



**LUXURY
INTERIORS
MAGAZINE
INTERVIEW
WITH JEN
BERNARD**

Bernard Interiors is an award winning interior design practice working with a variety of distinguished clients across the UK and abroad on residential and commercial properties in the luxury care, retirement and hotel sectors. We spoke with Jen Bernard, founder and managing director.

1. What determined your passion for interior design and architecture?

From an early age I had a passion for all things creative, art, interiors and styling. In my first 'Saturday job' when I was 16 I had the chance to style room sets for interior magazines such as Elle Decoration – from then I was hooked. I then studied interior architecture at Edinburgh College of Art.

2. What inspired you to set up your own interior design company and has this always been your dream?

After graduating, I worked for an architecture practice specialising in commercial interiors and found that I enjoyed being on site, interacting, problem solving and building rapport with clients and contractors. This was the catalyst to the dream of running my own practice. However, I needed more experience so I moved into a sales and design role with an international wall covering company. I spent a lot of time visiting and advising clients, mostly in the hotel and healthcare sectors. In many ways it was like running my own business which reinforced that going it alone was the right path. My team is currently 14 strong and they inspire me daily.

3. Do you have a signature style?

The Bernard Interiors style is born from each client's vision. Our role

is to facilitate our clients' business aspirations or dream lifestyle creating a timeless aesthetic that reflects their character and interests, with impeccable attention to detail. We aim to create a warmth to our interiors through the use of pattern, texture and carefully designed lighting schemes.

4. Talk us through your design process, how are your ideas brought to life?

We work collaboratively with clients, architects, contractors and project managers as part of the development team, sharing our technical knowledge and project delivery experience. Our process aligns with the RIBA Plan of Work and once the project vision and concepts have been thoroughly discussed and agreed, we focus on delivery to make sure we're on time and on budget.

We draw upon years of knowledge and experience to tailor our designs to each individual client or end user and our goal is to exceed expectations.

5. With projects being so diverse, do you feel it important to adapt your design approach?

Every project varies so we naturally adapt our design approach to each individual project. We create timeless environments that function effectively for the needs of everyday life, from private residences, hotels to retirement villages.

Our approach is always based on our client's vision. For design inspiration we often respond to the history of the property, its surroundings and the lifestyle of the end user.

6. Your company have worked on some amazing projects, how important is it to fully understand a client brief and work with the client even when there may be a clash of opinion or ideas?

Fully understanding our clients' aspiration is vital but part of the process is often interpreting the brief as sometimes they may struggle to communicate this. It's our role to dissect the brief and extract information in order for us to start the creative design process.

We naturally build strong relationships with our clients, earning their trust from the outset. Sound business decisions are grounded in collaboration and experience and through this we are able to suggest a variation in ideas or bring something new that the client might not have previously considered. That is the beauty of using an interior designer.

We're strong in our approach and ideas but we will always listen to our clients – the aim is to get the best out of every project and ultimately add value.

7. Who or what inspires you?

Interior designer and hotelier Kit Kemp MBE inspires me, both as a designer and as an entrepreneur. She has built a very successful practice. Helen Green is another huge inspiration. Sadly she is no longer alive, though her signature style and legacy still thrives. My family, clients and team also inspire me on a daily basis.

8. What have been your favourite interior design projects that you have worked on?

I love every project I work on as I am passionate about all things design. I like to give the same amount of attention to every project. A private high-end residential project I worked on for two years was a real challenge and consumed my life but it was so rewarding once it was completed. Working on projects in Spain is always uplifting, with sunshine daily – it definitely lifts the mood!

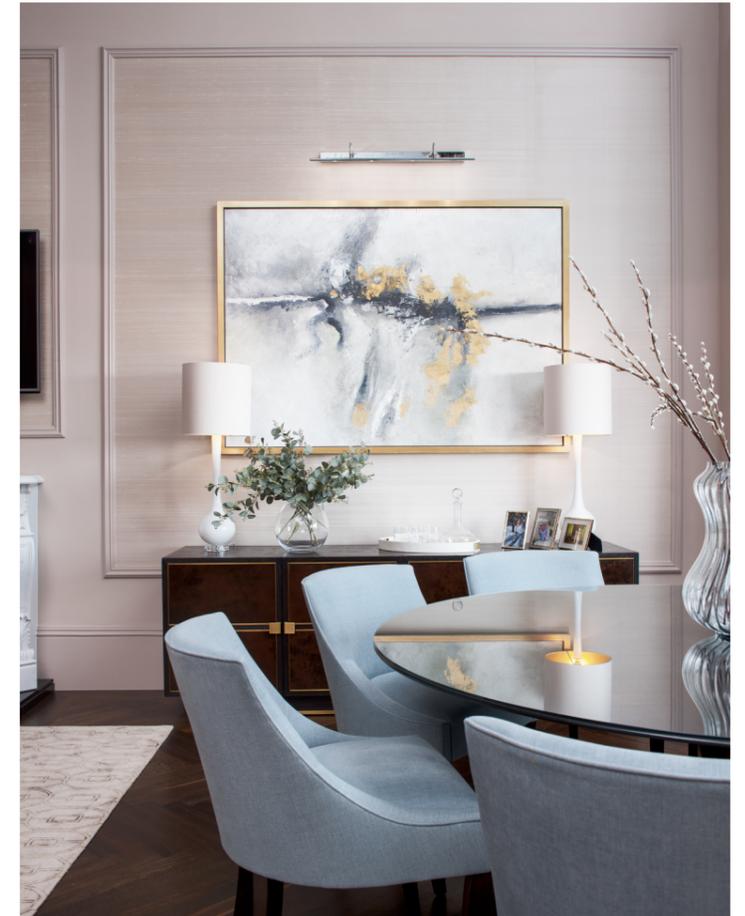
9. What would be your advice for other women who want to set up their own business?

I'd advise anyone to go for it, but you should be honest with yourself at the outset about how much time, effort and resource you are willing to commit to get a business off the ground. Other areas of your life will most definitely suffer and it is so important to build a support network professionally and privately. You can fail several times but never quit.

10. What are your future ambitions? Are there any projects you have upcoming that you are excited about?

For the practice, our aim is continued growth. We have just moved into a 5,000 sqft historic landmark property which has undergone significant redevelopment in order to provide an inspiring work environment. If our growth continues at the expected rate we have the flexibility to almost double the floor space of the new studio with the addition of a mezzanine floor.

We have lots of exciting projects due to be delivered throughout the next year, our first urban redevelopment in Clapham for Audley Villages is going to be a showstopper!



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