

People

Meet Lisa Montague CEO at Sanderson Design Group - she has big plans for the business

Pulse

We share details of the showrooms worth checking out, once the current travel restrictions are lifted

Products

Is it possible to have premium kitchen and bathroom products that are also sustainable?

Projects

Brian Woulfe is our guide to a stunning kitchen installation that exactly meets the clients' needs

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How do we use kitchens and bathrooms now, and how are designers accommodating this?

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In Good Company Charlie Smallbone

Charlie Smallbone founded the iconic Smallbone kitchen brand. Here he discusses his latest venture, Ledbury Studio

When was the business founded, and why?

I founded Ledbury Studio almost two years ago in January 2019. Since leaving Smallbone, in 2009, I have been evolving my design preferences, always with a view to building a new business around what I love, which is kitchens and, more generally, beautifully designed and built furniture. It was important for me to stay patient till I was confident I had something new and sufficiently different to build the new opportunity around.

How many staff?

We're a small team and we've developed several collaborations with exceptionally talented artists and artisan workshops. I design each project myself, and personally build the relationship with each new Ledbury Studio client.

What is your latest significant achievement/project of note?

Projects often run into years of gestation, and even 'quick' ones regularly run at least six to nine months. I'm very proud of all our projects to date and most especially having been able to establish Ledbury Studio in these difficult times. We opened our doors in 2019 right in the midst of Brexit, and then in 2020 the pandemic hit.

I think few people would suggest these are easy times to start a new business! But I have always believed that passion and determination work well together with a good idea.

What is your favourite possession?

I've fallen in love with my Pilot Hi-Tecpoint V5 pen that my daughter Holly, who works at the Studio, bought me to sketch new ideas and client schemes. I have three of them now, so they are pretty much with me at all times, and ready for whenever the inspiration takes me!

I've just discovered...

That I'm a stone heavier than I was a year ago, which was the last time we had a battery working in our scales! But we have been eating so well - cookery is a family interest, which is just as well given that we design and build kitchens. However, I think it's time now to refocus and work to lose what's been added onto my midriff!

Who inspires me...

David Cornwell - better known as the author John le Carré. He happened to go to the same prep school as me - though 20 years earlier - which at times has led me to reflect about possible shared experiences. John le Carré sadly died in December, but he was a creative literary force who remained relevant, interesting and witty through every stage of his 60 year career. As someone seeking to offer fresh perspectives in my own chosen field of furniture, I find him, what he did and how he did it totally inspiring.

My highlight of the last 12 months...

Towards the end of October I was lucky enough to visit Malta, finalising the design works of a current project. One day I had a spare hour and took myself into the centre of Valletta. I decided to visit St John's Co-Cathedral, which completely blew me away. Walking around looking at untold gems of marble carving depicting the provenance of each of the Knights of St John, I happened on a chapel, hung fully with paintings by Caravaggio. Words cannot really express the magnificence of these works - this was by some distance the most amazing hour of the last 12 months for me.

Personal Perspective: My most memorable project

Pippa Paton explains why a bathroom in the Cotswolds is particularly important to her

PART OF A RENOVATION OF the whole house, this project was to completely redesign the master bedroom suite to provide an ensuite bathroom, a separate dressing area and also a small work space. We undertook this project in 2014 in a Grade II listed, mid 19th Century Cotswold barn.

The client are a professional couple with four children who live and work in London and use the barn as a weekend retreat. We have subsequently worked with this client on two further projects. The brief was to create something that was visually exciting, which optimised both views and space whilst retaining the integrity of the building and its history. Functionally, the design needed to deliver twenty first century amenities and ergonomics but within the fabric of the original building.

Although the brief was extremely demanding we were lucky to have a client who was open to radical thinking about both spaces and materials.

In order to maximise space our idea was to create a 'floating' glass box above the master bedroom as this allowed the double height volume of the bedroom to be retained whilst using part of it for the ensuite. The glass box, with white resin floor, is accessed by a white powder coated steel staircase. The original volume of the bedroom is unimpaired by the structure and the clients benefit from being able to see the full volume, to a ridge height of 5.5 metres, including original features such as the Cotswold stone wall and trusses.

Within the bathroom an old stable door sits in front of the shower glass, with corrugated iron on the wall at the back of the shower area. The bathroom enjoys all the modern amenities which the owners required: a Japanese WC is set behind a stud wall so whilst open is not obviously on view; there is a rainshower which, because of the vault could not be inset into the ceiling, so a bespoke frame was fabricated which allowed the shower to be supported from pipes which acted as the feeds and tied the glass panels in position. A white Corian clad storage cupboard was designed to act as a wall between the WC and the shower.

The controls for the copper bath are set into an oak block at one end of the bath and a specially designed rill was fabricated to take the water from a second oak block into the bath resembling a flowing stream. The copper basin sits on a further oak block with a niche cut out to discretely hold toothbrushes.

In order to maximise the views over the valley, openings were created to allow glimpses outside such as a rooflight added adjacent to the glass shower wall so that there is view straight across the valley while showering.

The idea of the new en-suite is that it is a curated gallery of objects in a floating glass box, suspended above the master bedroom to maximise space, light and volume.

What did we learn from this project? It was the fulcrum point of everything we have done since. It taught us not to be afraid of difficult spaces and to have the confidence in the power of radical ideas to solve clients' challenges. And also, that the simplest looking result can require the most technical solutions in order to achieve that simplicity.

Pippa's latest book - *Twenty First Century Cotswolds Volume II* is available from her website pippapatondesign.co.uk

