Blinds 2go.

3 OF THE BEST... retro prints

- 1 **£65 per roll from Bobbi Beck**
Create an eye-catching feature wall like Anne, using a bold wallpaper in bright shades.
- 2 **£24.99 from Gisella Graham**
Retro circles in sky blue are a softer take on the classic 1970s look, but no less groovy.
- 3 **£22 from Gail Myerscough**
We're digging this 1970s-inspired print, which comes in four colourways to suit your scheme.

