

DESIGN CENTRE GUIDE

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The Ultimate
Guide to
the World's
Premier Design
Destination

design centre
LONDON



a hub of EXCELLENCE

Design Centre, Chelsea Harbour is working with designers to create bespoke schemes that are not just beautiful but tell a wider story of craftsmanship and authenticity

Feature by Emily Brooks

The definition of luxury is always in flux: different eras in history and different cultures have always had a distinct notion of what they value above all else. In interior design, while the craftsmanship behind an individual object – be it a hand-painted wallpaper or the complex construction of a piece of furniture – is always to be admired, what is truly luxurious is how it's all put together to create an intensely personalised environment. Bespoke interiors are like a couture gown, balancing the exquisite artistry of the fabric itself with a made-to-measure fit: when both these elements come together, magic is made.

Such schemes are not easily put together, being both time consuming and involving high levels of creative thought. In recognition of this new luxury landscape, Design Centre, Chelsea Harbour is evolving into a hub of bespoke design, where the specialist expertise of showroom staff and the talents of the skilled makers meet. Holland & Sherry has just opened a showroom entirely dedicated to bespoke work, from embroidery to rugs to hardware. Previous projects include Tel Aviv's Norman Hotel, for which the company worked with designer David D'Almada on custom embroidered fabrics in an historic tile design that he had found on site. "People are value conscious – everyone's looking for something unique, made to their exact specification," says Holland & Sherry's UK sales manager Dudley Beckwith. The design of the showroom itself reflects a shift in the way of working. "When you're working on bespoke projects you're often spending quite some time with clients, so there is space dedicated to face-to-face client meetings as well as well-lit

RIGHT: The Ivy, designed by Martin Brudnizki Design Studio, featuring leathers from Altfield





TOP: Belgian restaurant Villared, which features Arte's exuberant 'Flamingo' wallcovering
 ABOVE: A scheme by Nicholas Haslam Ltd. Sofa, designed by Paolo Moschino for Nicholas Haslam with fabric by Pierre Frey; table lamps, Paolo Moschino for Nicholas Haslam; rug, Tim Page Carpets; antique chair upholstered in fabric by Colefax and Fowler

working areas." Crestron's projects are 100% bespoke: its home automation and control systems are built on infinite flexibility, each system installed and programmed to order. And because anything is possible, the showroom is a vital platform for providing potential users an idea of what they might want: it will be completely redesigned in time for Focus/16 to better reflect this. "Clients and interior designers are almost certain to visit the Design Centre while planning their projects, so being able to meet them there, in a home-like setting, and show them how the technology can be seamlessly integrated to complement the interior of their property, is invaluable," says Chris Knight, managing director of home technology firm Perfect Integration. "Crestron to us is a 'yes' product: when someone asks 'can I do this?' so far at least, the answer has always been yes."

"We arrange client appointments in the showrooms because we feel it's best for our clients to experience the pieces close up, and get a real feel for the schemes," says interior designer Verity Woolf of Woolf Interior. "The Design Centre has a great capacity for bespoke production," she continues. "We have worked with Watts of Westminster on double-width bespoke 'Pear' wallpaper, for example, and Porta Romana has a great variety of metal finishes and sizes, which we have often played with. We have also worked with Pierre Frey on bespoke rug designs and numerous incarnations of their passementerie." A recent residential project in Kensington, created with MWAI Architects, used 'Verbier' crystal chandeliers from Vaughan, and fabrics from Zimmer + Rohde and Mulberry Home.



Case Study: A hotel with a sense of place

Large hotel chains are moving away from the one-size-fits-all design approach: now, they want guests to have a sense of where in the world they are staying. This makes for a much more exciting project for an interior designer, where the brief is more about expressing a sense of place and being able to work with home-grown design talent. Marriott is no exception: its newly remodelled London Marriott Hotel County Hall occupies the former GLC building on the Thames, and RPW Design responded to the grandeur of the building and the setting in its design concept. "The hotel had not been refurbished for several years and we were keen to develop what were traditionally styled Marriott guestrooms to a design that related to history of the property and its location," says senior designer Heather McLellan. "We took the architecture as inspiration, for example taking metalwork detailing from the original bronze ceremonial gates and introducing it into the furniture, as well as recalling the original oak-panelled walls found in the public areas in a slightly more contemporary way in the guest rooms."

RPW took its own designs for guest-room case goods to Decca (Bolier). "All the rooms were different shapes



and sizes, so that meant we couldn't just roll out the same piece of furniture in every room," says Heather. "Every piece was designed by RPW, even down to the handles, which form an abstracted 'CH' for County Hall, and Decca brought them to life." Decca made the night stands, mini-bar credenzas and wardrobes, plus some further pieces for the suites, including a dining room table, which, with its integrated power, can also double up as a meeting table. The mini-bar units incorporate drawer fronts in a silver glass relief design that echoes the shape of the meandering Thames outside the window – no better reminder for guests of where they are staying.