



SHOWROOM SHOWCASE

INTERIOR DESIGN TODAY IS STEPPING THROUGH THE DOORS OF SOME OF THE UK'S BEST SHOWROOMS, OFFERING AN INSIGHT INTO THE COLLECTIONS CRAFTED AND CURATED BY THE DESIGNERS WHO RUN THEM. **By Jade Tilley**

Often, showrooms need to serve the professional design community, as much as offering a shop window for consumers and creative eyes that glance on passing. When the contracts are rolled out and the design process begins, the interior design community rely on one another to come together, sketch and discuss ideas, hoping to come up with that 'wow' solution that they know their clients will love.

It is not an easy task but thankfully, the designers I have the pleasure of working with, know all about the beauty of collaboration and are ready and willing to embrace each other's talent to create that perfect interior space. When I decided on my latest showroom, I was aware that this particular designer is a pro at collaboration; it is after all, the main business element of her craft. Aiveen Daly is an upholsterer and designer for

the professional interiors sector. Her work includes partnering with some world-renowned designers and brand names including, Katharine Pooley London, Candy & Candy, Martin Kemp Design, The Langham Hong Kong and the Mandarin Oriental, Hyde Park London. To these clients, the finish and final flourish is everything and Aiveen's designs provide beautifully crafted flourishes that come only from knowing your stuff, and I mean really knowing it.



Aiveen's studio, showroom and workshop are based in North London, off the Harrow Road – Letchford Gardens to be precise. I travel into London on what I thought was the hottest day so far this year (turns out the hottest day was yet to come and I avoided the city that Wednesday!). I headed down the Harrow Road, turning off about half way between Kensal Green and Willesden Junction and strolled down a picturesque residential street. On the corner, gleaming in the afternoon sun, Aiveen Daly's showroom stands, a brick fronted building painted a beautiful hue of blue; the colour, somewhat reminiscent of the infamous Notting Hill door from the film of the same name. This is the setting for Aiveen's showroom for designer clients, the offices are upstairs and the workshop is down the road. Aiveen greets me at the door; her soft Irish lilt a joy to hear. I am immediately drawn in by the soft, luscious fabrics on offer, the details in the embellishments and the calmness of the showroom. The Aiveen Daly brand is a specialist upholstery studio, designing and making for some of the world's finest interiors projects. The majority of the work is to commission, using the most luxurious embellishments and fabrics to

adorn furniture and surfaces. I knew all of this before I stepped foot inside the premises, so I was really surprised to hear that Aiveen didn't actually begin her career in upholstery. Originally she gained a Business Studies and Russian degree at Trinity College in Dublin and eventually went on to work as a Marketing Manager for Expedia. It was when Aiveen turned 30 that she realised she had another calling in life, she completely changed course, enrolling on evening classes until she finally landed on upholstery and loved it.

A self-confessed 'bad student', Aiveen claims that her unorthodox approach to materials did not sit very well with her tutors but this has stood her in good stead for her now prominent career in the interiors sector. It is innovation and creativity that we cherish, and Aiveen's bravery with designs and manipulation of fabrics is a thing to behold.

Once qualified in upholstery, Aiveen took the proverbial plunge and moved the Letchford Gardens, living above the workshop space. A lot has changed since then, Aiveen no longer lives upstairs for one. The workshop is now in a separate space, where Aiveen's talented

craftspeople are busy working on commissions galore. The original unit is now simply the office and showroom, when designer clients can come and see and touch the fabrics that Aiveen has sourced from around the globe. Aiveen says she hopes to bring the spaces back together at some point, with one big space, where designers, craftspeople and clients can mull over ideas and put pen to paper, needle to thread.

As I said, Aiveen works for a whole host of clients in both residential and commercial fields, her designs are so versatile, they really do fit both sectors. Aiveen recently worked with Katharine Pooley on a piece for the Vanity Fair Theatre during Masterpiece.

We talk and browse through a table of swatches and fabrics, every colour, texture and technique you could wish to come across, strewn over a dining room table, elegantly flanked by chairs of Aiveen's own creation. The stud work, the light feathered touches, it all seems a bit too pretty to be real and certainly not to be used, but on closer inspection, you can see the perfection in the craftsmanship. Hand-stitched beadwork creating glittering designs across cushions, chain-linked embellishments for the backs of



chairs and ribboned furniture in a corset affect, it's all real and it has been expertly made so that not a bead is out of place – you can see and feel the quality.

Aiveen tells me about her close links with the fashion world; ateliers from Paris and Italy, often providing inspiration and materials for her creations. She holds a stunning tasseled piece of leather, studded at the end of each tassel – it could be a handbag from a famed designer. A palette of metal trims come together almost as a belt. As a designer, Aiveen takes the time to travel the world sourcing these materials with her own eye. It is important to get it just right – the devil is after all, in the detail. My favourite pieces on the table comes in the form of delicately assembled feather trims, stitched together, some with dipped tips in a beautiful gold colour. The palette reminds me of the battle between Odette and Odile in Swan Lake, the light and shade, good and evil. There are many references, cultural, social and technical, in Aiveen's work and she confesses that there is something alluring and feminine in this kind of

craft as well; it is girly, but it is strong and full of craft too.

Aiveen is no stranger to the hand that technology can play in designs. Some beadwork is hand stitched, some is applied using a thermo adhesive. All results are beautiful and some are surprising. The fabrics and their embellishments have become one and you cannot tell where the material ends and the buttons/studs/trims begin.

My time at the showroom is up but as we finish fawning over the fabrics, taking a look at cleverly compiled swatches to demonstrate to clients, I'm filled with the urge to get home and research evening classes for a creative outlet. After all, who wouldn't want to be able to create such beautiful designs from such humble beginnings..?

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