

# DESIGNER PROFILE



After moving to London in 2007 Rebecca Leivars has made a real impact on the interior design world. Earmarked as House and Garden magazine's 'rising young star' in 2008, her cool contemporary designs have definitely caught everyone's eye. A K.L.C School of Design graduate, 34 year old Rebecca currently lives in Putney, south west London and her design service is responsible for grand designs in family homes, high class apartments, hotels and restaurants alike. Living's Brittany Moodie spoke to Rebecca, who had just returned from a project in Jersey to find out more...



**Hello Rebecca. Could we start off by telling me a bit about yourself...?**

I'm originally from Derby. I had an unconventional upbringing as my father was a singer so I found myself spending summers in a mix of seaside resorts both here in the UK and Europe, with little focus on education. That said, the cultural experiences were priceless and it opened my eyes to changing environments and varying styles. In hindsight, it was probably the start to my passion for design.



**How did you become involved in Interior Design?**

It was my then boyfriend who told me that I should consider making my hobby my career. I always had an interest in interiors and enjoyed redeveloping each property I bought. Given I would sell each property the moment it was finished should have been a big enough sign to me, but it wasn't – it needed to be pointed out to me. I then researched various schools, I decided if I were to start a career I wanted to ensure I was as fully trained and qualified as I could be. When you're 30 you don't get many second chances so I wanted to give myself the best chance of success. I decided on KLC School of Design, Chelsea Harbour – the school was amazing, tremendous staff and tutors, all of whom are practising designers which was important to me and we were able throughout the one year diploma course to work on amazing projects with high profile industry designers, so not only was I learning practical and professionally but was also able to learn from designers who I aspired to be like. It was without a doubt the hardest year of my life in terms of workload and hours input, but achieving Top Student 2007 and winning three further industry awards made it all worthwhile.

**You launched your design service in 2007. How has it been, working independently?**

I initially worked for a design practice and undertook freelance work in my spare time, it suddenly became apparent that I was undertaking more freelance work than actual projects for my employer so I made the decision to leave and set up alone. A terrifying prospect, knowing a recession was around the corner... but I decided if I could survive a recession I could survive anything (and I recalled reading that a recession was the best time to start a new business). I work a lot on gut instinct, both with what I do and with working with people, so I thought this formula had served me well and that I should just do it and not be afraid of the 'what ifs'. Life is too short and sometimes you just have to follow your instincts.

**How does your service differ from that of other interior designers?**

I pride myself on being open, honest and everything I do to the very best of my ability... often at my own time and cost. I need to go to bed each night knowing I have worked my hardest for a client. It's a privilege to be invited into a home and I never lose sight of that.

**How do you evaluate what your clients are looking for and tailor your service to their individual needs?**

I listen... simple as that. Clients generally know what they like, though more often than not they know what they don't like. They have a budget in mind and I am realistic in my approach to design. There is little point designing a space if it doesn't work practically. Finishes and layouts need to be appropriate for their needs and lifestyle.

**Is it difficult to separate your own taste from the taste of each client?**

Not at all... this is the wonderful element of the profession. Yes, I have my own taste but that's exactly what it is - my own taste!

**In your designs how do you strike the right balance between aesthetic beauty and practicality?**

I am practical by nature. I need to understand how something works and, if I don't, then chances are my clients won't. You can achieve beauty and practicality at the same time. The best designs, tried and tested over centuries, are those that aren't contrived or where people haven't tried too hard. The basic rule is, less is more. You can take beauty from the simplest of products or finishes, lit well – great lighting is always key to the success of any project. Check out Rebecca's site for more information [www.rebeccaleivarsdesigns.com](http://www.rebeccaleivarsdesigns.com)

