

Ahead of her time



ALEX JENKINS catches up with a Sussex interior designer who has been leading the way.

Clare Pascoe



'Vintage' is a term you hear a great deal nowadays when it comes to interiors. 'Upcycling' is another.

"I hate that," interior designer Clare Pascoe says when discussing the latter, "it makes me shudder."

However, after a pause she adds: "If people want to do that, that's great."

"If we all did the same thing, if everything looked the same we would get tired of looking at each other."

Evidently though this is not Clare's style, nor does she wish it to be.

Clare, who lives in Oving, near Chichester, with her husband and two young children, has a distinctive flair.

Named as one of the top 20 interior designers in Britain by The Telegraph at the end of 2013, she has been recognised for being ahead of her time.

Looking at her work it is fair to describe it as simple, blending contemporary elements with mid century furniture to create a Nordic inspired, timeless feel.



It is this use of mid century furniture which is key. Technically regarded as 'vintage' I note Clare avoids that now over-used term. And it is no wonder.

Forget the 'twee' look, for Clare it is about well-made furniture that makes a statement.

So what attracts her to this era?

"It is the design of it," she says. "It is well worn, well loved, beautifully crafted."

"You can't beat a chair which is so beautifully smooth that people can't help but run a hand over it."

Yet it is not just the design that draws Clare, it is the history.

"It came about from the post war era so made from simple materials, simple production," she explains.

"It was the first time mass produced furniture came on the market."

"It meant people could hope to have new furniture for their home, not just hand-me-downs. It heralded a new movement."

Much of Clare's work is based in the principles of longevity and favouring British products.

Clare's top tips

- 1) Make sure what you do you can afford, as what nobody can afford to do is make mistakes.
- 2) Planning is key, no matter what size the project is going to be research and plan it. This can be as simple as looking at designs and researching what images you like so you can come up with a general look.
- 3) Think about your lifestyle. You may want to make a big change, but think about what you are always going back to.
- 4) Take your time.
- 5) Budget (linked with point one). Have a realistic budget but note that until you go down the research and planning route (point two) you do not know what your budget needs to be.





For example she uses the last remaining fabric mill in the UK for material.

Her policy that 'sustainable can be attainable' can be seen in the way she incorporates green technology into her work.

"Doing what you can is better than nothing," she explains when discussing 'going green', adding that good breathable insulation for your home is vital.

Solar panels are another obvious and effective way to help the environment – something Clare is an advocate for as her Emsworth-born husband installs them as a business.

"We are quite a sustainable couple," Clare laughs. "We met at university and we have grown up with this way of thinking."

However, a simple way to be green is by reusing and reupholstering furniture in a bid to reduce the impact of landfill.

Having a design technology and business degree, which included aspects of structural engineering, has helped ensure Clare is more than just an 'interior decorator'.

"A lot of interior designers are calling themselves interior architects now as the term designer has been hijacked by decorators," she says.

"I wanted to be very professional and not a hobbyist. I wanted a bona fide, professional business," she adds, before stating she is a member of the British Institute of Interior Designers.

“I would never take on anything if I did not feel confident”

Clare started her interior business when she was just 24 after sitting a design course at KLC School of Design in Chelsea.

"I sailed through with my top grade," she smiles. "I loved it."

It was after working briefly for interior designer Sasha Waddell that she decided to go it alone, with her first project a house in Islington.

So was she nervous about that first job?

"I would never take on anything if I did not feel confident," she states, before adding: "I do not swagger around being cocky as that is when you make mistakes."

It is this refreshing and down-to-earth attitude, combined with her knowledge and experience, that helps set Clare apart from many of her contemporaries.

But it is also her passion that shines through her work.

As Clare says with a smile: "To be able to do what you love everyday...it is not really like going to work."

Clare's predicted big look for 2015

"I think brass is going to be big," Clare reveals.

"In the recession everyone went back to nostalgia and the cottage industry and it was seen as crass to do brass - to show off money.

"Now things are lifting out of the recession and brass accents are going to be big.

"But it will be brushed brass as polished brass is too blingy."

Ideas to incorporate brass – think brass splashbacks, lamps, and anything that will give a warm but industrial look.

Clare Pascoe has a showroom for her designs, mid century furniture as well as high quality, long-lasting kitchens she imports from Italy.

Please call 01243 781118 to arrange your visit to La Woodhorn Business Centre, Woodhorn Lane, Oving, PO20 2BX.

Alternatively, for more information visit www.pascoeinteriors.com