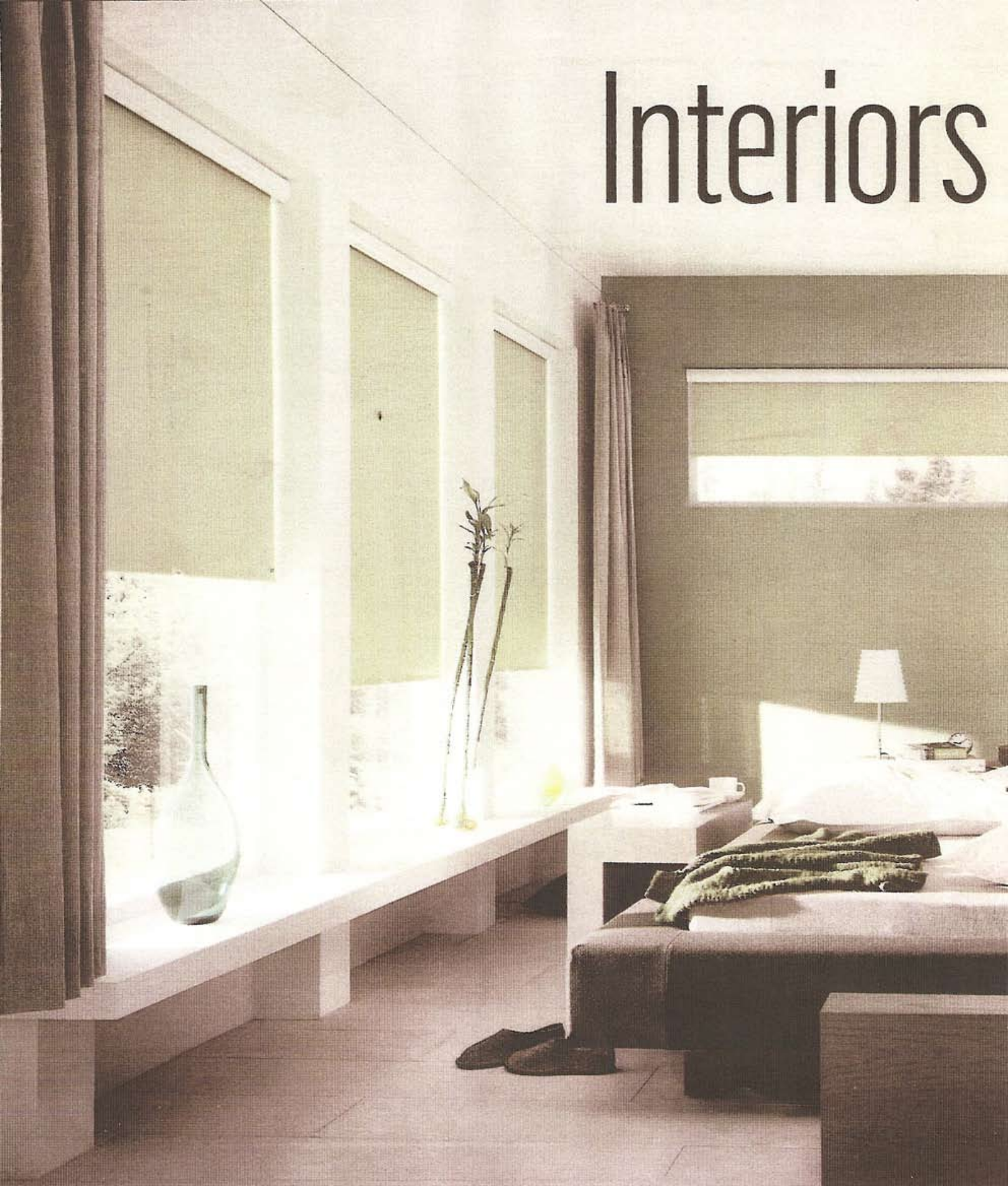


# Interiors





# Getting a helping hand

Hiring an interior designer need not mean losing your own ideas, just accepting some new ones

**M**AURA EATON, a presenter on Lyric FM, called on interior designer Pilar Landaluce to help re-design her semi-detached home in Dublin. The house, which she bought in the 1980s, had a typical ground floor layout of two interconnecting rooms plus a small kitchen.

"I never expected to stay long in this house – when I bought it, anything the other side of the Dodder River was outer space to me – but given the cost of buying another house, it made better sense to stay and improve what I have."

Here's their step-by-step guide to renovating, rather than relocating.

**STEP 1: hire an interior designer** "Pilar picked up on the mood I like and made things easy," says Eaton.

"She sourced materials and furniture I would never have found. What I learnt is that using a designer doesn't mean everything will be expensive and you don't have to throw all your possessions out and start from scratch."

For her part, Landaluce says: "I'm not a designer who forces her taste on clients. At the end of the day, I leave and Maura has to live here. Everyone lives differently and if this was a family home it would have another requirements."

**STEP 2: know what you want** "I wanted a home that is modern but warm and easy to live with. I had a bit of money to spend but not a fortune. I wanted a look that's 'real' rather than high de-

sign. This place is not about re-inventing the wheel," says Eaton.

**STEP 3 open up** "We opened up the ground floor into one big living space," explains Landaluce. There's a sitting area, a dining/work space and a kitchen. Eaton works from home so the dining area is more office than entertaining space. "I really only do casual entertaining, so it was more important to have a pleasant place in which to be during the day." They took the washing machine and dryer from the kitchen and put them under the stairs, freeing up space for kitchen storage.

**STEP 4: don't over-furnish** When it came to filling the space, they decided not to use too much furniture: one large sofa, an armchair or two and some small tables. The small table beside the sofa is by Irish designer Lorraine Brennan. Cushioned folding chairs are brought out from a cupboard if Eaton has friends over. "The room isn't crowded – even the dining table can be folded up," says Landaluce.

**STEP 5: spend wisely** "I remember my parents buying really good furniture that lasted. The black 1960s leather chair was theirs and looks great here. I bought pale wood storage unit from Lomi ([www.lomi.ie](http://www.lomi.ie)) because it's well made, something I'll have forever. On the other hand, I didn't want to spend a lot on the sofa because it gets wear and tear. This one is leather and cost €600 in a sale." Good art can make a space: Eaton bought monographs by Irish artist, Michael Coleman.

**ABOVE:** Maura Eaton, top far right, pictured in her home with designer Pilar Landaluce who she hired to re-design her house

**STEP 6 work with what you have** The fireplace was left as it had been since Eaton bought the house. "It's funny how things come around – this simple style is perfect for today. We just added a new slate hearth and a modern gas fire."

**STEP 7 focus on the kitchen** "The breakfast bar changed my life," says Eaton. "Friends can gather around it rather than at a table – much more relaxed." Newcastle Design (0404-65000) in Co Wicklow made the kitchen to Landaluce's specifications. "They're open to ideas, whereas a lot of kitchen suppliers will run a mile if you want anything different." There are no tiles in the kitchen; instead, blue glass is used behind the hob. "As someone who doesn't cook, I don't like fussy kitchens but wanted to have something beautiful." Spotlights were placed in a panel above the window, so light is closer to the sink. The lights over the island bar are from Stillorgan Decor (01-288 5284).

**STEP 8 use a blast of colour** The house faces north and is therefore not the sunniest, so a wall near the window was painted raspberry. Painting one wall a bright colour is an old trick that still works. It means floating shelves stand out and the pale wood floor doesn't seem to cold. "I've travelled a lot in Nordic countries," says Eaton. "The way they use colour is about balance – slots of brightness against a pale backdrop."

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