



ROLLS-ROYCE ENTHUSIASTS' CLUB

THE PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE





PRIME TIME

Martin Kemp Design

JETTING AROUND THE super-prime property market that Martin Kemp inhabits, a less grounded designer might be distracted by his clients' high profiles and the prestige of the addresses they want transformed. Martin, however, founded his interior design studio on values rooted in a humble Welsh upbringing. "My childhood was simple and my feet remain firmly on the ground," he says. "I'm not influenced by wealth – people and manners impress me."

With a portfolio that includes a private polo estate in St Tropez, London's luxury apartment complex Clarges Mayfair and residences from Beijing to New York, there is evidently a select international clientele that is equally impressed by Martin Kemp. The designer founded his own studio in 2012, by which point he'd worked in Los Angeles for Barbara Barry as her Senior Designer, followed by eight years as Creative Director at London's Candy & Candy, growing the interior design office from a team of six people to a staff of 120. "By then, I was losing interest," says Martin. "I wasn't hands-on anymore."

Accordingly, Martin Kemp Design quickly took shape. "By the time there were five of us working in my living room, I realised I could do something more solid with this," he says. A turning point was winning the contract to design the interiors for 77 South Audley Street in Mayfair. "The client said: 'We were attracted to you as a person', which is the highest compliment anyone could pay me. Being humble and sincere is the most important thing for me in this industry."

As the company profile rose, Martin received commissions to redevelop Grade I-listed London mansions and oversee some of the most sought-after residential developments in the capital, as

well as being charged with designing interiors for private yachts and jets.

Martin's portfolio is unashamedly super-prime. "We regularly spend tens of thousands on a single piece of furniture," he explains. "It is the quality that is different. We are creating the Chippendales of the future. We keep craftsmanship alive, working with clever people, making lovely things."

These bespoke "lovely things" account for virtually every detail of Martin Kemp's projects. Furniture, lighting and furnishings are custom-designed, refined and reworked in-house until a perfect balance of burnished wood, hand-stitched leather and trimmed velvet is achieved.

It is a frustration to Martin that items such as trays, tissue boxes and soap dispensers are not currently being made to a standard that fits the rest of his interiors. "I am fascinated by product design," he says, "and can see a gap in the market for a company such as ourselves to provide sublimely stylish home accessories. We have the opportunity to be the epitome of contemporary British luxury homeware."

Plans for a collection of refined home accessories will have to run alongside a busy schedule of international projects that sees Kemp zig-zagging across time zones, visiting marble quarries with clients and sourcing fine art for them.

"Challenges are made for certain sorts of people," says Kemp. "You get the right team working with you and you get the right results. A lot of it is to do with personality. Myself and my staff, we are very capable people creatively, but often we are told we are such easy and approachable people to work with. It's about being sincere, humble, fun, friendly and respectful." — www.martinkempdesign.com