

# Touch of Class

Aiveen Daly's couture-inspired furniture designs feature in high-end interiors across the world but they start life in her Kensal Green showroom



If you've ever stayed in an exclusive hotel or perhaps even on a super-yacht recently, it's likely you've coveted one of Aiveen Daly's beautifully luxurious upholstered beds, sofas, chairs or wardrobes. Since setting up her business in 2006 the furniture designer has gone from strength to strength and her intricate couture-inspired pieces grace the Mandarin Oriental, Knightsbridge, the Langham, Hong Kong and the Gansevoort, New York, to name just a few. That's not the only place to see them though. Aiveen has just transformed her former workshop in Kensal Green into a charming showroom and moved her workshop into larger premises nearby. 'We can make much larger items now: installation pieces, upholstered walls and huge wardrobe doors,' she explains. 'We've expanded the range too and have more accessories which can all be seen here with the furniture.'

We use similar techniques to dress-making and tailoring but use much stronger fabrics and threads

Aiveen's work has a feminine feel and is inspired by the graceful gowns seen in couture fashion. It has been snapped up by Hollywood A-listers and high-flying businesswomen – although she's far too discreet to name names. That's not to say she doesn't have high profile male customers too; she's created pieces for Paul Smith's boutiques, both in London and Tokyo, as well as for famous authors, politicians and pop stars. She describes her elegant designs as tailoring for furniture. 'I studied upholstery but have always loved details like pleats, ribbons and buttons on garments,' she says. 'We use similar techniques to those in dress-making and tailoring but with far stronger fabrics and threads.' However, the latest



collection takes its cue from the bags, shoes, belts and accessories that usually complete such glamorous outfits. 'We've used the stitching, applique and hardware, like buckles, studs and metal trims that you might see on hand-crafted leather bags,' she says. 'We've kept the fabric as a blank canvas and really focused on the embellishment.' Her beautiful new Ice Diamond sofa is a stunning example; hand-quilted in pale grey ultra-leather it is meticulously stitched with over 250 diamond shapes, and has been short-listed in the International Product Design and Architecture Awards.

When she started her business, Aiveen re-upholstered and redesigned vintage furniture, but now the frames are hand-made in the UK and she focuses on the designs. Having studied Business and Russian at Trinity College, Dublin, Aiveen, who is originally from Cork, was working in marketing for a large corporate, and like many, harboured a dream of doing something more creative. She undertook a series of evening courses and discovered a flair for upholstery. 'The course was very prescriptive and not at all creative,' she says. 'I was already thinking how I'd like to change things, rather than just re-cover a chair in the same way it had always been. I had always loved the details like buttons and pleats in fashion, but I hadn't considered them in relation to furniture before. So I experimented with a few ideas'. Pleased with the outcome, Aiveen honed her skills

transforming vintage furniture into bespoke pieces and the idea for her business was born.

'I loved updating heirlooms,' says Aiveen. 'At first, Aiveen lived above her studio and worked on small projects making individual pieces. 'I was surrounded by chairs and furniture in various stages of completion,' she says. 'I didn't want to sit on any of them as they were for customers. It looked like a chair hospital.' As the business grew Aiveen was able to work on larger projects, but is still happy to breathe new life into vintage pieces. 'We still do antique restoration if it's what a client wants. We sometimes have requests, so we'll have the frame restored and create a contemporary look with the upholstery,' she says. 'But as we've grown our clients have too and our projects now tend to be larger high-end room schemes.' In addition, items from the collections are made to order and can be adapted to suit a particular room. 'We work with a lot of interior designers so we can alter a piece to fit a space or change the feet or the fabric or colour,' she says. 'It's usually an in-depth purchase so we're happy to tailor pieces accordingly.'

✦ Viewing the collections is by appointment.  
aiveendaly.com

