



The plinth element

Interiors | Time to elevate the everyday; pedestals are being used in playful ways, says *Keith Flanagan*

You don't need to be an ancient Roman or an ancient curator to appreciate the enduring elegance of a plinth. They might evoke the classical or antiquated, but a growing number of contemporary designers are using them with modern wit. "They have typically been considered formal or even ostentatious," says London-based designer Christian Bense. "But that is definitely changing."

These tall displays are being used as neat solutions to a number of design conundrums: to demarcate areas in open-plan layouts, introduce visual variety through height, and add intriguing texture — pecking out from behind other furniture. Often, it's with a twist.

Notably, contemporary designers aren't just using them for priceless vases

Clockwise from above left:

Ghislaíne Viñas's plaster bust of John Wayne on a vintage plinth by Josh Greene/Lawson-Fenning; stone plinth by Christian Bense; James Mackie's huge plaster plinth holds a miniature sculpture; Devin Wilde's cocktail table — Ethan

Herrington, YorkFoto/Photo Credit House

or marble busts — plants, lamps or even a cocktail can be just as at home. "Sometimes it's just another surface to stack books or magazines," says Los Angeles designer Nathan Warkentin.

New York-based designer Ghislaíne Viñas agrees, and recommends having fun by "elevating something more everyday or even a little kooky". In her own home, a vintage ceramic plinth stands in front of green plaid wallpaper, supporting a plaster bust of a masked John Wayne wearing a large rosary and a stack of her husband's hats.

Regard plinths less as decoration and more as building blocks. Bense recommends grouping them with other objects or plinths of different heights, to create a composition that sows the seeds for some storytelling. In a kitchen corner of a recent project, a stone column

topped with flowers stands next to a painting of a stormy landscape hanging on the wall, and a large carved wooden urn on the floor.

So seduced by the idea are some designers that they have added plinths into their own product offerings. Dublin-based designer Róisín Lafferty's studio recently launched *Bosca*, in collaboration with Miller Brothers Stone: a series of boxy plinths in varying heights and materials (including onyx and travertine) that are designed to be grouped. The shorter models double as stools. The

Not just priceless vases or marble busts — plants, lamps or even a cocktail can be at home on a plinth

collection "allows people who may not have access to stone on a larger scale to bring a sense of luxury and timelessness into their home", she says.

New York designer Josh Greene opted for chamfered-edge timber rather than marble for his interpretations, produced in collaboration with California furniture maker Lawson-Fenning. He sees plinths as "freestanding architecture that corresponds with the design" rather than simply decor, and uses them to break up long sightlines or add structure to a space.

Henri Kivist, a joiner based in Oxfordshire, also recently debated a series of made-to-order wooden plinths. Timber, he says, is "far lighter, easier to move and more flexible in how [it can be] used within a home".

Plinths in quartzite and metal, available from Soho Home and Restoration Hardware, also lean into the possibilities that come with being able to be moved with ease.

The format is also ripe for more exuberant, playful and indeed practical experimentation: Devin Wilde recently released a colourful series of

plinth-like cocktail tables for Design Within Reach, and interior designer Jeremiah Brent included a column-like plinth with concealed storage for Crate & Barrel.

Antique plinths, meanwhile, are being appreciated afresh. In the UK, designer James Mackie, a fan of column displays, recommends platforms such as The Saleroom to view lots from a variety of auction houses at once. In his own Cotswolds home, he has played with scale by topping an antique scagliola column — made from plaster painted and polished

to imitate marble — with a miniature sculpture of a classical nude.

"Whether scagliola, painted or wood in the raw, I like to see some wear and tear — what antique dealers call 'country house' condition — which brings with it patina and character," he says.

But what of the risk of knocking a plinth over? "If they are substantial and weighty enough, they won't tip over," assures Greene, adding that placement away from high-traffic routes should ease concerns. But perhaps best keep them away from a lively dog or charging toddler nonetheless.

