



How to commission an INTERIOR DESIGNER

What to expect when calling in the professionals – and how to get the best results from the process

From a whole house renovation to a single room refresh, it may be worth commissioning an interior designer to deliver a perfectly suited result. Crucially, a designer will have the expertise to offer a host of clever solutions and options – and help make the process smoother and more enjoyable. “Designers are there to make your

CLOCKWISE FROM THIS PAGE Otta Design's watercolour presentation of the drawing room concept and swatches of fabrics and flooring. Colour introduces a modern twist to the classic drawing room design. A palette of materials and colours assembled by Otta Design to discuss with a client. Alex Keith, director of Otta Design.





‘Professional knowledge and experience mean that your designer can save you time and save you from making mistakes’

Gail Taylor, co-founder and creative director, Th2 Designs



life easier, helping you visualise and streamline your ideas,” says interior designer Rosanna Bossom. “They have the best access to suppliers, can save you a lot of time, money and stress, and offer many solutions thanks to their experience.”

So what exactly does an interior designer do? Alex Keith, director of Otta Design, says, “A common misconception is that interior designers are only concerned with the ‘fluffy’ parts of renovation projects, picking fabrics and paint colours.” In reality, while they can provide plenty of help with an inspirational look, services are much more extensive and can cover space planning and layouts, detailed room designs and specification including electrical and lighting plans, designs for bespoke joinery, kitchen and bathrooms, all the way through to procurement, project management and installation. “Over 80 per cent of our time involves detailed planning, following processes, effective organisation and communication, budgeting, schedules and project co-ordination,” ▶



TOP The completed home office by Th2 Designs, produced after consultation with the client and their approval using the computer-aided design above.

MIDDLE Gail Taylor of Th2 Designs.
ABOVE The computer-aided design of the home office, produced to scale for accurate representation.



ABOVE This tranquil haven was created by Kelling Designs.
 ABOVE Emma Deterding of Kelling Designs.
 BELOW The original sketch for the design of the room.



'It is worth noting that many interior designers share a portion of their trade discounts with you, resulting in a saving on purchasing costs'

Emma Deterding, founder and creative director, Kelling Designs

she adds. "This is where the true value of an established, respected interior designer lies."

To find the right designer for a project, it may be worth following up recommendations from friends, browsing magazines and social media. View portfolios on the designer's website and look for experience of the type of project. "Think about what you are trying to achieve and find someone with a similar aesthetic, so, for example, if you want a traditional interior, select someone with experience of antiques and classic period properties," advises Henriette von Stockhausen of VSP Interiors. "Have a first meeting – call it a 'chemistry meeting' – and see if you can imagine working with that person for a long time, sharing your personal experiences and likes and lifestyle with."

Most designers will be experienced at working with individual client preferences. "Some clients come to us with a file of design visuals and a clear brief,

MORE INTERIOR DESIGN OPTIONS

- Some home and lifestyle stores, such as Neptune, John Lewis, Oka and Susie Watson Designs, offer personalised interior design services. While these are, of course, geared to encourage clients to purchase their products, they can be a cost-effective way of receiving some professional assistance with a project, especially if planning to buy from the supplier anyway. Services may be free or charged per room, sometimes redeemable against a minimum spend on products.
- Some designers, such as Nicola Harding and Octavia Dickinson, offer one-to-one virtual interior design consultations, charged by the hour, from about £500. These are particularly useful for guidance on smaller projects or for solving particular interior design conundrums in a home or for simply trying out the experience of working with a professional designer.
- An interior design course may open possibilities to transform a home oneself, with the aid of expertise from sought-after designers. Create Academy offers online lessons by Nina Campbell, Alidad and Rita Konig, prices for nine hours from £127.

others come to find their style and final scheme as we progress," says interior designer Samantha Watkins McRae. While every project and relationship is unique, a client will usually be asked to sign off approval to final layouts, designs, finishes and furniture prior to manufacture or to any drawings being issued to site. Designers may provide hand-drawn sketches, watercolours or computer-generated designs and walk-throughs, or a combination of these, as well as mood boards and samples of fabrics, colours, finishes and materials.

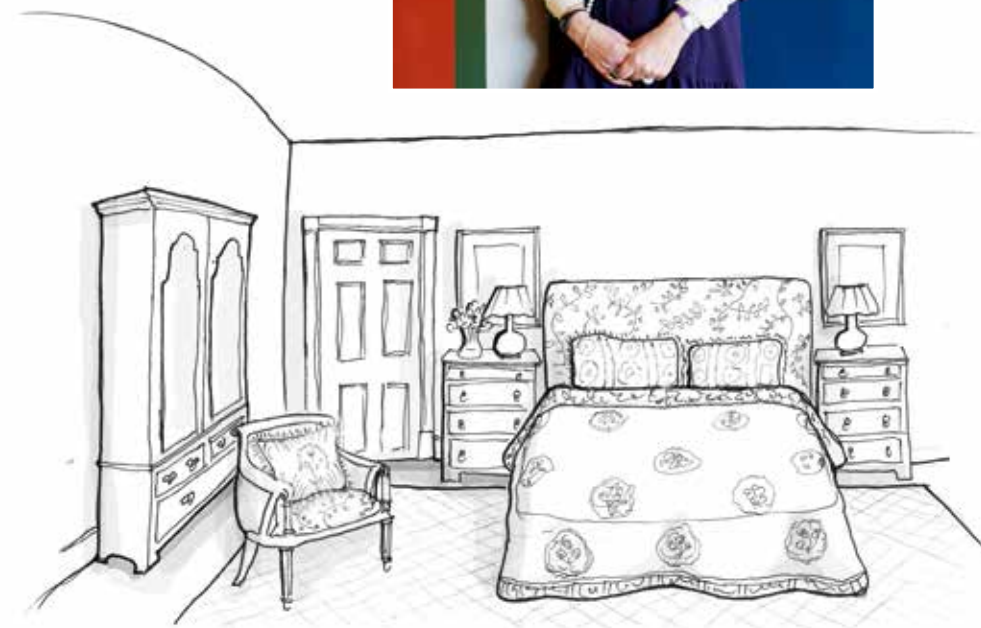
It is also worth thinking about the amount of time a client wants to devote to the project. "Some clients prefer to have fewer meetings and are quite decisive, which makes this possible, while others like and require a lot of back and forth," explains interior designer Kate Guinness, whose studio divides each project into four phases, which may overlap depending on the project. Phase one is project scoping and concept to cover some high-level spatial planning and co-ordinate some key initial components, such as a measured survey; phase two is the design and procurement of all the technical elements, such as preparation of detailed layout plans and specifications for lighting, switches and sockets, ironmongery, sanitaryware, joinery, kitchen design, fireplaces and architectural detailing. Then comes phase three, ▶



TOP An elegant entrance hall sets the scene, by Kate Guinness Design.

ABOVE Kate Guinness in a bedroom of her design.

RIGHT This watercolour by Hugo Francis was created after completion of the project as a memento.





‘Have a first meeting – call it a chemistry meeting – and see if you can imagine working with that person, sharing your personal experiences, likes and lifestyle with them’

Henriette von Stockhausen, founder and creative director, VSP Interiors



ABOVE This watercolour of a room concept by VSP Interiors is drawn to scale and furnished with actual pieces to create a good sense of how the finished design will look. Watercolour by Leslie-jon Vickory.

ABOVE RIGHT Henriette von Stockhausen, designer of the bedroom shown here.

covering detailed design and procurement of the decorative elements, including furniture, fabrics, soft furnishings, window treatments and decorative lighting, with the final phase covering installation and snagging.

Most designers prefer clients to be frank about their budget at the outset, if possible, to get the best fit for the project. Interior design fees vary considerably – from less than £500 for an hour’s colour consultation to £20,000 and more for a house refurbishment. Prices will vary according to the scope of the project, the services and level of involvement required, and the experience and status of the chosen designer. “Design fees may be structured in different ways, including hourly rates, flat fees per project phase, or a percentage

of the total budget,” advises Emma Deterding, founder and creative director of Kelling Designs. It is worth noting that many interior designers share a portion of their trade discounts with their clients, resulting in a saving on purchasing costs. “Each designer has their own black book and an extensive network of suppliers and tradespeople, allowing them to source the best and most unique materials and furnishings at competitive prices,” adds Deterding.

The golden rule is to achieve a clear understanding with a designer about what is covered by the fee. “A good designer will save you a fortune,” explains Gail Taylor, director of Th2 Designs. “Professional knowledge and experience mean that a designer can save you time and save you from making mistakes.” ■

FEATURE AMELIA THORPE PHOTOGRAPHS (KATE GUINNESS HALLWAY) © JAMES McDONALD; (KELLING DESIGNS) © MARK BOLTON; (TOTTI DESIGN SITTING ROOM) © JONATHAN BOND; (TOTTI DESIGN ALL OTHER IMAGES) © ANYA CAMPBELL; (VSP INTERIORS PORTRAIT) © PAUL MASSEY