



Clare Pascoe in front of her storage container office and Porsche 928

Clean living

Award-winning interior designer Clare Pascoe takes inspiration from classic 20th century designs and Nordic simplicity. DUNCAN HALL visits her at home



WHEN *Sussex Life* visits Clare Pascoe's Oving home the sleek and classic come together in the driveway. There is the new storage container which houses Clare's office – its grey-blue shade melting into the surrounding trees – and her pride and joy, a classic Porsche 928 dating back to the mid-1980s. "My dad was a racing driver," she explains from her open plan kitchen and living room. "I grew up going to Snetterton, Brands Hatch and across to Ireland where he drove rally cars and Formula 3,000. I was never going to have a normal car. I like the design of the Porsche. I'm part of the UK Porsche Club – there aren't many girls in it."

In her field of interior design she often finds herself in the middle of a very testosterone-filled world of building sites and tradesmen. The 42-year-old founder of Pascoe Interiors



Detail from Clare Pascoe's storage container office

is very keen to distinguish between an interior designer and an interior decorator. "I have an engineering design degree," she says. "I'm insured to advise on structural changes. If you aren't insured you shouldn't even mention knock-throughs or widening a window." A member of the British Institute of Interior Design, she works alongside architects on her projects dealing with space management, room-flow, furniture and technological systems, rather than which paintings would look good where.

She keeps on top of current trends to ensure technological systems can be future-proofed. But as a mother-of-two – to Oscar (10) and Olive (7) – she can also advise on making spaces work for a family. "I had a client in Romford with two young children," says Clare. "She was creating a fantasy

room, with dress-up and theatre space. I was able to tell her as her children got older they would be able to change it into a technology space.” It is this sort of insight which keeps her clients coming back.

She is keen to emphasise caution when it comes to transforming a home. “When you have spent a summer and a winter in a place you know which room doesn’t work and you can readdress the balance. Taking time can only be a benefit.” It is something she understands firsthand from moving to her family home in Oving nine years ago with electrician husband Matt, 43. “Our plan was to get permission to do an extension above the kitchen and have an en suite bedroom,” she says. “Then house prices crashed and what could have been a healthy budget turned into a tiny one. We never thought we would be living here for nine years – but then we realised we needed less than we thought. We look at the house in a slightly different way. If we were to do an extension we would make it more natural.”

When they moved into the house it hadn’t been lived in for two years. “The garden was so overgrown we didn’t know how much we had,” laughs Clare. “It was shoulder-high with brambles. We spent six months doing the house up.”

Clare believes that a house should be designed to be lived in. “A home is about curating a collection of things that make you feel at home. It represents who you are, where you come from and where you want to go. It’s aspirational and sentimental, but it needs to be practical.

“A house is a space where you close the door and the weight drops off – whether there’s a busy road outside or a farmer ploughing his field behind, it’s your sanctuary. It’s a place to love, laugh and cry – somewhere you feel totally safe.”

She was recently nominated for an International Design Award for her work on a family home in nearby Birdham for a British couple living in Hong Kong. “It had been a second home and didn’t have any sense of life. It felt soulless and empty,” she says. “I introduced different layers, styles, textures and colours which came together – it’s what I find easy and what clients find difficult.

“Often people don’t know what they like. A lot of interior designers have got very successful styles. You go to them for a product. I have a broad spectrum of what I love – when you have a commission you have to produce what a client wants.

“I used to work in the city as an internet marketing executive. Someone there once said to me: ‘You have two ears and one mouth

– and you should use them in that ratio’.”

It was leaving her city job after two-and-a-half years and exploring the world which led to Clare discovering her real passion. “I was photographing properties inside and out,” she says. “I was fascinated by the big open spaces in South Africa, the shuttered glass and sheer curtains, the mix of artworks and tribal elements on the walls.” Coming back she enrolled on a course at KLC School of Design in Chelsea. She spent six months as a temp working with brand management firm Coty whose clients included Rimmel. It helped her learn both colour management and how the brand management team brought

together their collections.

After that she was an assistant to designer Sasha Waddell, who was a pioneer in Swedish style, before branching out on her own. “I knew I had a passion, desire and drive for it,” she says. “Looking

back it took ten years to develop my style.”

It clearly worked. In 2013 she was named in *The Telegraph* as one of the country’s top 20 interior designers. Last year 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.

At the heart of her style is a love of mid-20th century furniture – a look which has become very on-trend, but was quite unusual at the time. “I grew up with the country interiors look, which was very stylish and comfortable,” says Clare. “I got drawn to the lighting, finishing and colour of mid-century furniture. I loved the clean lines and the old, loved nature of it. They were designed for young up-and-coming family lives.” She found pieces through eBay and in junk shops. Reusing the furniture makes it a sustainable

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Above: Inside Clare Pascoe’s storage container office

Below: Clare Pascoe interior designs in The Annex, Oving





and environmentally friendly form of design.

She uses blocks of colour to set the furniture off to its best effect. Added into this is a love of Scandinavian style – as seen in the many Scandi noirs broadcast on British TV. “The Scandinavian lifestyle is so clean with blank walls,” she says. “It looks very crisp and cool – it feels like you can breathe the oxygen. When everything is warm and yellow and tinged it has a dusty feel. I love that black and white crispness.”

That can be seen in another addition to the house – a converted garage and outbuilding known as The Annex which can be booked through Air BnB. It sits alongside Clare’s new storage container office space. “I was looking for a building which would sit in the environment and represented my design style,” she says. “It isn’t mainstream or run-of-the-mill, it’s a bit more edgy. I like to use commercial materials in domestic settings.” She found a storage container supplier in Southampton and designed the space to her specific needs. It is fitted out with mid-century

furniture, with a marmoleum flooring and plywood fittings. “The other evening we had an evening client meeting,” she says. “I was able to have a focused meeting, knowing that as soon as they were gone I could turn back into mum without having to rush back from the city. It feels very natural.”

She loves being part of the Sussex design community – working with local companies such as architects fiftypointeight in Chichester and joining the Design Collective Chichester last July. As well as the acclaimed Birdham job she has designed the interior of local community pub The Gribble after it was damaged by fire, and created a showhome for the Print Works development in Chichester.

At the heart of all her work is building a positive relationship with her clients. “You’re talking to somebody about their home and hard-earned savings,” she says. “I like to remain down to earth and practical. There should be no end to creativity – it’s about having fun.” ♦

GOOD TO KNOW

For more information about Clare’s work call 01243 781118; www.pascoeinteriors.com