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## How the social media platform became a game-changer for interiors aficionados

By **Dominic Lutyens**

25 January 2018

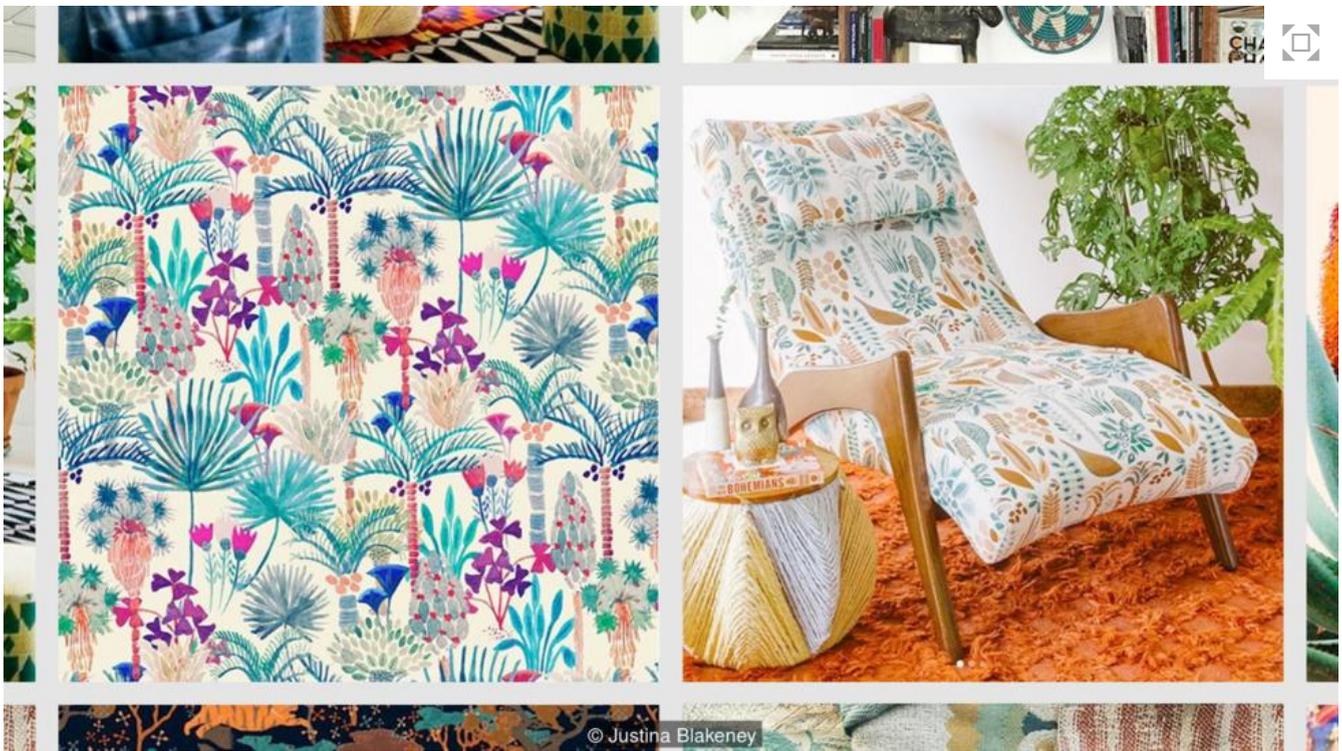
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It's no surprise that Instagram, of all social media platforms, fuels the imagination of design aficionados around the world – be they designers, writers, photographers or simply design buffs.

Its format is chiefly visual and it lends itself to highly studied compositions as well as off-the-cuff snapshots. Its rectilinear format, albeit one that can be carved into split-screens or grids, is simple, eye-catching and clean-lined.



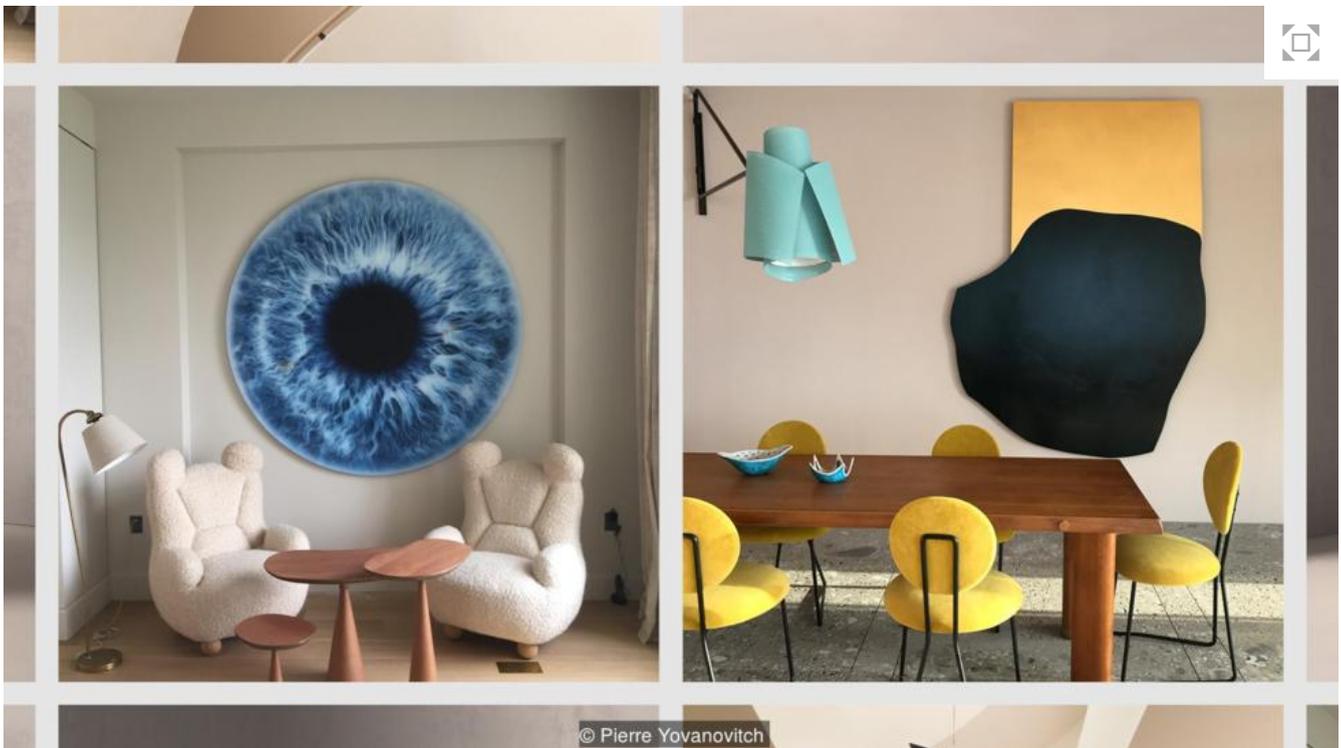
Instagram is an ideal platform for interiors accounts such as @thejungalow, which is bohemian in mood and has a huge following (Credit: Justina Blakeney)

Instagram is used by design lovers as a form of self-expression, to communicate their sensibility and inspirations to others in a highly curated way that represents their personality and taste, along, potentially, with captions relaying personal insights.

In the form of still images or videos, Instagram can showcase a designer's work and publicise their business, and as such is a useful – and free - commercial tool. It's also a versatile visual medium: it allows photos and videos to be presented using the Stories feature or as carousels (various images attached to one post that are revealed by swiping the first picture).

Design-led Instagram handles are used by private individuals, small businesses, magazines such as Dezeen (see @dezeen) and It's Nice That (@itnsicethat), museums including Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum in New York (@cooperhewitt) and London's Design Museum (@designmuseum) as well as larger companies such as design consultancy Pentagram (@pentagram) and furniture manufacturer Herman Miller (@hermanmiller).

Via hashtags, Instagram connects peoples with a shared, very specific visual sensibility, yet in a way that is relatively organic and unpredictable. When someone responds favourably to another account's images, they could be anywhere in the world.



© Pierre Yovanovitch

'I like the interactivity,' says French interior designer Pierre Yovanovitch, who joined the platform in 2015 (Credit: Pierre Yovanovitch)

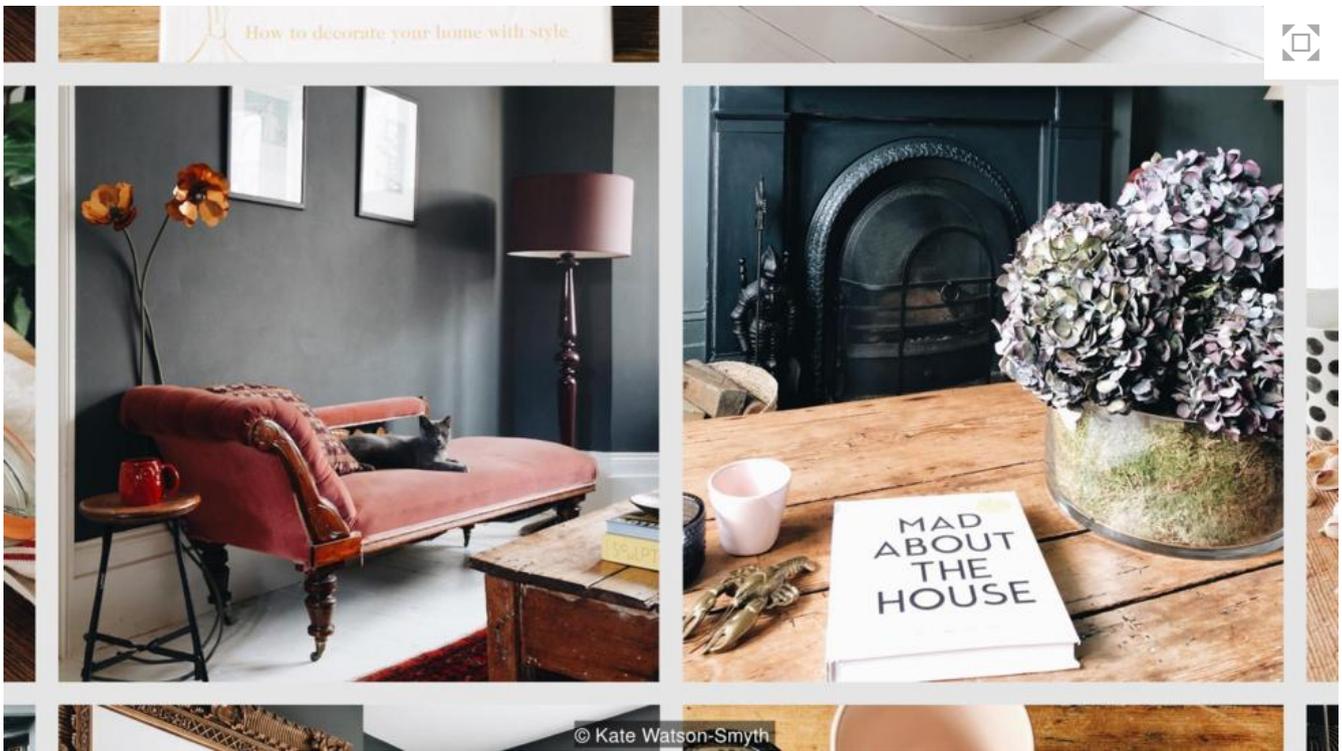
"The Instagram design community is incredibly diverse, sharing everything from traditional design practices to niche art forms," says a spokesperson for the company.

And while Twitter is seen as combative, Instagram is a safer, less judgmental space for exchanging images and thoughts in a direct, digestible way.

### **An image can be beautiful, relatable, funny, colourful, thought-provoking or moving – Justina Blakeney**

This community has grown rapidly since Instagram was launched in 2010. By September 2017, it had 800 million users. One early adopter was Los Angeles-based designer and artist Justina Blakeney. She has a blog and online design shop called Jungalow and is author of *The New Bohemians Handbook: Come Home to Good Vibes* (Abrams, £19.99). Her handle, @thejungalow, now has more than 880,000 followers, and the platform is perhaps the perfect showcase for her love of juicy colour and luxuriant botanical motifs.

"I've been on Instagram since early 2011," she says. "A friend touted it to me as the new Twitter for visual people. It's my favourite social media platform because it's visual and simple. For me, many things make an image compelling – it can be beautiful, relatable, funny, colourful, thought-provoking or moving."



The influential account @mad\_about\_the\_house is a visual diary with chatty captions (Credit: Kate Watson-Smyth)

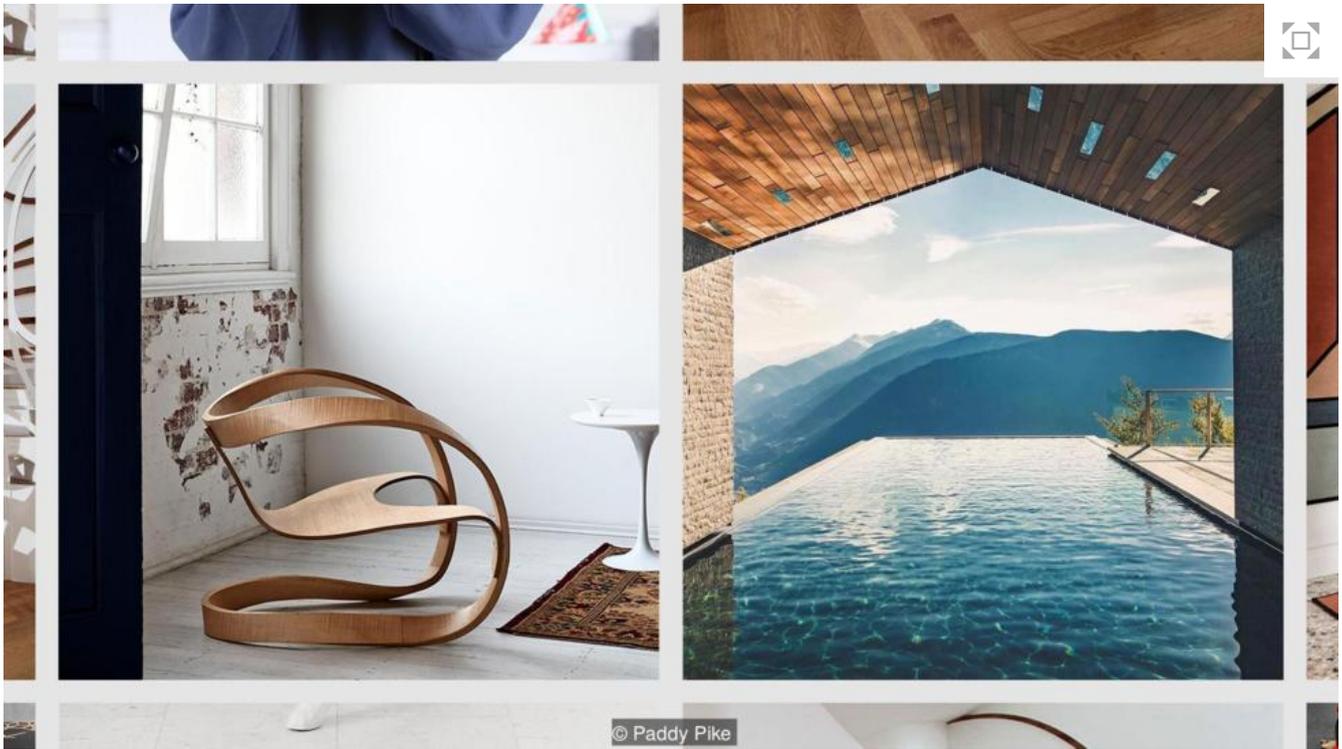
UK-based Kate Watson-Smyth has a similarly multi-faceted business operating under the umbrella name Mad About the House. A design journalist, she has a blog and her Instagram handle @mad\_about\_the\_house (with nearly 80,000 followers) is a visual diary, mainly showing images of her home accompanied by chatty captions. The moody, forest-green walls of her home are a unifying element in her feed, which British Vogue named one of Instagram's top 10 interiors accounts.

## I can spend an hour moving things left or right by an inch or two – Kate Watson-Smyth

“I post a new picture about 7am, Monday to Friday. I use it as a micro-blogging site, sometimes giving tips on interior design,” says Watson-Smyth, also author of new book *Mad About the House: How to Decorate Your Home with Style* (Pavilion Books, £20), to be published in March. Her images are painstakingly composed: “I spend far too much time in pursuit of the perfect image and can spend an hour moving things left or right by an inch or two. I bought myself a very good camera last year and it has a grid on it to make sure I get my verticals vertical and horizontals horizontal.”

### Interior life

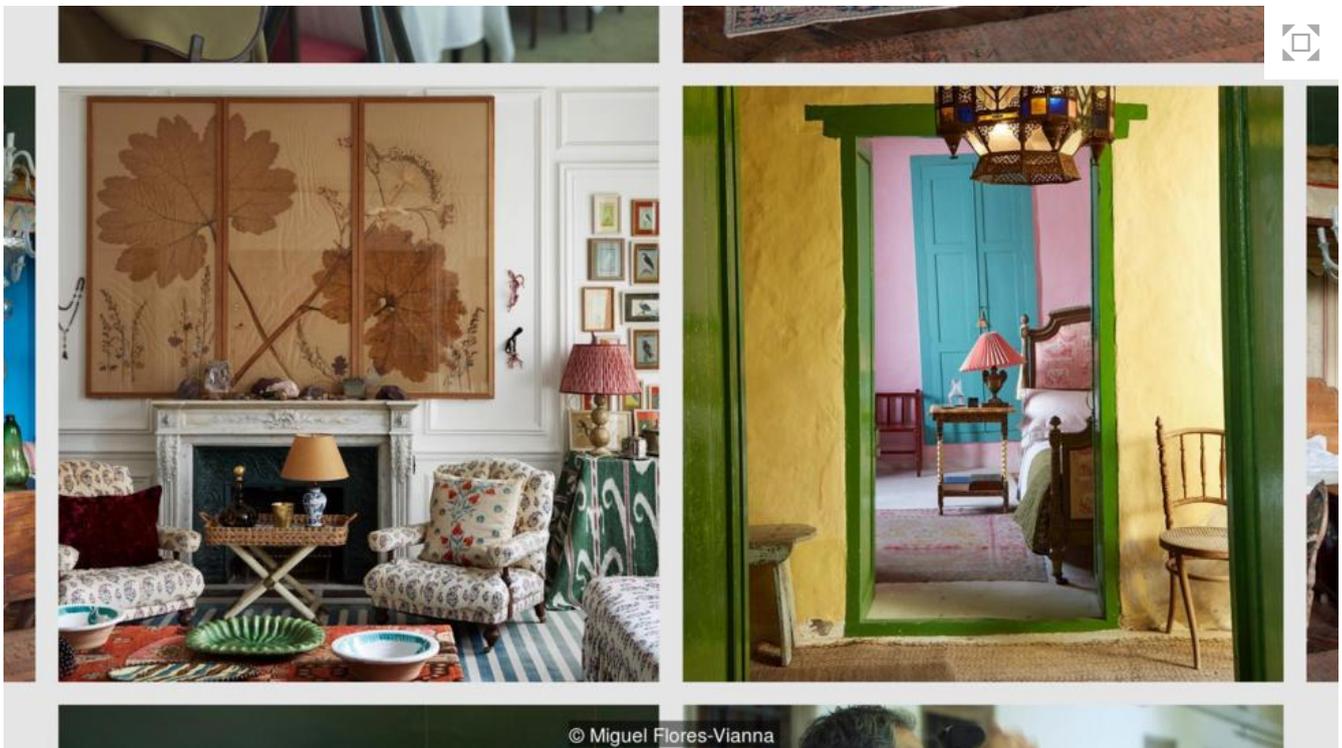
Meanwhile, French interior designer Pierre Yovanovitch, who joined Instagram in 2015 and has almost 80,000 followers (on @pierre.yovanovitch), says “I immediately liked it. I was keen to get acquainted with a platform that is second nature to millennials as they are tomorrow’s influencers. I like the interactivity of the images, too – you can zoom in on them, send them to another Instagram user...”



Like many Instagrammers, furniture designer Paddy Pike uses the platform as both a promotional tool and a mood board, with his account [@paddy.designs](#) (Credit: Paddy Pike)

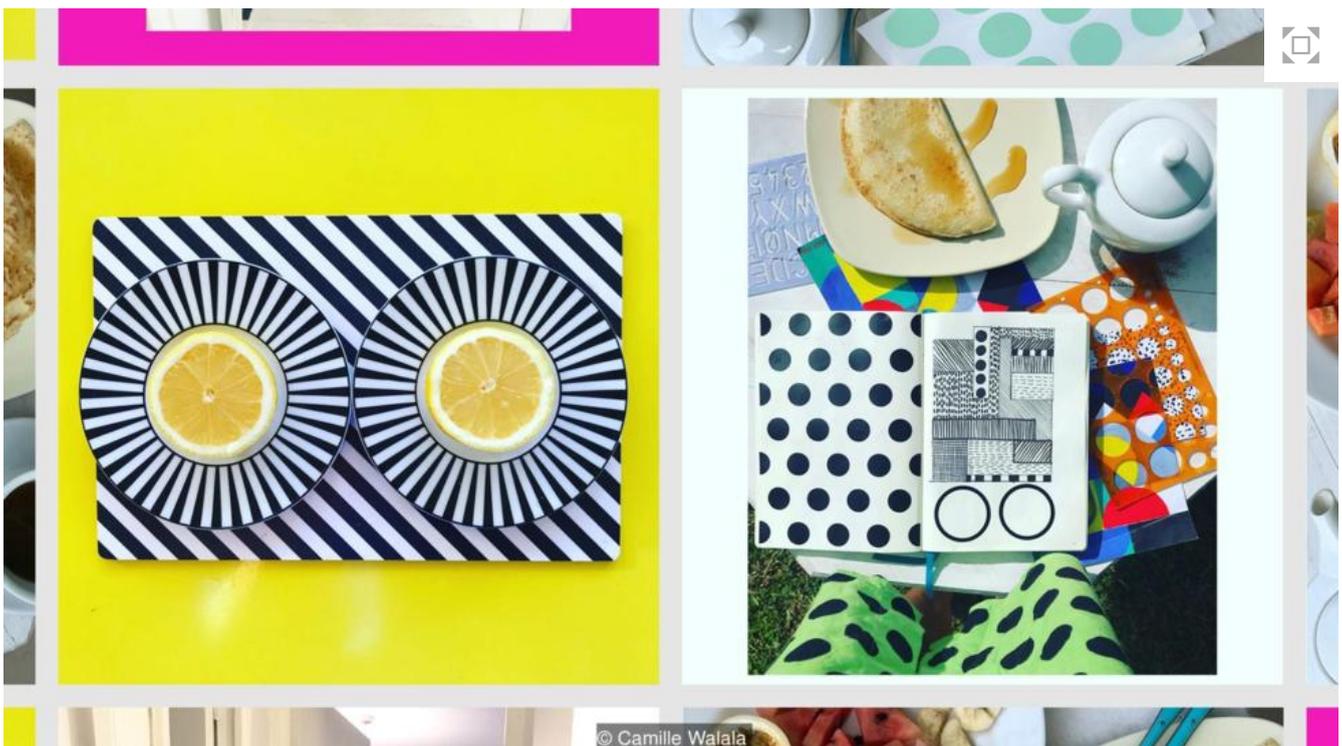
For furniture designer and blogger Paddy Pike – who uses a Leica TL2 camera to post images of interiors and furniture he admires on his account [@paddy.designs](#) – the platform is a vital tool: “It’s infinitely more cost-effective than most advertising as it’s free. It’s only a matter of time before designers put a large portion of their advertising budget into social media.”

According to Miguel Flores-Vianna, a freelance interiors photographer, writer and author of *Haute Bohemians* (Vendome Press, £45), whose Instagram handle [@miguel floresvianna](#) has 64,000 followers, “my main motivation is to share what I experience. I travel a lot, see great things. I hope my images help my followers to learn about these places too. Instagram can be a generous tool and I admire those who use it this way.”



'My main motivation is to share what I experience,' says author and photographer Miguel Flores-Vianna (Credit: Miguel Flores-Vianna)

The vividly colourful Instagram page of London-based designer Camille Walala is a reflection of her eye-poppingly vibrant work, which takes the form of huge murals and boldly patterned homeware, and is influenced by 1960s Op Art and 1980s design collective Memphis. But there's more to it than that – it provides an insight into what makes her tick as a designer, since it includes myriad images of what influences her. "Anything I see that inspires me I'll take a photo of. I'll upload it to Instagram and use it as part of my research," she says.



The vibrant Instagram page of designer Camille Walala reflects her own vividly-hued work, and shows her influences (Credit: Camille Walala)

As Instagram's spokesperson points out: "in addition to highlighting exceptional design, successful accounts engage with and nurture their communities by sharing behind-the-scenes, personal content you wouldn't see elsewhere." Indeed, seen collectively, an Instagram feed can look like a designer's private mood board – and one that can be added to *ad infinitum*.

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