

# interior design TODAY

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# DESIGNER VS DESIGNER

AS PART OF OUR FOCUS ON INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE, WE SET IRINA TOWNSEND AND THOMAS GRIEM SOME QUESTIONS BASED ON THEIR SEPARATE EXPERIENCES OF WORKING IN THE REALM OF ARCHITECTURE WITHIN A PROJECT



**How heavily involved do you get in the interior architecture of any project?** I would say in 80 per cent of our projects we are involved in the interior architecture, which ranges from elements of the interior space redesign, to gutting the space down to the shell. I think proper space planning is actually more important than the decorative and furnishing specification, as it affects light, circulation and the use of the space.

**You have worked around the globe, which cultural influences inspire you?** I find inspiration in every country that I visit. I am mostly drawn to interior architecture that is inspired by nature and has logical links between the interior and exterior spaces. I love Moroccan interior spaces, leading on to semi-open verandas with comfortable seating, this in turn leading onto courtyards with mosaic floors, gardens and water features.

**Have you ever experienced a project where the interior architecture of the space was so difficult that you had to completely rework it to achieve your brief?** Several times. We worked on a 2,000m<sup>2</sup> commercial space with very scarce daylight, which had to be converted into a high-end restaurant. We also had a brief to convert a 40m<sup>2</sup> flat into a luxurious pied-a-terre. Both were equally challenging, as both places felt very unwelcoming and not at all fit for purpose.

**How have clients expectations changed towards interior architecture?** I think the concept of contemporary dining has affected interior architecture dramatically in the recent years, as all of our clients want open kitchens today, regardless of how big or small the space is. Our clients also pay a lot of attention to detail when it comes to bedroom design. We've had very specific requirements for walk-in wardrobes recently in terms of materials, lighting and internal planning of the wardrobes, which wasn't a trend 10 years ago.

**What do you see as being the key interior architecture trends of 2015/16?** I think there is a definite trend for luxurious storage solutions, where every object has a designated place. Home automation will also take us to a different level in the next 5 to 10 years. As the interior architecture becomes sleeker and more high tech, I believe decorative accents will continue towards the contrasting trend of going back to our routes towards the simplicity of natural materials and rustic and organic influences.

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**How has your architectural education helped to inform your choices?** Being a qualified architect is more about ensuring ideas are built in the correct way and manner. Construction contracts and legal complexities are everyday problems. The ideas for a project, be it in layout, finish or detail, are mostly independent of being a qualified architect.

**How has your German heritage influenced your ideas on interior architecture?** From an early age I learnt about Bauhaus and the design movement from the thirties in Germany, which has influenced my love for symmetry and rational design. From Japan I have picked up joining the shower and bath into a wet area and from Spain, in particular from my projects in Mallorca, I have learnt to design with maximising sunlight in rooms.

**What is your 'worst nightmare' situation when being faced with the beginnings of a project from an interior architecture perspective?** Worst situation would be a Grade 1 listed building where everything including the interior may be of architectural interest, combined with a client who wants a new modern building. In this scenario it can be very difficult for the client to understand that he/she cannot do anything to their property unless it is first approved by the heritage.

**How are your clients being influenced in terms of interior architecture?** First I listen to their requirements and needs, and then ask them to show me interiors they like from magazines or hotels they have stayed in. Next I show them inspirational images, then materials and lastly 3D sketched/CGI's. I take my clients through a journey of design, logic and taste. At the end it's a new and different/ personally evolved house.

**What do you see as being the key interior architecture trends of 2015/16?** I am hugely interested in industrial design and how it can be adopted and serve as an inspiration for urban interiors, I think this influence will feature heavily in the near future. For example: matt black, metal copper, antique brass finishes and organic linens in hemp and similar colours. Concrete finishes for floors and walls. White Thassos marble in bathrooms combined with gold fittings.

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