

NEW YEAR, NEW LOOK

From a Mayfair home reinvented with a shimmer of autumnal leaves across its façade, to a glass extension sunk into the earth, home improvements can fire the imagination, writes **Ruth Bloomfield**

The New Year is inevitably when people look at their post-holiday homes with a jaundiced eye and wonder what they could do to make the place where they live work better, whether the requirement is more space, more light, more pizzazz – or all three.

So with the assistance of some of London's most creative architects, we look at ways to breathe life into your home in 2015.

A NEW LEAF

If proof were needed that thinking outside the box can pay dividends then this reinvention of a converted pub in Mayfair is it.

Architects Squire and Partners, the practice which is currently masterminding the redevelopment of the contentious Chelsea Barracks site, were called in to revamp a five storey former inn, which was being converted into a house.

Although the original 18th century façade of the pub was preserved, much of the rest of the building was rebuilt behind it.

"When we design a new building it is important that we link it to the architectural language of the area," explains Murray Levinson, a partner at Squire and Partners.

In this case, design inspiration came from a nearby property clad in Virginia creeper. "We thought it would be nice to reinterpret that in a contemporary way," says Levinson.

So, working with a team of Swiss metalworkers, Squire and Partners developed a design for a metal leaf which was cut from aluminium, slightly folded inwards for texture, and then powder coated in subtly different shades of bronze to give it a richer appearance.

Each leaf was attached to a panel, and the panels were then bolted onto the new walls of the house. There are, in total, 4,080 leaves.

Levinson admits that his clients initially took some persuading as to the wisdom of the idea, but luckily Westminster City Council's planners loved it (always a bonus) and the property has since won numerous design awards including the gong for best individual house in the Schueco/RIBA Journal Excellence Awards.

The pub was being revamped for a property developer and the house has since been sold on to an international family – proof that individual, not to say slightly eccentric, touches are not inevitably a hindrance to a sale. **||**

NEW BRONZE AGE Squire and Partners used 4,080 aluminium leaves to replicate Virginia creeper