



Stunning interiors mixing up all era's

Juliette Hopkins shares her story from when she found her love of interiors to the stunning restoration of her 300 year old property in Norfolk.

What is your history as an Interior Designer?
It was during my time at Art College that I discovered a love for interior design. I enjoyed creating “looks” for rooms and found myself mentally redesigning spaces wherever I went. My career really took off in 1992, when a development company offered me the role of lead designer of show homes – requiring me to design up to 12 a year. I gained a reputation for creating show homes with unusual individuality and style, to the point that private clients were asking if I could emulate that style in their own homes.

How long have you lived in your home?
I’ve lived here for eight years, but before we moved in we undertook a total restoration of the house. It is 300 years old and we took it back to the bare bones and rebuilt it. My aim was to reflect the history of the house, while at the same giving the interior a contemporary, and often quirky, look and feel.

What was your approach to the decoration of the house?
I started with the backdrop to everything – the walls, ceilings, windows and floors. This is where I sought to complement the historic fabric of the house, using

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lots of lovely traditional materials and styles. From beautiful sash windows and shutters to extravagant cornicing, architraves and skirting boards; from wood paneling and huge oak beams to limestone tiles and wide-planked timber floors. They all provide a depth and texture to the house, which I completed by using Paint and Paper Library wall colours throughout. I then created a more contemporary look to each room by mixing up furniture and fittings from different eras and using a wide range of surfaces and fabrics. Colour-wise, I tend to favour neutral tones, with splashes of colour coming from cushions and artwork. Artwork and fabulous cushions transform a room and I use both liberally!

Taking just one room, can you tell us how you put it together?
Well the hallway is a good example of how I love to mix up eras, styles and textures. The backdrop is traditional, with its large sash window, ornate cornicing and limestone floor. I continued the theme with a Victorian dining table and an early 20th century armchair, but then created dramatic contrast by adding lots of highly contemporary items



– some of which could be considered quite brash. I love the size and shape of the brass Tom Dixon light over the table and the white sideboard and Perspex table lamps – both originals from the 1970s – add a kitsch element that balances with the antiques. The key to blending differing styles and materials is to use complementary colours and here I’ve used mostly neutrals.

What’s your favourite decorative item in the hallway and why?
That’s easy, it’s the large collage over the sideboard. Created by Gavin Mitchell, it’s his highly original take on the traditional family portrait. Using our garden as a backdrop, Gavin artfully transposed photos of us all when we were four years old. It’s such a gorgeous photo montage, with an almost ethereal quality which really sets off the whole room.

How is your design flair reflected in the homes you create for Fleur Developments?
As a design-led business, our emphasis is on creating beautiful, highly individual homes that meet the quality and strong sense of style that I seek in my own home. I’m very uncompromising and refuse to cut corners – every home we build I would be happy to live in myself; it’s an attitude that sets us apart from many

larger developers. To me, as a builder, it’s important to make a positive contribution to the community – Fleur homes are our mark on the landscape and I see that as a big responsibility.

Can you describe a typical Fleur-style house?
Because we are based on the north Norfolk coast, we believe traditional exteriors are essential for our homes so they blend in seamlessly with their surroundings. We therefore use lots of brick and flint, clay roof pantiles, (never concrete), timber-framed windows, hand-cut chalk blocks and colour-washed timber cladding. However once inside, I seek to create cool, contemporary interiors that maximise light and space and provide a real sense of luxury. I’m particularly keen on using bi-folding doors and French windows, which add light and extend rooms. Inspired by my own home, the interior backdrops in Fleur homes are similar to my own, with features including generous oak floorboards, limestone tiles, oak internal doors and Carrara marble work surfaces. These elements contribute to my signature palette of neutrals, with the current emphasis warm greys, which I particularly love and use for kitchen units.



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Growth in the economy proves doubters wrong but what does it mean for the property market?

Gross domestic product grew in the third quarter by 0.5% which is considerably more than economic forecasters were hoping for and also considerably more than most other developed economies. This is more evidence that the economy is proving to be incredibly resilient following the historic vote to leave the EU. Let's not forget the legion of doom mongers who predicted a recession immediately after June's referendum if we voted to leave. This army of learned individuals and organisations included David Cameron, George Osborne, Mark Carney, the Treasury, the IMF, TUC, CBI and many more have all been proved wrong. David Cameron and George Osborne have departed the scene and the governor of the Bank of England, Mark Carney, may follow shortly because his dour outlook simply doesn't fit with what's actually going on.

So what does this have to do with the property market I hear you say? Well the property market depends to a large degree on confidence and sentiment, and if the establishment and the ruling classes try to scare us to death about the state of the economy, which is what happened for the first half of this year, then the natural thing for us to do is to hold back. As a consequence many buyers, and particularly, sellers up and down the country have been delaying their plans.

Now that we know that the gloom mongering was all about spin and nothing to do with hard evidence, the good news for the property market is that we can now all get off the fence and get on with business. Property prices are rising steadily, demand from buyers moving to Norwich is strong and with interest rates at an all-time low, affordability has never been better. So whether you're buying or selling now is the time to make your move with confidence. East Anglia has led the way in recent months as the fastest growing property market in the UK and Norwich remains a highly desirable destination for buyers relocating from other parts of the country.

This column is sponsored by Nick Taylor of Hadley Taylor Estate Agents 01603 250248