



THE IRISH TIMES

Home Front: interiors, design, people, property

**Arminta Wallace
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Nostalgia at Marks & Spencer, timeshare in Tuscany and a skilled joiner who won't retire

Homespun 1970s at Marks & Spencer

When you hear that 1970s style is 2017's biggest news in home decor, don't despair: you don't have to go down the road of gingham upholstery and plug-in candlesticks. The new Marigold collection from M&S is full of lighthearted retro touches, having fun with 1970s shapes and patterns while staying firmly away from brown walls and synthetic materials. The look is homespun – it was a decade of oil crises, recession and unemployment, after all – but the detailing is decadent, with jacquard prints, lace trims and floral fabrics creating a retro feel while the tonal palette luxuriates in warm ochres and burnt oranges. The ultra-cool Hayward sideboard costs €809; the super-neat Jolie chair in Baylie damask is priced at €599. Add a flower wall clock (€40), a sunflower mirror (€79) and a Cynthia cushion (€27) and you're all set to boogie around the house singing *You Make Me Feel Like Dancing*. Available from the end of January instore and online at marksandspencer.ie

A matter of design

Is there any real benefit to initiatives such as Irish Design 2015, which set out to promote Irish designers and craftspeople at home and abroad over a 12-month period? According to a report just launched by the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Mary Mitchell O'Connor, the answer is definitely in the affirmative. "ID2015 demonstrated to the world the vibrancy and diversity of design and craft practice in Ireland," said Karen Hennessy, chief executive of the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland, at the launch of *Irish Design 2015 – Making Design Matter*.

Hennessy stressed, however, that momentum needed to be maintained in order to ensure a lasting legacy for the sector. Why not read the report and judge for yourself? It's available from amazon.co.uk, as well as from the Institute of

Designers in Ireland (IDI) and the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland (RIAI) for €15, plus postage and packaging.

The enchanted joiner

In 1957, a young joiner from Galway travelled to Spain to compete in WorldSkills, an international competition that aims to raise the profile and recognition of skills development and highlight their role in personal success and economic growth.

Peter Walsh was just 18 when he travelled to Madrid: the only Irish team member to take gold at the junior event that year, he had to make a stepladder from scratch to win. Then he had to learn to how say "Enchanted to meet you", so he could receive his trophy from General Franco. The 77-year-old, who still works up to 70 hours a week and says he has no intention of retiring, helped mark the 60th anniversary of Ireland's involvement in WorldSkills at the closing ceremony of the 2017 Irish competition in Dublin's Croke Park.

More than 140 craftspeople from all over Ireland took part in the 22 events, which were held early in order to select a national team for participation at the WorldSkills competition in Abu Dhabi next October.

Would you like to own a bit of Italy?

A visit to Tuscany will instill in many a wish to own a home in this beautiful part of Italy. A little dose of realism will soon bring the dream to earth when consideration is taken of the cost and the expense of bringing a hundreds-year-old home back to life and comfort.

There is a way to become a home owner in a medieval hamlet near Cortona. Fractional ownership, which has been used to make private jets available to a wider ownership, is being used to bring the coveted Tuscan property of Borgo di Vagli into many hands.

The concept allows a number of owners to buy a luxury home for certain weeks each year. Borgo di Vagli is a 15th-century hamlet restored to traditional Tuscan style, with comfort, to provide a series of one-, two- and three-bedroom homes. The

property has been completely renovated by architect/restorer Fulvio di Rosa and is managed all year round by a management company.

On site, there is a trattoria serving local food, and work on the olive groves that originally surrounded the hamlet is in progress. Owners can book their property and turn up. Everything will be ready to settle in, turn on the high-speed wifi and enjoy their home from home. Owners can also allow family and friends to use their property.

Prices for a one-tenth share of Borgo di Vagli are from €80,500 for a one-bedroom residence or €127,000 for a two-bedroom residence. Annual fees are €2,600 and €3,200 respectively.

Borgo di Vagli, Località Vagli, 52040 Mercatale di Cortona (AR), Italy: 00 39 366 455 8835

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■ Home furnishing inspired by the 1970s in Marks&Spencer; joiner Peter Walsh at Croke Park; a kitchen with a view at Borgo di Bagli in Tuscany, Italy