

*Expect the unexpected:* In concepts by Ryan Brown, unique features create impact, such as the glass floor in this cathedral-like space that reveals the home's subterranean wine cellar below.



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Words AILEEN SCOLAR

Your hallway is your home's calling card – and first impressions are vital. Presenting a flavor of the architecture and decor that awaits, and revealing the first, tantalizing glimpse of your personality, the entrance hall to your home is a wonderful opportunity to at once welcome and wow your guests. As Kathleen Coumou, Executive Director at Christie's International Real Estate, observes, “Entering a home through an appealing front door leading to an attractive entry foyer entices you to want to step farther in... to see what's to come.”

The hallway offers almost limitless design freedom because its primary role as a transition space demands a sense of anticipation. Ed Ng and Terence Ngan, founders of Hong Kong-based design practice AB Concept, sum it up perfectly when they describe a great hallway as, “The first paragraph of a novel. It lures the audience into continuing the journey until the end.” So, while your hallway may not necessarily mirror the interior palette in the rest of your home, it must surely reflect the quality of the design.

Hallways are, of course, functional spaces and for that reason, they need care and imagination to

bring them alive. “Great hallways celebrate the act of passage and should capture one's attention on the way through,” notes Kimberly Sheppard of Manhattan-based architectural and interior design firm Gabellini Sheppard Associates. “They need a careful balance of drama and ambience to avoid monotony.” But a successful entrance hall should enhance, rather than detract from, the rooms they introduce.

Celebrated New York interior designer Champion Platt says that the secret to a memorable hallway is breathability. “A hallway always pleases when it opens gracefully to other rooms and creates a promenade; it should not be too big to cannibalize other important living spaces.” Although it is tempting to approach the hallway in the same way as a regular room, Platt recommends introducing grandeur by treating the space more sumptuously. Luxe finishes are a must: marble, hardwood, limestone, and, as favored by Sheppard, color-rich upholstered panels or linen wallpaper to create an “enveloping space with a soft residential quality.”

Urban homes tend to have hallways with a more contemporary slant, although the design features can still soothe as well as excite – traditional »

plaster detailing and hand-painted paneling, for example – to help visitors forget the neon-lit city streets they leave behind. Conversely, the outdoor environment is likely to influence the entrance hall of a country retreat. In the Côte d’Azur, a villa designed by AB Concept saw guests greeted by an ancient olive tree before being led through the hallway to a magnificent view of the Mediterranean Sea. Simple, natural materials – glass, marble, and bronze – accentuated the light sparkling on the turquoise waters beyond.

Therefore, when briefing your interior designer, never underestimate the power of the perfect hallway. Considerations include the materials used, the role it will play within family life, and, of course, privacy: Gabellini Sheppard Associates strongly recommend that adjacent living spaces should be screened from the entry area.

Los Angeles designer Ryan Brown, of Brown Design Group, excels at introducing unique features. In Santa Barbara, he showcased a spectacular subterranean wine cellar by installing a glass floor in the cathedral-like entrance hall, while in the Hollywood Hills, a client’s staircase displayed a beautiful hand-stenciled “tile” design and an elegant iron balustrade.

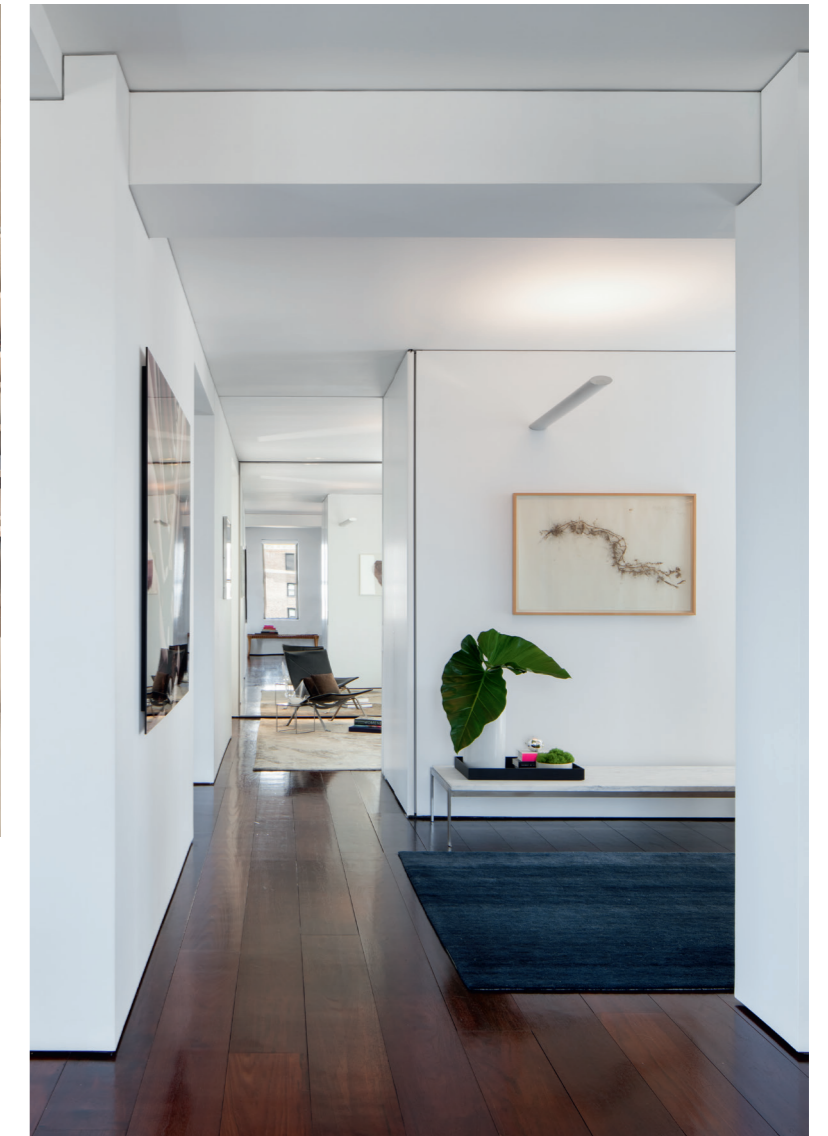
In Hong Kong, one of Ng and Ngan’s most prized hallways is in a home on Headland Road,

“Entering a home through an attractive foyer entices you to want to step farther in... to see what’s to come.”  
*Kathleen Coumou*

where AB Concept took complete control of the whole “arrival experience”: solid bronze doors open to an entryway of three-layered crystal-rod side panels to allow natural light to flood the space. A solid marble sphere, a dramatic skylight, and shagreen panels also contribute to the sublime atmosphere. And in New York, Platt recalls creating a curving wood-paneled hallway with many secret doors for both owners and staff, areas for built-in display, and a window opening on to a den. “The curve elegantly directed guests to a view of the mountains while entering a tall, magnificent room,” he explains.

For London-based designer Katharine Pooley, flooring can make a powerful impact. “A favorite approach of mine is using contrasting flooring materials,” she explains. “Versailles parquet with bronze trims, or marble tiling book-matched [matching a marble’s natural patterns across a

*Elegant encounters:* At an exclusive Hong Kong residence by AB Concept, entering the home has been elevated to an “arrival experience,” with the hallway setting the tone for the luxe interior aesthetic throughout.



surface] on the diagonal is simply stunning and will look terrific for decades to come.”

Of a recent commission in London’s Mayfair, Pooley notes: “I reinstated a beautiful Regency marble fireplace in the entrance hallway of a townhouse. Combined with a dark, glossy parquet floor and an over-mantel gilt mirror, it created a striking focal point and was wonderfully welcoming when lit. A large-scale painting, a feature chandelier, or an antique lantern can create a similar effect.”

Lighting, of course, is key to a great hallway because natural lighting is typically scarce. Gabellini Sheppard Associates use ambient lighting effects to create highs and lows, accentuating doorways with punches of light, and Pooley, like many designers, adores statement lighting: “We often have bespoke chandeliers or lighting created for our clients. Recently, I designed an installation made from thousands of hand-gilded porcelain leaves to hang down four floors of an Arts and Crafts staircase in Mayfair.”

Finally, what should hallways contain? They are the natural home for art collections, sculpture, seating, musical instruments, pedestals, and »

PAUL WARCHOL



*Home spotlight:* Designs by Gabellini Sheppard Associates (above and top left) showcase the use of strategic lighting and mirrors to open up a hallway, while a skylight floods the space with sunshine at AB Concept’s Côte d’Azur villa (left).

On show: A hallway is ideal for displaying key artworks or hand-crafted pieces tailored to the space, as seen in concepts by Campion Platt (below) and Katharine Pooley (right).



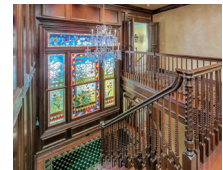
On the market  
**WELCOME HOME**



**60 Geneva Street**  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

On entering this Westboro retreat, through the floor-to-ceiling glazed entryway, a sleek, modern home awaits. In keeping with the open-concept floor plan, the foyer leads to a spacious living and dining area, while a dramatic floating staircase maximizes the flow of light.

C\$2,650,000  
Marilyn Wilson  
+1 613 842 5000  
marilyn@dreamproperties.com



**Hidden Meadow Farm**  
Ligonier, Pennsylvania, USA

At this grand residence on 133 acres, a stunning entryway staircase with stained-glass window introduces the splendor that defines the custom-built home: mahogany and cherry-wood floors, marble fireplaces, and coffered ceilings feature throughout. A pool, wine cellar, and equestrian facilities add to the amenities on offer.  
\$5,750,000  
Kathleen Coumou  
+1 212 468 7140  
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antique consoles, among other things. “A hallway or entrance gallery plays an important role in the architectural experience so it needs a dramatic focal point, something that makes you want to explore further,” says John Beckmann, founder of New York- and Chicago-based Axis Mundi.

Michael Gabellini suggests that “a series of artworks can create a rhythmic draw to lead guests through the space with a gallery-like flair.” This trick was used to great effect by Brisbane designer John Croft in the hallway of a client’s home. A line of life-size vintage warrior figures from Rajasthan guard the entrance and, beyond, an arch supported on spiral columns frames a magnificent staircase, with twin pedestals carrying oversized floral arrangements.

“Hallways are exciting spaces to design. Be bolder and more experimental in these areas.” *Katharine Pooley*

“Practically speaking, the hallway presents opportunities to include statement pieces that will be seen frequently but not used nearly as heavily as if they were in a living room,” says Brown. The focal pieces in the entrance hall can be classic in style, leaving more adventurous choices for private areas of the home – “Personal objects that say ‘Welcome home’ to our client, but also ‘Welcome’ to their guests,” as Gabellini puts it. Pooley, meanwhile, advises a different approach: “Hallways are exciting spaces to design; they can be used as a backdrop for statement pieces that may be unsuitable for entertaining or living rooms. I encourage my clients to be bolder and more experimental in these areas.”

However you decorate your hallway, Coumou is clear on its importance: “With every new encounter, we experience first impressions. Whether that’s meeting a person for the first time or stepping into a home for the first time, these impressions are lasting. The entrance to a home is the first impression a buyer will experience; it sets the tone for all that follows.” ●  
*Aileen Scoular is a lifestyle journalist, and regular contributor to this title and luxurydefined.com.*