

A photograph of a modern interior. In the foreground, a grey fabric sofa is adorned with three pillows: a patterned one with triangles in blue, orange, and white, a solid red one, and a plain grey one. To the left, a dark wood bookshelf is filled with books of various colors. To the right, a tall, thin floor lamp with a gold-colored shade stands on a wooden floor. The background wall is a dark, muted blue-grey.

ENGINEERING GOOD TASTE

Top interiors designer Clare Pascoe uses her knowledge of ergonomics and engineering for her award-winning projects

WORDS BY LOUISE HOWESON



Great interior design often looks deceptively effortless, but, like an iceberg, there is a lot going on under the surface.

Clare Pascoe considers ergonomics, engineering, acoustics, as well as an expert listening ear when it comes to what clients want. Oh, and she has exceptionally good taste too, of course.

Since 2000, Clare Pascoe has been delivering ahead of trend, award-winning interior design. She champions mid-century style, British-made products and sustainable design.

Locks End in Birdham, West Sussex, is a great example of Clare's work and her ability to truly understand her clients' visions.

It was purchased by a British couple who were living in Hong Kong. The brief was to create a British New Hampton style interior that would provide a home for the family when they were in the UK. Clare was nominated for an International Design Award for her work on the property.

"It had been extended and refurbished as a second home, and the property lacked soul and warmth," says Clare.

"Everything was beige and off-white with cream curtains. There was no warmth or identity, and it felt like a lost opportunity."

The owner showed Clare a photo she liked of an entrance hall with a baby blue front door and orange rug on the floor.



'Acoustics are so important. If you have a large room and hard surfaces the sound will just bounce all over the room. It's about absorbing the sound so it feels cosy'

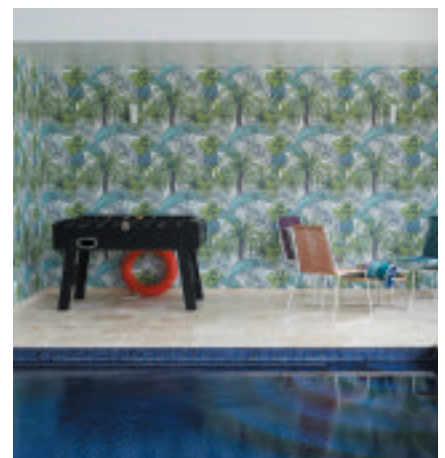
"The brief was quite open and when I saw the image I knew what they were looking for. They wanted a British/New Hampton style property, luxury but simple, an elevated beach house."

Several items of furniture were commissioned for the project, which were beautifully handmade in Sussex. Where possible British fabrics were used, and any surplus items removed from the property were rehomed or donated.

"Originally, the orange footstool wasn't supposed to go next to the sofa but it was there one day when my client she saw it and we decided it looked good, so it stayed."

"Getting the final look right is trial and error, I have to ask the questions like: do they brush their teeth together? How do they use the space? One client likes talking to her husband in the bath. It's about working out how they live so that the property works for them."

There is so much that goes on behind the scenes when it comes to interior design.



"Acoustics are so important. If you have a large room and hard surfaces, the sound will just bounce all over the room. It's about absorbing the sound so it feels cosy. My background is in engineering, so I know what can be achieved and I will never float an idea unless it is achievable."

"There is also the boring stuff to consider, like is there enough storage, is it easy to clean? If you get the design right a house can look immaculate with lots of storage and a great process in place when you get home to put things away."

Clare worked closely with her clients, liaising electronically to bridge wide geographical distances.

"I have been doing Zoom chats, WhatsApp messaging for years, way before lockdown. I can show my clients the showrooms when I go to them and make them feel part of the process even if they are overseas."

"One Locks End client said she trusted me to choose the wall colour and when she



arrived to see it all done I was nervous, there was a pause, then she said, 'oh yes, I love it', which was a relief!"

In 2013 Clare was named in *The Telegraph* as one of the country's top 20 interior designers and in 2016 she won the Most Outstanding Leader in Interior Design UK trophy at the Corporate Livewire Architecture Awards, as well as the Most Outstanding Interior Design at the Acquisition International Excellence Awards.

Over the years Clare has repeatedly spotted the trends before they have sky-rocketed.

"I seem to pick out things that then go on to be trends. Cow print I was doing way ahead of the curve and in 2014 I was using brass before it was popular. Brass is great, because the really good quality brass is actually anti-bacterial and the germs can't live on it, so it's good for light switches and door handles.

"I was using copper lights in 2013, but I find it too pink compared to brass. Then it was quickly taken up by the high street and was everywhere."

Clare graduated from the Engineering faculty at Plymouth University with a BSc Honours Degree in Design Technology & Business and achieving Honours at the prestigious KLC School of Design

Her engineering know-how came into play during the Vernon House project to make a former nurses' accommodation, presenting a new wave of slick, light and bright modern British bedsits.

"There was a false ceiling to hide pipes and cables above, and above that there was a lot of space. We decided it was worth the expense and effort to raise everything and lift the ceilings, physically and visually opening up the communal corridors.

"I pointed out that perhaps we shouldn't take the stance of concealing the pipes and cables, but instead should mask it discretely with a handsome architectural detail, such as a slatted ceiling. Working with Modulo Studio, a slatted ceiling design was agreed, and the slats made up by a joinery."

Clare, who is a full member of The British Institute of Interior Designers, has a love for the British landscape, Nordic wilderness,



and a deep appreciation for the ethos of Scandinavian design. She also believes strongly in sustainability.

"I believe that all designers have a duty to design responsibly, by reusing and reupholstering comfortable and timeless pieces," says Clare

"People should buy timeless pieces of the best quality they can afford so that they last a lifetime. If that is not an option then I'd say wait and save or look to buy second-hand."

pascoeinteriors.com

