

BY DESIGN

THOMSON CARPENTER

DESIGNER ABOUT THE WORLD

Between trotting across the globe and his daring redecorating ventures, eniGma's Man About the World Thomas Carpenter slows down long enough to talk about his latest design projects and returning to the UK.

Thomson Carpenter's qualifications speak for themselves. As a young boy, he transformed his family's crumbling English home into a creative laboratory for his design ideas. Others soon realised his talent, and began seeking his advice and services for their own homes. Serious about pursuing a career as a designer, Carpenter went on to study in England, Germany and Dubai before working with renowned American decorator Thomas Hamel in Sydney.

With his globetrotting days behind him (at least temporarily), Carpenter has returned home to the UK. Now, with his own boutique design firm, he's been making a name for himself as a nomadic-chic interior designer. Carpenter's style is definitive. While his work pays homage to refined English traditionalism, his worldly experience is evident through surprising nuances and

work in Sydney, traveling in the Middle East, his return to Great Britain and what the future holds...

When did you first realise you had an 'eye' for design?

My father is an architect. He runs an international practice with offices in the Middle East and the UK. When I was very young, he would take me "on site" to see various construction projects he was working on. I soon became obsessed with buildings and design and began creating minute "dream homes" out of cardboard

"I began creating minute 'dream homes' out of cardboard boxes which were impeccably decorated!"

subtleties. Harbour-side properties in Sydney, beach houses in Muscat, apartments in London and listed mansions in Sussex are just a few examples from his burgeoning portfolio.

boxes. I even had a dolls house, which was impeccably decorated!

How did this develop into your career?

My family's main home is a crumbling 17th century house in West Sussex in the English countryside. My parents spend a lot of time abroad, and so I was sent to boarding school nearby. During the weekends – without permission – I would sneak home to demolish a wall, remove some doors or re-position light switches. Luckily my parents were very patient. Gradually people began to see I had an eye for interior design and (informally) started asking me for advice on their own homes. In

eniGma talked to Carpenter about design, his



2007 I moved to sunny Sydney and met the esteemed US decorator Thomas Hamel, a prodigy of New York's Parish Hadley. Thomas took a gamble, employing me in his Woollahra firm where East-Coast 'wasp' style was the order-of-the-day. Four years later, I returned to England to work on my own as a designer.

How would you describe your signature look?

The best way to describe my look is 'pared-down traditionalism', a sort of old school British 'prep' with a few quasi-modern pieces thrown in. However, whilst the overall aesthetic is pretty classic, due to my constant travels and extensive time living abroad, I am able to bring a few unusual and unexpected nuances to my interiors. Ultimately, a house is to be lived in, and though I strive for an elegant finish, it needs to be extremely comfortable – luxuriously soft fabrics, oversized beds, giant sofas, etc.

embarking on a career in interior design?

Take the time to gain invaluable experience, whether through a professional qualification or through working within a design organisation. Ideally, you'd do both. And make sure you love what you do.

And finally, what or who has been your greatest source of inspiration?

It would have to be the great architects of England's classic age, such as Sir Christopher Wren and Sir John Soane. Their use of scale, proportion and symmetry made for the most elegant compositions and continue to be great inspirations.

www.thomsoncarpenter.co.uk

"Take your time! Rome wasn't built in a day and neither should your home"

If you had one piece of advice for someone about to decorate a property, what would it be?

Take your time! Rome wasn't built in a day and neither should your home. Read through design magazines extensively, browse shops and examine the interiors of friends' houses you admire. Constantly be on the 'look-out'. Arm yourself with a camera phone and be ready to take pictures of everything and anything you find interesting; whether it's a plant arrangement in a hotel, a table-lamp in a shop or a fabric pattern in a street market. Then take these snippets of inspiration home and slowly but thoughtfully incorporate them into your finished scheme.

As for employing an interior designer, do you see it as a luxury for the wealthy or is it now more commonplace now?

Employing an interior designer is still a luxury and while it is thankfully becoming more commonplace, it is not for everyone. A designer has no place in helping you select things from IKEA! Having said that, if you do have a certain budget and a specific look in mind, a designer can save you from making costly mistakes and ultimately, the finished look will probably be more polished and thought out.

Do you have any tips for someone looking to employ a designer?

Again, take your time. Look at their portfolio; you might not like every single thing they've done in the past, but you should like their style overall. It's also important to make sure you get on with one another. A designer and a client spend a lot of time together, often in very personal spaces. Therefore it's vital you build a strong working relationship.

And for someone thinking about

