

style 20/20

The lockdown issue : June 2020



Practical & inexpensive ideas to improve your home

What I learnt during lockdown

Our homes have never worked harder. They needed to be highly efficient work spaces for parents and school children, they needed to feel comfortable through some very changeable weather, they needed to calm us through higher than normal levels of anxiety, they needed to help us feel connected to nature, they needed to offer a variety of exercise opportunities, they needed to stimulate our creative energy and they needed to fulfil all our entertainment needs, from watching Netflix to drinking G & T's in the sun.

This got me thinking about how we can adapt our homes to function better. These were just some of the thoughts I had during lockdown:

- We need fluid and flexible spaces to accommodate home working and exercising
- We can never have too much greenery
- We really need to support local small business suppliers.

I'm sure you've had similar thoughts but probably have been too busy just making it through each day, to actually implement any of this. I hope this inaugural edition of Style 20/20 helps inspire you to make some small meaningful changes to your home post lockdown.

For help with a difficult space in your home, please reach out to me by email : mdruce774@gmail.com.

Enjoy your freedom, enjoy your home.

Melissa Druce

PS: After this edition, I promise I'll never mention lockdown again.

contents



04 Creating flexible spaces

A place to work 05

A place to exercise 09

A place to store wine 12

14 A touch of greenery

18 Supporting local artisans

Creating fluid and flexible spaces

We can learn from the Europeans, who have for many years grappled with the idea of space (or a lack of it), and are always looking for opportunities to create multi-functional spaces in their homes.

I believe a good home office is one that can easily be “undone” so that the original room retains its core purpose and design sensibility.

A home gym needn't be a luxury or only an option for those with really large homes. It's easy to create a compact but efficient workout space in an existing room in your home.

A wine cellar is another aspiration for many of us, usually reserved for people with very impressive large homes. But imagine a really neat and stylish wine storage area designed to be a feature in your kitchen, living room or dining room?

It is absolutely possible for a room to be highly functional and beautiful at the same time.

A place to work



A place to work

The large, formal home office is no longer an efficient use of your space.

All we really need is a flat surface, a little privacy, some natural light and fast internet connectivity. During lockdown, I had to forfeit my usual work space (see cover photo) so my husband could work from home, so I adopted more of a transient work space. But the more I moved my laptop around, the more I discovered unexpected little nooks in my house which could all serve the purpose of becoming a small inexpensive home office.

Most people would still want a dedicated, “fit-for-purpose” work space, i. e. one that looks smart enough to be seen by work colleagues during online meetings, but it is possible (and ideal really) to have more than one work space if you have a large home, or to incorporate your work space seamlessly into another room (if space is tight).

An office with a view

I have to be honest, I have in the past balked at the idea of running a desk right across a full-length window or sliding door, but the minute you sit down and take in the uninterrupted view, you realise what you've been missing.

And the view actually doesn't have to be magnificent. Just sitting in front of a full-length window with any type of outdoors view is going to lift your spirits.

Keep the desk or worktop very sleek and unfussy so as not to detract from the view.

I would personally choose a desk without any drawers and rather design some neat shelves on a nearby wall.

A bedroom or kitchen office?

If hotels can do it, then so can you. Your bedroom is one of the easiest places to include a home workspace, as the built-in cupboards in many of our bedrooms already provide for a desk/dressing table area as part of the design and even if they don't, most of us have sufficient space for a free-standing desk in our main bedrooms.

Some argue that it's not ideal to work in your bedroom (your bedroom should be your sanctuary and all that) but I reckon we all now need to get our heads around the idea of multi-purpose rooms.

So the kitchen is not the obvious place to include a home office, but gosh, it really makes sense. Especially as kitchens have become the hive of activity in most homes. The benefits are many, not only can you grab a cup of coffee so very quickly while working, but you can also keep an eye on whatever you're cooking and interact with family members as they come and go, all with minimal effort. Also, kitchens usually have lots of existing plug/power points.



I am not talking about just sitting at the kitchen table and working, but rather the idea of creating a purpose-made office nook in the kitchen. When designing your kitchen office space, you'll need to be mindful of the kitchen design aesthetic but it doesn't need to be a perfect match. I would suggest carrying through one design element from the kitchen (for example matching handles) for a cohesive look.

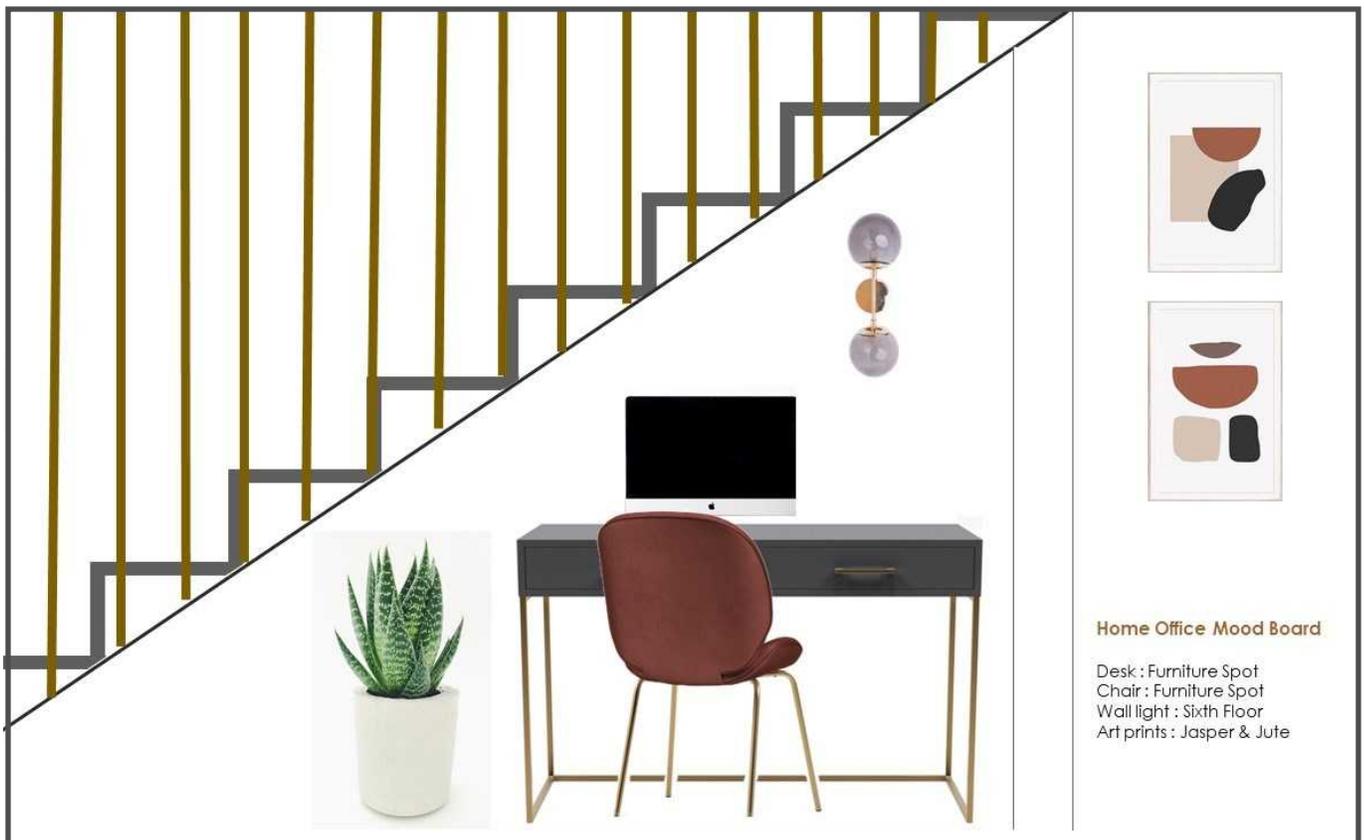
The “neglected space” office

This is really where you make clever use of what would otherwise be redundant or negative space — the end of a passage, the area underneath the stairs, a mezzanine level or a walk-in linen cupboard.

So the downside of creating your home office in this type of space is that it may lack natural light, but the upside is that you are not giving up valuable “already-in-use” space.

It’s worth spending a little time and effort on planning the layout and style, as a messy “just threw it together” solution will not work in this type of space, in fact it may really detract from what you’re trying to achieve.

Take a look at my Mood Board below for a little inspiration if you're thinking about taking the leap and creating an office underneath your stairs.





A place to
exercise

A place to exercise



Home gyms are notoriously under-utilised. I guess we crave company and social interaction so no matter how well we kit out our home gyms, we still tend to do most of our workouts in commercial gyms. Of course, that was prior to lockdown!

I was completely blown away by the enthusiasm people showed towards exercising during lockdown and I strongly predict that home workouts are here to stay. In fact, I hope that future new home builds and home renovations will automatically include workout rooms. And for the rest of us who are not undertaking a large building project any time soon, we too can easily create a comfortable, dedicated space in our homes to work out.

So how to get started after you've bought the gym equipment?

To be fair, it's quite difficult to make a home gym look stylish, so don't make the area any bigger than it needs to be (because then you're going to need professional help decorating and styling it). It's definitely worth having some clever shelving installed or alternatively buy a few funky storage baskets to keep things neat while you're not training. It's also a nice idea to include a mirrored wall or simply hang one or two full-length vertical mirrors in front of your training area. Keep in mind that some gym machines require power and you'll definitely need to be near a window, fan or air con unit. A bar fridge for water and energy drinks is another nice touch if you have the space.

A place to exercise



Isn't this just the most serene music and workout/yoga room? A great example of a multi-functional, hard-working and beautiful space that both adults and children would feel right at home in.

A place to store wine



A place to store wine



Okay, so just before lockdown, we all rushed out and bought what we thought was a pretty decent supply of our favourite wines (with the exception of those lucky few who already owned a fully stocked wine cellar prior to lockdown)! We didn't go overboard because it's expensive and where to put it? Also, lockdown was only going to be for a couple of weeks, right?

I don't need to elaborate on what happened next, but let's just politely say that I soon realised that having a dedicated wine area where you can stock more than a few bottles of wine at any point in time is an absolute priority. It doesn't have to be a proper wine cellar — few of us have the space for that and then there's the very real cost of actually keeping it fully stocked.

But a dedicated and stylish wine wall, wine rack or wine area is easily doable.

I must admit, I'm really uninspired by the traditional wine racks which have become so common and tend to consist of hundreds of little square blocks built unimaginably into kitchen cabinetry.

My top pick at the moment is this sleek, contemporary steel and glass wine cabinet made by The Iron Banister (theironbanister.co.za). This is definitely worth saving up for. Large wine racks can be busy but that's not the case with this cabinet. The clean, well-proportioned design means the wine bottles appear perfectly spaced.

A touch of greenery

Indoor plants, green walls, hanging pots, creepers, herbs, there are so many ways you can green your space — no matter how compact it is.

There are of course proven health benefits to having plants nearby, and let's also not underestimate what they bring to a room in terms of style.

I read an article entitled "How will the Corona virus change our homes" on Houzz.com recently. The article shared valuable insights from the three European architects interviewed, but the common thread was a commitment to more green space, especially in small apartment buildings. I salute that.

A small balcony off as many rooms as possible is a sure way to help you feel connected to the outdoors. Something to consider when choosing a home or renovating.



Indoor plants



3 ways to create a harmonious look with indoor plants:

1. Go for one large plant in a stylish pot. The plant needs to be tall and leafy with vertical rather than horizontal shoots;
2. Create a cluster of two or three of the same pot (size can differ but the finish should ideally be consistent) and then plant different plants;
3. Use a Delicious Monster for it's sculptural lines and compatibility with almost any type of pot—it will look as good in a modern space as it will in a country farmhouse.



Indoor plants



Displaying large banana tree leaves in a clear glass vase is another way to bring a shot of green power into a dining or living room. Keep them over-scaled to really draw your eye to the greenery.

A small balcony



This small balcony off my bedroom has always seemed surplus to requirements in the past, but it literally kept me sane during lockdown.

I could go outside to just breathe and pause, take in the garden, look at the changing weather, sit and drink tea, contemplate life, enjoy a Gin & Tonic before the sun finally set, all without leaving my bedroom “home-office”. It was a place free from interruption from the rest of my family and it really got me thinking about the value of a small balcony.

It also became my vantage point to start photographing the sky each day—partly out of boredom (I won't lie) and partly because for the first time, I was actually seeing the beauty of the sky throughout the day and really noticing how the light and sky changed as we moved closer to Autumn. Nothing like a bit of natural light and greenery to kickstart your creativity.

Supporting local
artisans



Supporting local artisans

Support local — this mantra has been with us for some time.

Many local design trailblazers (like Kamers, 100% Design South Africa and Southern Guild) have tirelessly promoted talented local designers for years and yet, many local artisans still struggle to convert their crafts into viable businesses.

And then lockdown came along, and the idea of “supporting local” was cast into a whole new light and on an international scale.

I don't think that we go out of our way to not support our local artisans, but many people just don't know how many local producers even exist or where to find them, and maybe just don't have time to do the research.

I've spent more hours than I could possibly count immersing myself in the local design scene, so I've included some contacts here for amazing local artisans and/or retailers who source artisanal products.

Follow them on Instagram to be sure you don't miss out on new stock arrivals and promotions.

Local inspiration : Accessories



My love for Africa



Naturally Macrame



Chic Fusion Textiles



Skinny La Minx

Local inspiration : Accessories



Rialheim



Mia Melange



Gold Bottom

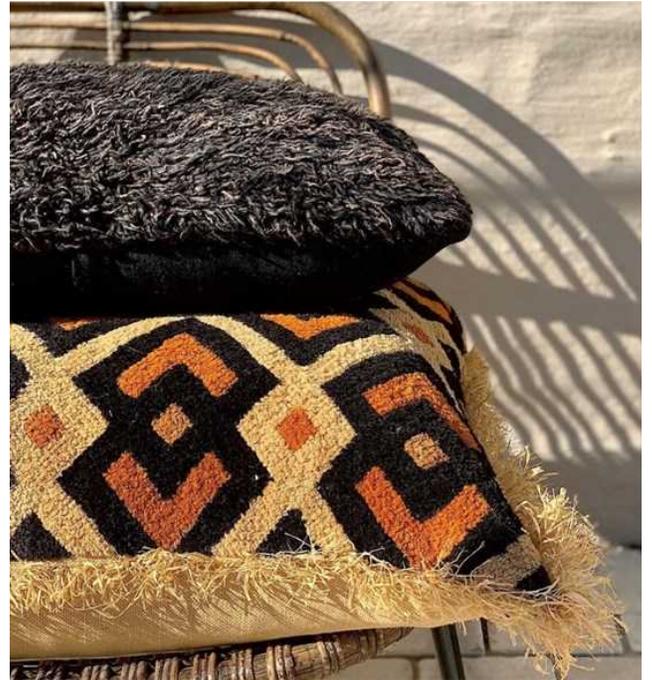


Mungo

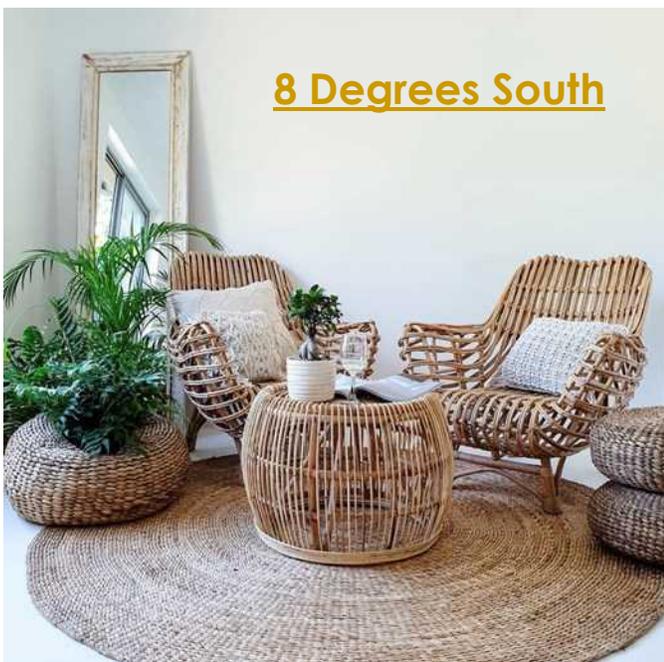
Local retailers who source hand-made products from further afield



Amatuli



The Storer



8 Degrees South



Tintsaba

Photographer : Zoe Davidson

In my next issue:

- **Transitioning a child's room into a teen room—not for the faint-hearted!**
- **Updating kitchens and bathrooms without a complete renovation (it can be done)!**
- **Great ideas to start your own collection of pretty much anything that's stylish & clever ways to display your collections.**