

A splash of colour simply won't do

Be bold with glass and crystal – create a rainbow in your home, says *Bethan Ryder*

When it comes to adding colour to your home, forget about “splashes” – now it's time to embrace the full spectrum, because designers are currently looking at life through a happy, trippy rainbow lens. From chromatic designs that layer hues like photographic filter paper to iridescent finishes that morph and refract like floating bubbles in the sky, this bold, multi-hued aesthetic is the latest in interiors fashion.

The trend for chromatics is gripping the world of glass and crystal design, but rainbows, gradients and shimmers are also being filtered through to ceramics, wallpaper, even furniture and tech.

This tripping the light fantastic began last year with the Serpentine Gallery Pavilion, designed by Spanish husband-and-wife architects José Selgas and Lucia Cano. At first, their delicate ultra-light construction, in fluorine-based plastic ETFE, felt flimsy and inconsequential, but as the daylight changed, it metamorphosed before your eyes into a psychedelic chrysalis of candy shades.

Avant-garde Spanish designer Patricia Urquiola exploits the dynamic interplay between colour, light and material with her Shimmer range of tables, consoles and mirrors for Glas Italia, unveiled at last year's Milan design week and now on sale at the Conran Shop.

With each piece, its laminated glass coat gives a multi-chromatic finish that – as the collection's name suggests – shifts across a variety of gentle pearlescent shades, depending on the light source and angle at which you view them.

For Urquiola, her concept for Shimmer was actually time. “Iridescence absorbs the light and changes depending on the time of day, so the furniture changes whether the pieces are in direct light, and from day to night. They glow, project colour and affect the environment around them, which feels very contemporary.”

It's a theme she has continued with her inaugural collection as art director of Italian furniture brand Cassina. For the Origins of the Future range, she

has reissued classics such as Marcel Breuer's Beam sofa rendered in anodised aluminium, which gives off flashes of iridescence.

“I immediately wanted to use aluminium because it's lightweight but also when anodised it expresses a colourful energy,” she explains. “We also used reflective greeny/blue leather upholstery that resembles the sheen of a beetle; when embodied in the materials the colour feels advanced and dynamic.”

For British designer Tom Dixon, who has also embraced iridescence with his Oil range of lighting, vases and candle holders, there are myriad references. “It's an effect you see a lot in nature – peacocks and minerals being great examples, but also in industry with oil slicks and exhaust pipes. I guess in interiors it was last popular in art nouveau. It works well on natural materials like glass and ceramic, but it's quite difficult to use and needs to be carefully dosed. I love it because it's mysterious, exotic and hard to describe.”

It's not all about dreamy iridescence, though; other designers are exploring the spectrum in a more structured way.

When Austrian crystal brand Swarovski recently unveiled its debut home accessories collection, the

standout pieces included crystal and marble trays and vases by London-based, Spanish-born designer Tomas Alonso, which explore the spectrum of colours refracted and reflected by crystal.

“When you work with crystal you need to have facets to create the reflections so most of the pieces are shaped on the outside,” he explains. “I was interested in reversing the process and having something that's very clean on the outside, but then lots of

things are happening on the inside.”

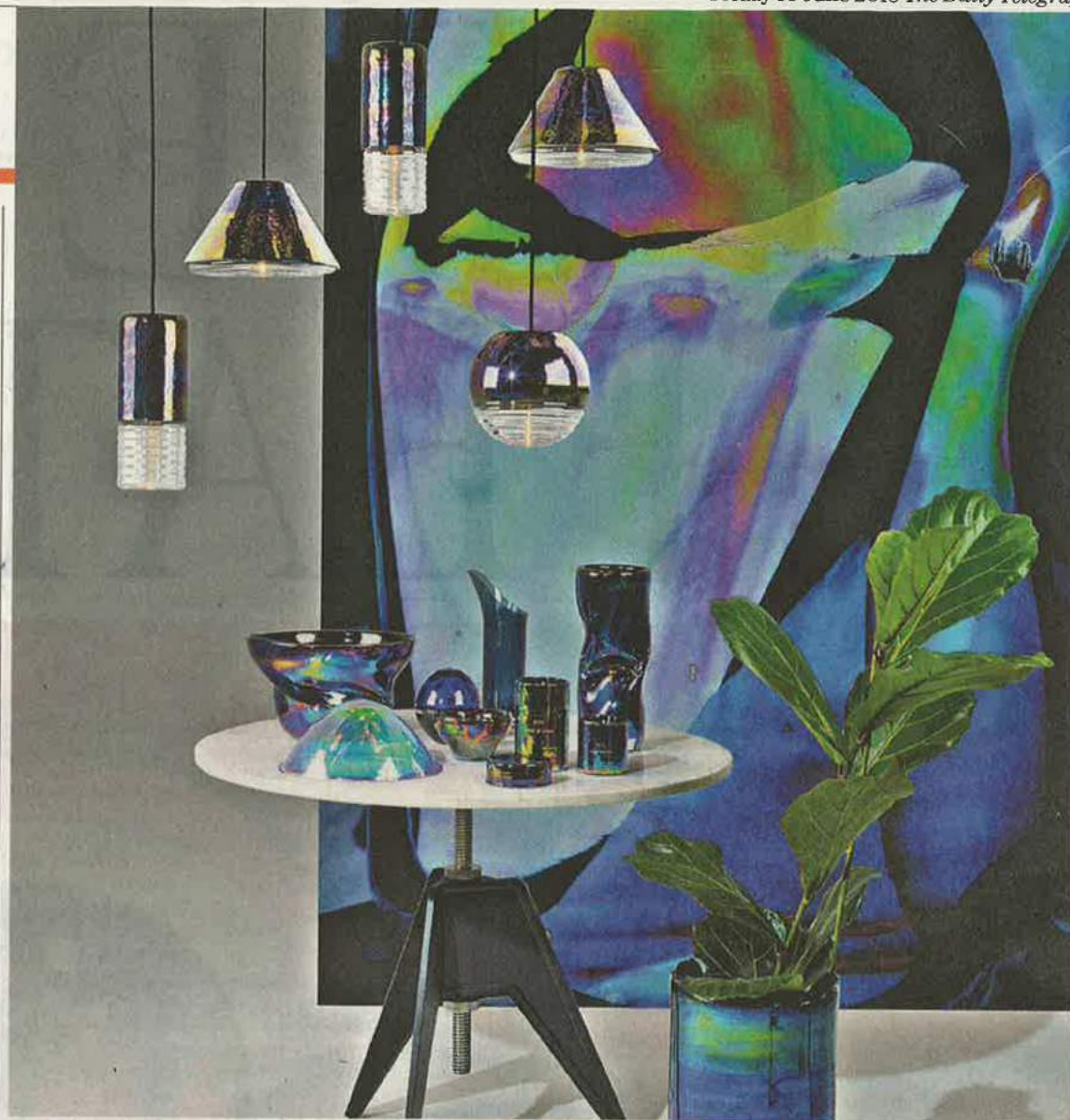
Alonso's trays and vases are composed of clear crystal prisms, with many cut at 47-degree angles, the precise point when light changes from being reflected to refracted. He added colour in the adhesive that bonds the prisms together, creating a kaleidoscopic effect.

So as your vantage point changes, the strips of colour on the trays and vases alter, graduating from transparent through to solid blocks. It's captivating, bold and modern, and Swarovski plans to launch the collection this autumn.

Why this fascination with the colourful effects of light? Kate Franklin of multidisciplinary design, research and forecasting studio Franklin Till believes it's linked to our wider obsession with wellbeing. “The psychological effects of colour and light have long been recognised.

“Given our preoccupation with optimising our personal wellbeing, we are seeing an overwhelming number of designers and artists focusing on the healing power of colour and light. Often used as an antidote to our hyper-stimulated lifestyles, colour is now playing a big part in meditation and relaxation.”

So there you have it: this design trend has an inbuilt feelgood factor, too. Investing in these vibrant, colourful pieces could bring a whole new meaning to retail therapy.



TRIPPING THE LIGHT FANTASTIC DAY AND NIGHT



Prism pastel rug, £1,995, by Sonya Winner (sonyawinner.com)



Francis wall mirror, £450, by Constance Guisset for Petite Friture (heals.co.uk)



Oil scented candle, £60, by Tom Dixon (trouva.com)

ABCD side table, from €930 by Rona Meyuchas-Koblentz for Kukka (kukka.co.uk)



Fearless prism bookends, £413, by Alexandra von Furstenburg (amara.com)



Chroma lamp, £920, by Arturo Erbsman for Roche Bobois (roche-bobois.com)

