



# Moving with the times

**Interiors** | Designers are innovating for the growing rental market. By *Mark C O'Flaherty*

**H**igh flyers with the lifestyles to match rarely live in a single place for a long time. But signing new leases doesn't have to mean a fully furnished property livened up with a few cashmere throws. Designers are rising to the challenge of creating temporary feature decor that can move and adapt from place to place.

When Anaïs Seguin and Alice Gras, the designers behind Paris-based brand Delajoie Editions, moved into a rented Haussmann-era flat last year, they left the living room and all its decorative cornicing white, but made frames stretched with bright yellow moiré fabric from Dedar to fit into the ornate rectangular wall mouldings. "We see it as a kind of film set," says Seguin. "We won't be here a long time, so when we move, we will take it with us and rework it."

Renters represent a substantial target market for design. There were 28 per

cent more rental homes on the UK market in the 12 months ending April 2024, compared with the previous year, and 35.7 per cent of people in the country are tenants. That figure is higher in many countries across Europe — as much as 40 per cent in Denmark, a country renowned for its stylish furniture. In Germany, more people are tenants than not.

With the rental market in mind, Bavaria-based company Schotten & Hansen recently launched a magnetic flooring system that can be taken from property to property. An example debuted at Clerkenwell Design Week in May — seen on Kit Kemp's PIT-A-PAT table, which incorporates the magnetic system with interchangeable, coloured, wooden veneer pieces.

"The design involves single millimetre magnetic foils concealed within each piece," says Schotten & Hansen founder Torben Hansen. "You can install a floor without using glue and take it to your



(Clockwise from top left) Ronan and Erwen Bouroullec's cloud sculpture; Anaïs Seguin and Alice Gras's Paris apartment; Schotten & Hansen's magnetic flooring system; the classic modular 606 Universal Shelving System by Vitsoe

Mark C O'Flaherty, Julian Hartwig, Vitsoe



moveable larder unit, oak and marble island, and butcher's block, "takes us back to our roots".

The concept has pedigree. Some of the greatest designs for homes have been made with impermanence in mind. Consider Dieter Rams' glorious wall-mounted 606 Universal Shelving System, designed in 1960 and made by Vitsoe. It is prosaic, handsome and functional, easy to install, totally reconfigurable, and simple to add or subtract from. You move, it moves with you.

If you want a statement sofa, it doesn't get much bolder than a Roche Bobois Mah Jong, first seen 11 years after the 606. Designed by Hans Hopfer, its modular nature means you can reconfigure it for different spaces, and mix and match the fabrics of each element — throw some Kenzo Takada with a bit of Missoni or Jean Paul Gaultier. A new element looks just as good with older, more weathered pieces.

Renting can also be an opportunity to experiment. Like Seguin and Gras, this is the case for brand polymath and creative director Ramdane Touhami and his wife Victoire de Taillac, who have lived in numerous capital cities. Before moving to, and transforming, their current 1870s home in Paris, the couple rented a house in Tokyo. They landed in the city with next to nothing, apart from their children. An ascetic set up of futons, tatami mats and shoji screens became a canvas for Touhami to create simple and geometric oversized armchairs and curved platforms cut from insulation foam, which he covered in brightly coloured Kvadrat fabrics.

"They were prototypes," he says. "Now they are office furniture in my HQ in Paris."



next property." It's also, of course, inherently modular — pieces can be swapped out if damaged, and added to.

Renters are also now able to bring more than just accessories to their cooking spaces. Neptune Kitchens launches a freestanding kitchen collection next January, designed to be easy to move with. "We use only solid timber or ply," says design director Fred Horlock of the brand's collections; clients are reluctant to leave them: "people often de- and re-install when they move". The new pieces make that more straightforward. He adds that Neptune's first kitchen design was created to be freestanding and that the new collection, including a

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