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The GLOSSARY

YOUR LONDON STYLE GUIDE

ISSUE TWO
AUTUMN 2017
£5 WHERE SOLD

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Featuring: **Jane Birkin** on music, **Eileen Cooper** on art, **Anya Hindmarch** on fashion, **Monica Galetti** on food, **Rosemary Ferguson** on nutrition, **Charlotte Olympia's** London



As the go-to interior designer for the super-rich, from billionaire entrepreneurs to pop stars, penthouses to polo estates to private jets, you'd be forgiven for thinking that Martin Kemp would be somewhat grand in person. Maybe even a little snooty. But the softly spoken man in a simple white T-shirt and blue jeans who welcomes me into his slick office in a quiet backstreet in Victoria, gently shooing an excited dog out of the way, is anything but. "I'm a simple Welsh boy from a simple Welsh town," he tells me. "If you'd said to me as a child that this is where I'd be sat today, my parents and I would have been speechless – and I would have been terrified."

Kemp has the kind of glittering CV that most designers would be shouting about from the rooftops, with stints working for legendary Beverly Hills designer Barbara Barry in Los Angeles, seven years as creative director of Candy & Candy, responsible for high-profile projects including One Hyde Park, and now master of his own destiny with his eponymous design studio, established in 2012. But Kemp, it becomes clear, is not one for blowing his own trumpet. "It's just what I do for a living," he says. "It's the same for nurses and doctors and street sweepers. I don't see myself as some clever, creative person who deserves an accolade – it's just what I do. And I don't do anything anywhere near as clever as a nurse or a doctor."

Where Kemp's expertise shines is in creating complete lifestyle solutions that go beyond a smart walk-in wardrobe or a few fancy scatter cushions. Almost everything in a Martin Kemp design is bespoke, from £15,000 silk headboards to statement light installations. Only the highest quality materials are used – walnut, ebony, marble, lead crystal – and fine art is borrowed from galleries on a sale or return basis (sourcing a Picasso isn't out of the question, thanks to Kemp's contacts). He can even fill your garage with supercars, stock your fridge with the finest champagnes and unpack your belongings. Suffice to say, prices reach seven figures. "I like to talk about us as the Tom Ford of interior design," Kemp explains. "You have to set your sights on a brand you relate to, or would like to

aspire to, and try and build your business along those lines. I have to be very careful about what projects we do. If we ever did a restaurant it would have to be seven-star, and I'm not sure we'll ever get to that. On commercial projects, we're not asked to do sub-penthouse and we rarely do a two-bed on level four unless we're doing the whole building."

This highly selective approach means that Kemp's name continues to be associated with only the very finest properties. In London, he has just finished the show apartment for the private residences at Ten Trinity Square, the redeveloped Grade II*-listed former Port of London Authority building in Tower Hill, which is also home to the capital's first Four Seasons hotel. Sprawling over two floors, the 4,163sq ft, three-bedroom apartment is on the market for £18m.

Following hot on its heels is Clarges Mayfair, a collection of 34 apartments and a spa overlooking Green Park and Buckingham Palace, which Kemp's studio has been working on for the past few

fashion, tailoring, shoe-making – so I wanted to make this development a little bit more raw, and weave in the subtle textures, patterns and prints of this industry. It's done in a very subliminal way but hopefully it will impart a sense of Englishness." This is particularly evident in the spa, which Kemp was keen to imbue with a real sense of place. "I didn't want it to be one of those nondescript luxury spas that could be in New York or Kuala Lumpur," he says. "When people see it in photographs I want them to know instantly that it is the spa in Clarges Mayfair. With the developer, British Land, being British, us being British, and it being on Piccadilly, we all agreed to make something distinctly English. So we looked at the spas of Bath, Harrogate, Cheltenham and Tunbridge Wells for inspiration – the little details such as ceramic tile inlays, alabaster domes and curtaining."

Kemp won the pitch for Clarges just a few months after founding his company, but again he is surprisingly humble about such an achievement. "They had heard my name and were curious so asked me to go and meet them," he says. "I recently found out that I won the pitch because they liked me as a person, and that's what made me stand out above all the other designers. I'm really proud of that; my mother would have been proudest of that. I like to think that I'm a genuine person."

Clearly others agree. In addition to his commercial work, Kemp has a number of private clients who amount to approximately 50 per cent of his business. They include the likes of Kylie Minogue – "she's gorgeous, she's a genuinely lovely person" – but he politely declines to mention anyone else. "We guard their confidentiality," he explains. "It can be very frustrating because there's an awful lot of imagery that we're not allowed to show. The chalet in the Alps that we did recently, for example, was for a very well-known family and I really want to promote it but I can't." This leads, he says, to a misconception that there is a standard Martin Kemp 'look'. "The look that you might think there is comes out of the imagery that you see, but the imagery that you see is only what we're allowed to show," he says. "We cover everything from classical right through to ultra-modern, futuristic, space age. I could show you something that looks like a *Star Wars* set.

"I like to talk about us as the Tom Ford of interior design. You have to set your sights on a brand you relate to and aspire to"

years and will finish this Christmas. It has already hit the headlines with a price per square foot value of more than £5,000, which broke the record at the time in an area that's no stranger to multiple zeroes. Interestingly, the development that subsequently beat that record was 77 Mayfair on South Audley Street, when the penthouse – designed by, you guessed it, Martin Kemp – sold for £26m, achieving an astonishing £7,000 per sq ft.

So is it all brash and bling? Not so much. "Discretion has crept in now, people don't want to show off," Kemp explains. "For Clarges we didn't want to repeat One Hyde Park. I wanted to do something that was British and had a connection to Mayfair but wasn't classical. Mayfair's got very good art deco connections and it's full of industry – watchmaking, jewellery,

Interview

The INSIDER

Interior designer *Martin Kemp* is the man with the midas touch whose humble outlook belies his starry portfolio

Words LAURA ARCHER

Images: Matthew Evans

We don't steer our clients in a particular direction, we honour what they want. We really try and get into the depths of their soul because it's their home, after all. We're very sincere in terms of delivering the spirit of the home they want to create because more often than not, they stay in these homes forever."

It is this approach that has won him such acclaim, even though he insists he's never been particularly well known. Yet he was hired on the spot by Barbara Barry – which he attributes to him wearing head-to-toe grey, a look that apparently appealed to her love of tonality – and then headhunted by Candy & Candy. He joined Candy & Candy in 2004 when there were just six people and grew it to a team of 120. Why did he leave? "I'm a quiet, reserved person and when I joined them it was a quiet, reserved company," he says. "It then grew into an empire and the politics that goes along with that didn't appeal to me. I took a six-month break and I would have been quite happy to go back to Los Angeles and work in a restaurant – I like serving people. But a client called me up and asked me to do their house and then word got out that I was available. I had no vision, I had no logo, it was just me working in my living room. Before I knew it, I had five people in my living room and I realised it was getting serious and I had to do something about it. So I rented an office, commissioned a website, and the phone was just ringing and ringing."

It's a sea change from life in a small Welsh town and an "academically hopeless" boy who spent much of his art foundation course gazing out of the window and never really wanted to leave the "incredibly creative" home in which he grew up with his portrait painter mother and architect father. Julia Carrick OBE selected Martin Kemp Design for inclusion in the luxury industry bible *Great British Brands*, alongside the likes of Asprey, Aston Martin and Burberry. Kemp hints at a retail product range in the pipeline and says he would love to design a boutique – but only at the level of Chanel, Tom Ford or Balenciaga. Yet for all that, Martin Kemp seemingly still can't quite believe his luck. "Yes we have a nice office and we work with spectacular clients," he says. "We sometimes get carried around in fabulous cars, private jets and helicopters. But I'm not interested in living this life. It's nice to dip your toe into, but at the end of the day I'm just as happy to go home on the bus."

Martin's LONDON GLOSSARY

TOP RESTAURANTS

Bob Bob Ricard offers consistently good food at a very sensible price with excellent service. Its stylish interior provides privacy and glamour. Chez Bruce has spectacular food with simple elegant ambience. I've yet to have a disappointing experience there.
 Bob Bob Ricard: 1 Upper James Street, Soho, W1; bobbobricard.com. Chez Bruce: 2 Bellevue Road, Wandsworth, SW17; chezbruce.co.uk

BEST PLACE FOR A NIGHTCAP

I rarely drink but always appreciate a bourbon or gin at the bar in Chiltern Firehouse.
 1 Chiltern Street, Marylebone, W1; chilternfirehouse.com

MOST INSPIRING VIEW

I never fail to enjoy looking at the marvellous view of London from Waterloo Bridge. Whether you face towards St Paul's or towards Westminster, night or day, it's a special vista embracing old and new.

FAVOURITE BUILDINGS

Architecturally I admire Richmond House in Whitehall, a clever modern reimagining of the old which blends well into London's historic fabric. My mother introduced me to Target House in St James's, which is somewhat startling initially but I – like she did – now see the fabulous style in this 1980s icon by Rodney Gordon. I've always liked 10 Fleet Place also, somewhat redolent of Gotham City, with nice detailing and a brave sense of modern classicism.

MOST-LOVED MUSEUM OR GALLERY

This depends on my mood. As a modernist the White Cube in Bermondsey stimulates me; for culture the V&A fascinates me; and as a classic car lover the London Motor Museum out in Hayes excites me.
 White Cube: 144-152 Bermondsey Street, Southwark, SE1; whitecube.com. V&A: Cromwell Road, Knightsbridge, SW7; vam.ac.uk. London Motor Museum: 3 Nestles Avenue, Hayes, UB3; londonmotormuseum.co.uk



St James's Square



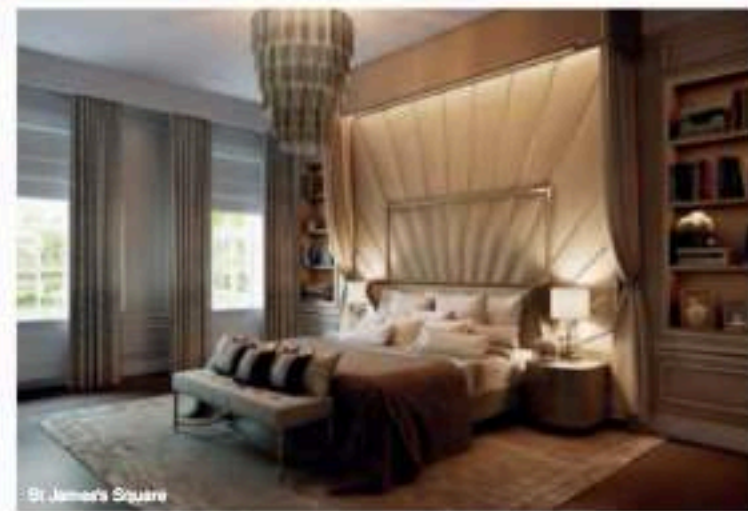
Charles Mayfair residents lounge



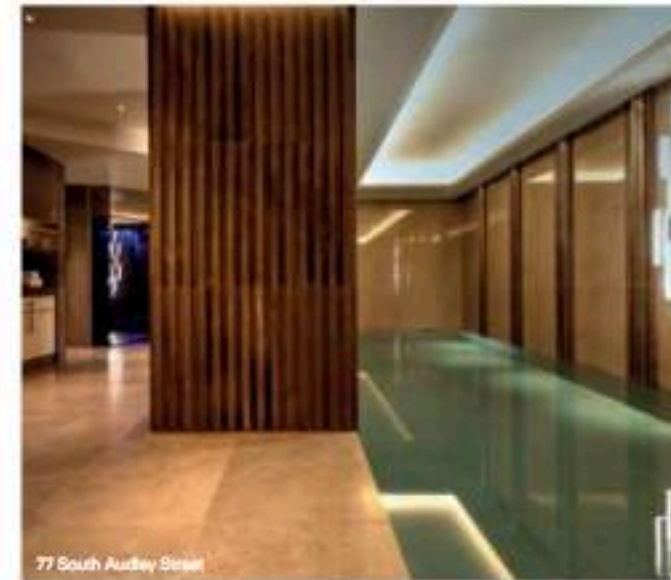
Charles Mayfair drawing room



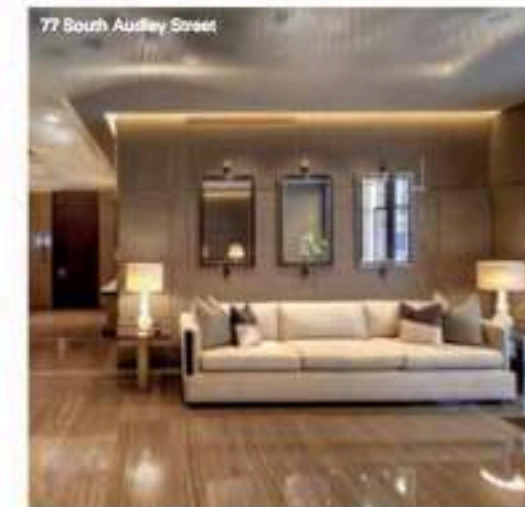
Private jet



St James's Square



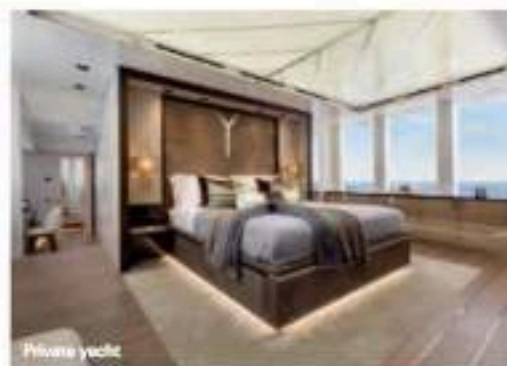
77 South Audley Street



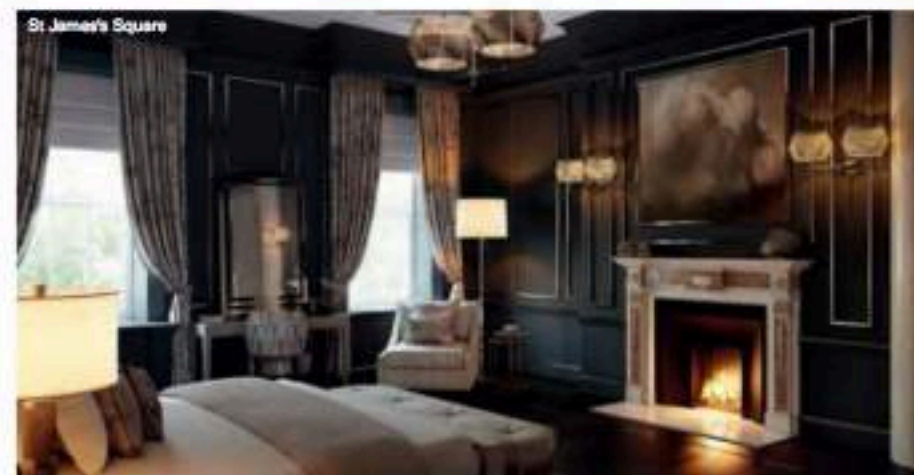
77 South Audley Street



Ten Trinity Square

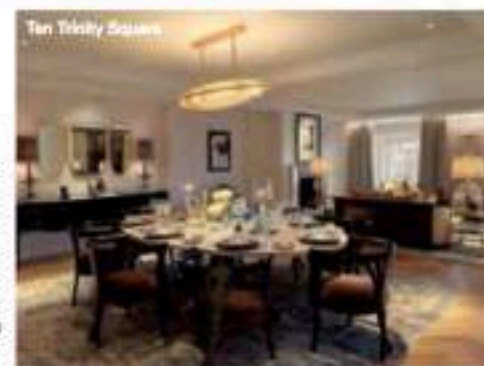


Private yacht

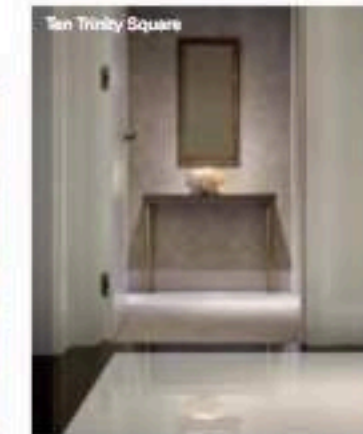


St James's Square

Images: Matthew Evans



Ten Trinity Square



Ten Trinity Square



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