



FARM FRESH

A farmhouse doesn't have to stick to country classics, as this rural home's glamour-drenched interiors show

Photography Susie Lowe Words Catherine Coyle

If he takes on a challenge, Douglas Bryce is the kind of man who commits to it wholeheartedly. He's a self-confessed control freak, with a love of the fine details, so when the modern farmhouse he now calls home came on to the property market, he relished the fact that it would take a lot of work to knock it into shape.

He'd reached a crossroads in his life; his career (he co-owns the construction services firm Topek) had taken him all over the country overseeing projects, but he was living out of a suitcase and spending a lot of time airport lounges. "I had an apartment at Speirs Wharf in Glasgow, but I was hardly ever there," he says.

All that travelling can result in an unhealthy lifestyle, and in fact a health scare forced him to reassess things. There were new opportunities, too: he'd just met the woman who is now his fiancée, Leanne. It was time for a change. "I was entering a great phase of my life and it was important to get our home right," he says.

It's no coincidence that Douglas looked to Ayrshire as the location of his new home. It's close to Glasgow for an easy commute and proximity to family (he grew up in Carmunnock, to the south of the city), and the gentle climate, abundance of rolling green fields and profusion of world-class golf courses all appealed. And that's not all: "I was addicted to agriculture as a child," he says. "I owe much of my work ethic and values to working whenever I could on Parklee Farm close to where I grew up; I'd skip school and go to the farm as often as I could, just to be part of this relentlessly hardworking family team."

On his first viewing of the house, he'd gazed out across the fields from the windows, watching the farmers at work, and realised that this was exactly where he wanted to live.

[Top] The extensive glazing attracted Douglas to the property, with the open-plan living-dining-kitchen area capitalising on the rural Ayrshire skylines. **[Bottom]** The entrance hall has a colourful custom-made rug by local artisan maker Turnberry Rug Works. The Pop Art-inspired painting was an online purchase. **[Previous pages, left]** The double-height master suite is a glamorous space, with an impressive mirrored wall. The bed, from And So To Bed, is dressed in Ralph Lauren bed linen and a luxe throw by James Brindley. **[Right]** An Eichholtz chair echoes the subtle elements of Art Deco styling throughout this elegant home; Dedar cushions finished in Samuel & Sons trimmings; downlights are by Occhio

"The extensive glazing and resulting views sold it to me," he remembers, "and I loved the fact that it was quirky." He realised that here he could create the home he'd always wanted but had never had the chance to design.

He moved in, knowing it needed refurbishment. "I brought literally no furniture with me, so the place was vast and empty," he recalls. "My uncle, who's also my mentor, told me I'd be mad if I didn't use professional help to bring the place to its full potential."

The entire house had been whitewashed in 'developer's white' and he was keen to inject both personality and style. The irregular shape of the house and its rooms had been one of the factors that had persuaded him to buy, and he wanted each of the spaces to have its own identity.

Douglas reckoned the best way to assess an interior designer's practice was to check out their own home – and when he saw how Margot Paton, design director at Chelsea McLaine, lived, he was bowled over. "Her home is so quirky and exciting – I wanted to move in!"

The overhaul of the farmhouse was soon underway, and it was Douglas's time on the road, surprisingly, that influenced the design. "I stayed in a lot of hotels when I was travelling, and some of them really appealed to me," he explains. In particular, he liked the decadent, boutique style adopted by Amanda Rosa for the Malmaison group, and by Oliver Redfern of Squid Inc who designed the darkly glamorous Gotham in Manchester, and wanted a similar atmosphere in his own master suite.

Margot and her designers Tracy Sifaoui and Amber Wiseman spent some time getting to know the house and its layout. They started work in the master suite, where they took into consideration the double-height ceiling and the couple's desire for all-out luxury. A bespoke emperor-sized bed by And So To Bed takes centre stage but the room is big enough not to be overwhelmed by it. Panelling the feature wall has made the most of the high ceiling, which is enhanced by a trio of oversized Eichholtz pendants that glitter in the mirrored wall behind.

Leanne, too, was impressed by the attention to detail, with small touches, such as the mirrored inserts around the bedside cabinets, or the wallpaper panels that serve as artworks, making a big impact. "We often gravitate towards the same things," says Douglas.

In many houses, Margot has suggested taking down a wall to create the right space for the owners; the ▶



DETAILS

What A contemporary farmhouse
Where Ayrshire
Interior design Chelsea McLaine





[Top left] A black bamboo chair by Pols Potten creates a corner for quiet reflection at the top of the stairs.
[Above] A view of the upper lounge from the bridge.
[Below] The upstairs lounge is an opulent space that uses green tones to connect with the outdoor landscapes. The footstool is a bespoke piece by Charlotte James and is covered in Larsen's Jenkins fabric, while the sofa is decked out with cushions by Larsen, Jim Thompson, Jane Churchill and Mulberry



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opposite was the case here: “We actually inserted a stud wall so that we could accommodate a fireplace and TV, as well as some staggered display nooks,” she explains.

This made a big difference to the feel of the room, but it isn't responsible for the most important improvement. That is down to the lighting. “It has been key to the success of this whole interior,” acknowledges Margot.

A large portion of the budget was spent on lighting, in fact – something the couple had not expected. However, having visited Occhio supplier HTI in Edinburgh with Margot and then seen the impact the Italian lighting brand has had on their home, they agree it is money well spent. “The lighting design has brought all of the hard work to life,” says Douglas. Previously, the house was overpopulated with spotlights that were harsh, unflattering and ineffective. Now, as in the master suite, a layered lighting scheme offer different moods and fulfils a variety of tasks.

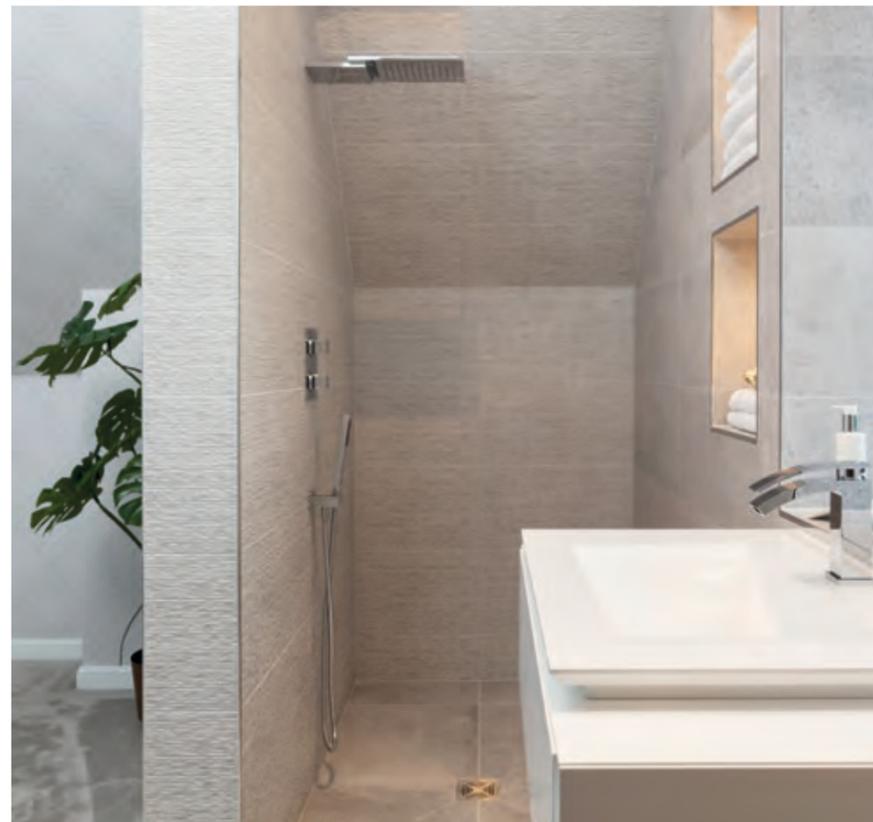
The wooden floor and staircase of the reception hall felt a little bland; Margot had made it feel more interesting by adding textured dark wallpaper (Elitis's Nomades and Designers Guild's Seta). Occhio's Sento lighting also helps to create atmosphere (the position of these lights can be changed, as can their colour and lenses). These changes make it much more welcoming, linking it better to the kitchen-dining-living area and to the mezzanine level.

This upper level is open – a ‘bridge’ leads from the upper living space through to the cinema room and guest bedroom – with a glass balustrade from which the open-plan area downstairs can be seen. The layout has remained the same, but the Chelsea McLaine scheme has allowed the rooms here to flourish; the lounge was previously seldom used, but it's now a relaxed space for entertaining. The large L-shaped Charlotte James sofa in Jim Thompson's Maddox velvet is an opulent piece that responds to the owners' passion for colour and detail. “The green of the sofa pulls in the outdoors,” says Margot, “while its size and shape help to zone the space.”

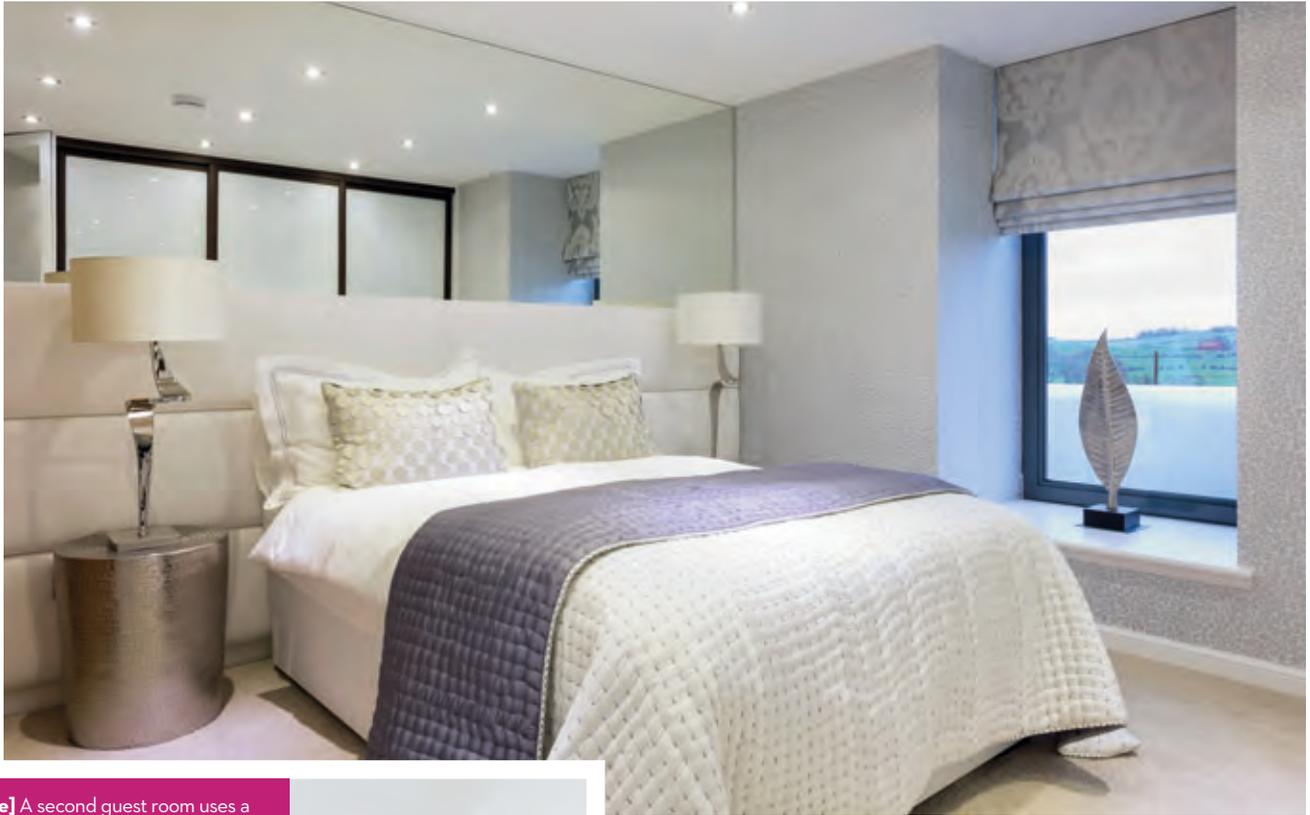
The day bed in tan leather, meanwhile, is a favourite of Douglas's, who appreciated the precision of Margot's design (the depth of the base pad is the same as the sofa's, so when guests are seated, everyone is at the same height).

Along the bridge is the cinema room, where the couple often enjoy a nightcap at their bespoke bar. “This room really comes alive at night,” smiles Douglas. “We don't really come up here in the summer months, so we wanted to create a snug for winter that would be really cosy.”

The design team have achieved this with textured surfaces in deep jewel tones. The Elitis wallpaper mimics horsehair and has the same sheen as the copper Pols Potten lamps. The modular sofa can be configured to suit ▶



[Above, left to right] The guest bedroom has fabrics by Jane Churchill and Designers Guild covering the custom-made headboard, and a muted wallpaper, Vico, by Brian Yates; Porcelanosa tiles and sanitaryware in the en-suite; the built-in wardrobes are finished in Farrow & Ball's Strong White paint. [Below] The stylish cinema room has a custom-built bar area and cosy lounge. Charlotte James bar stools have been upholstered in a GP & J Baker velvet and Jane Churchill's Riva fabric; Zoffany's Victorian Purple paint creates drama against the modular sofa



[Above] A second guest room uses a pale palette to accentuate texture with layers such as Osborne & Little's Pardus wallpaper and a roman blind in Jane Churchill's Agate fabric. **[Below]** Tricky roof angles haven't resulted in any dead space – a chair turns this nook into a peaceful reading corner



a crowd, and the dark wenge bar area was designed by Margot to fit around some particularly tall bottles of tequila that Douglas had collected. Fridges have been concealed behind black glass to ensure that convenience doesn't detract from the room's chic aesthetic.

The guest suite was the last room to be tackled. It was a daunting space, vast and empty, and working out how to make the most of it took all the design team's expertise. "There was no obvious wall to place the bed against, so we decided to build another stud partition," says Margot.

It meant that the asymmetric headboard (made by A & M Robinson) became a central feature. Behind it, a further partition created a walk-in double-sided en-suite, with concealed storage on the opposite wall. Working with the unusual angles of the ceiling, Margot was able to design built-in wardrobes with a hidden door. She mirrored the back of the door to the room to give the illusion of continuity, and finished the space with strong hues that have a hint of Art Deco style. Brass accessories fit beautifully with the gold, navy and emerald palette.

"Staying in hotels all over the world has given us ideas about what we wanted to do with our own place, and it has been great building it together," explains Douglas. "We love coming home to it." ■