

Eagle-eyed shoppers will have noticed the August hiatus in malls and high streets while everyone waits for the new collections to arrive, **writes Jackie Shears.** Why not use this time to express your individuality?

Working with a design-maker to commission a bespoke piece of furniture has several advantages. It can enliven our personal space, enable the fun of creativity without the hard work, provide a great investment and even embody some aspect of ourselves, from wistful memories of a delightful island holiday to a distant Celtic ancestry. One visit to the Devon Guild of Craftsmen (www.crafts.org.uk) confirms that the South West is home to some of the finest designer-makers in Britain.

A bespoke piece can be site-specific (the photo below shows my triangular table designed around an L-shaped sofa) or stand-alone (the cabinet above is by Christian O'Reilly's Walnut Manuscript www.christianoireilly.com).

Site-specific pieces create visual impact and cohesion, providing a focal point in a room to which all other objects refer, either in complement or counterpoint. A good designer-maker will clarify for you which of two design options to pursue. Should the piece be the dominant element in your room, around which everything else must necessarily revolve? Or should the design have enough aesthetic flexibility to look at home in a variety of interior schemes? Working with an expert makes this kind of decision fun.

Owning a beautiful stand-alone piece is possibly a quieter, but more rewarding experience, because rather like a kaleidoscope, the piece can express itself differently in different locations around the home, and will also change the feel of those different places once in position. A good starting point is to research the many excellent designer-maker websites in Devon (www.devonfurnituremakers.org.uk), establish your preferences and then work with your selected designer to refine the piece to your taste. A bespoke piece will not only keep its value, it can add value to the price of your home. It acts as a lifestyle marker for a way of living the house can represent, and will set your property apart from similar ones also for sale.



For more advice on interior design for home-owners or property presentation for home-sellers, call Jackie Sears on 01392 670485 or visit www.present2sell.co.uk