



## Virtual reality: is it the future of home design?

We can do almost anything through our phones these days, but how about remodelling your entire home? **Yvette Murrell** takes a closer look at how design is going hi-tech

**W**hen I hear the words virtual reality (VR), my mind immediately turns to futuristic headsets, space-age video games, and an overall concept far removed from the comforts of my own home. But if you have any interest in the development of modern technology, you'll probably know it is much closer to our everyday lives than we think. As something that started as a bit of fun and a means of escapism, VR now has many practical uses – and I may be biased, but I think the most notable growth can be found within interior design and home renovation. Apps can scan your living space and help visualise its full potential, elevating what it means to renovate your home to new hi-tech heights. Take Crown's My Room Painter. No longer do you need to swatch paint on your walls, only to stare at them for hours in different lights, but instead your phone can show you what different colours – including bespoke shades – would look like and how much paint you would need. Similarly, Graham & Brown's DecoratAR app allows



you to play around with different wallpapers until you find the one for your space – and you can buy it then and there, too. But there's even more: David Levine, chief executive officer of computer vision and machine learning company DigitalBridge – which has built space planning and visualisation tools for, among others, John Lewis – has seen VR take off first hand. "The majority of Brits admit to being overwhelmed by home renovation," he says. "However, space visualisation tools give us the opportunity to virtually place items in a room and plan out their configuration before purchasing – making it much easier to try before you buy, so to speak." The newest technology allows you to build

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floorplans, design rooms to suit you, and move items around on your phone or tablet while looking at changes in real time – either through an app or a headset. These plans can then be shared with friends, family, and even tradespeople, making the design process more interactive for everyone involved. More exciting concepts are on the horizon, thanks to this

**1** Velux's MyDaylight app allows homeowners to see how new windows can change the look and feel of a room.

**2** Unsure if that armchair you fell in love with will suit your space? Ikea's app can show you.

**3** Life Kitchens' flagship showroom in London features a 4D VR theatre.

fast-developing technology and brands such as Life Kitchens are adopting the benefits. The company opened its London flagship showroom with a 4D VR theatre earlier this year, allowing customers to build their dream kitchen – including paint colour, material finish, door handles, work surfaces, and appliances – and walk around the space to see if it would be the right fit. "The technology gives our customers the opportunity to step inside and wander around what could be their brand-new kitchen-diner" says co-founder Oli Stephenson. "As well as exploring the height and size of cabinetry, you can decide whether the design really suits your day-to-day needs and adjust it if necessary." While VR will by no means eliminate the need for expert designers, architects, or interior decorators, it does allow you to take more control of projects and experiment with different designs before committing to the large investment a renovation can be – and with no space-age action figure in sight. **KBB**