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Max Rollitt and Charu Gandhi

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SHELF CONFIDENCE



WITH 'BOOKSHELF WEALTH' TRENDING ON SOCIAL MEDIA,
ALEXANDRA GOSS ASKS LEADING INTERIOR DESIGNERS
 HOW TO CURATE YOUR COLLECTIONS FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT



PUBLIC DISPLAY OF COLLECTIONS

Opening page: Albion Nord's Chelsea Barracks townhouse layout features elegant shelving, complete with a rolling ladder. Clockwise from top left: SHH Interiors designed this serene reading nook, complete with window seat and framing bookcase shelving; a playfully curated sneaker wall at Ham Yard Hotel, courtesy of Kit Kemp Design Studio; designed by Angel O'Donnell, The OWO Residences have shelves lined with objets d'art; this Fulham home's display wall, conceived by Dalrymple Studio, welcomes creative arrangements

The renowned interior designer Kit Kemp is a big fan of the humble bookshelf, a piece of furniture that, she says, should never be underestimated for its ability to combine functionality with beauty.

"Shelves are not just for books!" exclaims Kemp, the founder and creative director of Kit Kemp Design Studio ([kitkemp.com](http://www.kitkemp.com)). "The bookshelf is an opportunity to showcase craft, personality, art and character. But crafting the perfect shelfscape is an art in itself."

The concept of "bookshelf wealth" has been a major design trend this year, with videos explaining how to achieve the look clocking up more than 2m views on TikTok. Essentially, it means your bookshelves should display a curated – but not too curated – selection of meaningful objects, from art to ceramics, antiques, personal trinkets, photographs and travel mementoes. And books, of course. The idea is to add intrigue to a room and lend a more distinguished, lived-in and individual look to your interiors.

Bookshelves needn't be confined to a



sitting room, study or library – indeed, they can be the perfect addition to a kitchen, bedroom or hallway, or even act as a useful room divider in an open-plan space. They're also the latest and most sophisticated way to incorporate collections – from vintage Louis Vuitton trunks to film memorabilia – into interior design, according to Charu Gandhi, director of Elieyon ([elieyon.com](http://www.elieyon.com)). "Rather than creating dedicated areas to display these pieces as stand-alone collections, our clients are choosing to weave these treasures throughout the fabric of their homes in a more personalised and artful manner," she explains.

Shelves should look stocked without being stuffed, says Ed O'Donnell, co-founder and creative director of Angel O'Donnell ([angelodonnell.com](http://www.angelodonnell.com)). He advocates displaying lots of well-thumbed texts – "because too many immaculate spines will look ostentatiously staged" – experimenting with the positioning so some are stacked side by side, others on top of each other, and then adding items such as artwork, objects, plants and family photos.

Mixing items of different sizes, shapes and textures helps add visual interest and balance, according to Bethany Prince, senior associate at SHH Architecture & Interiors ([shh.co.uk](http://www.shh.co.uk)). "Combining glossy and matte finishes, natural materials like wood or stone with metals, or rough textures with smooth surfaces will add richness and variety to your display," she adds. And, if in doubt, remember that less is more. "Dressing shelves is a bit like getting dressed and looking at yourself in the mirror – it is often a good tip to take one





CHIC VOLUMES

Clockwise from top left: Colourful bookshelves paired with textual backdrops are a signature of Studio Vero; VSP Interiors gave wedding venue Hampden House the library treatment with antique tomes; Th2 Designs created a cosy living space in this family home with a wall of uncluttered books; designed by Anna von Schawen and Björn Dahlström, the Pira G2 floor-to-wall shelving is an ideal piece for open-plan living

or two things out," says Gail Taylor, founder and creative director of Th2 Designs (th2designs.co.uk).

In the finest homes, only bespoke shelving will do to display collections for maximum impact; Amy Dalrymple, creative director at Dalrymple Studio (dalrymplestudio.co.uk), adds lighting to shelves to achieve a cosy feel and often puts wallpaper behind a bookcase to inject colour and extra detail.

Many designers now avoid colour-coding books. "This is a somewhat contrived aesthetic, which feels almost counterintuitive to the idea of a genuine bookshelf," says Venetia Rudebeck, co-founder and partner at Studio Vero (studio-vero.com). Rather, think about an overall palette before you start filling shelves. "I like to go for a few key colours," says Emma Sims-Hilditch, creative founder of Sims Hilditch (simshilditch.com). "Think of each shelf as an opportunity to tell a story – maybe a collection of shells bought back from a holiday or some rattan baskets to add texture."

Bookshelves are also increasingly doubling up as bars. At The OWO Residences, Angel O'Donnell designed shelves to house cocktail-making paraphernalia along with books, sculptures and flowers, while Ottalie Stride, creative director at Albion Nord (albion-nord.com), often incorporates a bar set-up somewhere on the lower shelves. "This creates a functional element to the shelving and works well in studies and spaces designed for entertaining," Stride says. "Ultimately, it's



about striking a balance between form and function, and having fun while doing it."

If your book collection is on the sparse side, Sims-Hilditch often buys boxes of vintage books for client schemes from Sunbury Antiques Market or from booksbymetre.com. And, if you're looking to start or add to an art collection, the new collaboration between Soho Home and the online art gallery Rise Art offers an exclusive collection of carefully-curated pieces for purchase in Soho Home showrooms and online (riseart.com/sohohome). "Integrating art into bookshelves creates a dynamic dialogue between literature and visual beauty," says Scott Phillips, founder of Rise Art.

Ultimately, the beauty of a bookshelf is that it can be altered over time, when you acquire a new piece, add a favourite tome or even simply when you feel in the mood to change things up.

"Unlike hanging pictures on a wall, very little damage can be done, so there's nothing but time to lose if you start over," says the interior designer and antiques dealer Max Rollitt (maxrollitt.com). "Dressing – and redressing – a bookcase will always bring me joy. It's an opportunity to handle the things you've lovingly collected and experiment with how to display them." ■

